

## **Beatrice Pettit (1872-1922) – a cornet soloist who thrived in the nascent ladies’ orchestras of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in Britain**

*Gavin Holman, 12 August 2020*

Beatrice Pettit was one of many accomplished female brass musicians who made a career out of their music in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. While such musicians were common on the theatre and vaudeville circuit in the USA, they were not quite so prominent in Britain. Many British female musicians took part in concerts and entertainments across the country, but relatively few achieved solo fame, particularly on brass instruments (of which the cornet was often the favoured instrument).



### **Her personal life**

Born Jessie Beatrice Pettit on 4 October 1872, at Mile End, Middlesex to parents Samuel Dan Taylor Pettit (1847-1913) and Jessie Pettit (née Kusel, 1847-1935). She had four siblings, Richard (b. 1874), Lillian (b. 1878), Ethel (b. 1881), and Harold (b 1887).

The family lived at 86 Northcote Road, Clapham. In the 1891 census, Beatrice was described as a musician, with her father Samuel being an architect. In 1901 Beatrice was absent from the census at Northcote Road, but her mother was described as a musical instrument dealer (employer), and sister Ethel, the only other resident apart from Samuel, as a musician.

She married Sidney Thomas Buckley (b. 1870), who was a stockbroker’s clerk, around 1900, and had two children – Eric Sidney (1901-1974) and Dennis Harold (1905-1985). In the 1901 census she was living at 90 Chichele Road, Willesden with Sidney and her new son, Eric.

In the 1911 census, she lived at 43 Palmerston Crescent, Palmers Green with her family.

Beatrice died on 18 January 1922.

- For information about the many other female brass soloists of this time, see: *Soft Lips on Cold Metal: female brass soloists of the 19th and early 20th centuries* available at <https://gavinholman.academia.edu/research>

## Her performing career

She started to perform at the age of 15, and her first appearance in public (at least as far as is recorded) was playing some cornet solos as part of the *Pleasant Monday Evenings* at the Schoolroom, Mallinson Road, Clapham in November 1988.

She went on to study at the Guildhall School of Music, and became a soloist on cornet with a number of orchestras, bands and entertainment troupes over the years. She was also accomplished as a pianist and soprano vocalist.

She was particularly associated with Rosabel Watson's Æolian Ladies' Orchestra, the English Ladies' Orchestral Society, and Eleanor Clauson's Ladies' Pompadour Band, as well as several other ladies' ensembles.

Rosabel Watson was a suffragist musical pioneer. She launched the Æolian Ladies' Orchestra, one of the world's earliest all-female orchestras, in 1886, and composed and directed music in theatres and concert halls across the UK. [Note: *Helen Matilda Pleydell-Bouverie, the Countess of Radnor, created her own ladies' orchestra in 1881, which lasted for 15 years*].



*The Æolian Ladies' Orchestra, conductor Rosabel Watson*

The Pompadour Band was especially popular with audiences, as they wore various historical costumes, particularly that of 18<sup>th</sup> century ladies with full dresses and powdered wigs, or as the reporters stated, “picturesque costumes which are identified with a famous period in the history of the Royal Courts of France”. The Band played mainly marches, operatic and dance music. Other soloists with the Band included Florence Woolhouse (cello), Edith Greenwood (saxophone), Mary Woolhouse (flute & piccolo), Lilly Pettit (Beatrice's sister, drums), and Jessie Strathearn (soprano vocalist). The last recorded engagement of this band under



Eleanor Clausen was in 1899. A new (or reformed with new conductor) orchestra, H.E. Angless' Pompadour Ladies' Orchestra, was in action from 1906 for a few years.



*Eleanor Clauson's Ladies' Pompadour Band*

She spent some time as part of the Clayton Quartette Party, which consisted of Beatrice Pettit (soprano, piano, cornet), Miss Florence Croft (contralto), Mr Frank Wilson (refined humorist and baritone), and Mr D'Arcy Clayton (tenor).

### **Known performances of Beatrice Pettit as a cornet soloist**

- Monday 19 Nov 1888 – cornet solos as part of the Pleasant Monday Evenings at the Schoolroom, Mallinson Road, Clapham
- Tuesday 26 Feb 1889 – cornet solos at White Star Cricket Club concert evening at Crichton Hall, Clapham
- Monday 15 Apr 1889 – piano solo at Bolingbroke Tradesmen's and Ratepayers' Club concert evening at Crichton Hall, Clapham
- Thursday 9 Jan 1890 – gave a solo concert at the Stanley Hall, Clapham on cornet and pianoforte
- Thursday 12 June 1890 – performed the cornet solo *Hand in Hand* (Slaughter) at the "At Home" at the Public Hall, Haywards Heath
- Wednesday 2 July 1890 – performed Schubert's *Serenade* at the concert of students and professors at the Guildhall School of Music, London
- Wednesday 29 Oct 1890 – performed the cornet solo "*I Lombardi*" at Georgina Tear's annual concert at the Parochial Hall, Brixton
- Saturday 15 Nov 1890 – performed some cornet solos at the "Happy Evenings at the Baths" at the Baths, Latchmere Road, Clapham
- Thursday 2 April 1891 - performed "*I Lombardi*" as part of the Conservative Club Smoking concert at the Victoria Hall, Sudbury

- Tuesday 12 May 1891 – gave a solo concert at the Stanley Hall, Clapham on cornet, with selections from Donizetti and Sullivan’s *Lost Chord*
- Saturday 9 May 1891 – various cornet solos at the Southwark Help-Myself Society concert
- Thursday 1 Oct 1891 - Gave solo items as part of the Croydon Literary and Scientific Institution’s President’s Soirée at the Large Public Hall, Croydon
- Wednesday 21 Oct 1891 – contributed the solos *Berceuse* (Gounod) and *The Last Watch* (Pinsuti) to a Dramatic and Musical Recital at the Green Man Assembly Rooms, Blackheath
- Saturday 17 Oct 1891 – cornet solos at the Morley Hall Entertainments, Shoreditch
- Saturday 31 Oct 1891 – performed at Harry Carr’s Fortnightly Concert at the St James’ Hall, Kingston-on-Thames
- Wednesday 4 Nov 1891 - contributed the solos *Berceuse* and a selection from *Martha* to Georgina Tear’s annual concert at the Surrey Masonic Hall, Southwark
- Saturday 12 Dec 1891 – performed at Harry Carr’s Fortnightly Concert at the St James’ Hall, Kingston-on-Thames
- Wednesday 16 Dec 1891 – performed with Eleanor Clauson’s “Pompadour Band”, which was comprised of performers who had been pupils at the Guildhall School of Music, at the Bridgnorth Exhibition
- Monday 18 Jan 1892 – played solos at a concert at Munt’s Hall, Clapham Junction
- Wednesday 2 Mar 1892 - performed *The Lost Chord* at the concert of students and professors at the Guildhall School of Music, London
- Monday 14 Mar 1892 (for the week or two?) - performed solos with Miss Clauson’s “Pompadour Band” at the Liverpool Naval Exhibition, at the Liverpool Winter Gardens, in their twice daily concerts
- Monday 26 Dec 1892 - performed solos with Miss Clauson’s “Pompadour Band”, at the People’s Palace, London
- Thursday 23 Feb 1893 - played *The Better Land*, and *The Death of Nelson* (John Braham), at a concert at Munt’s Hall, Clapham Junction
- Monday 6 March 1893 – piano and cornet solos as part of the Pleasant Monday Evenings at the Schoolroom, Mallinson Road, Clapham
- Tuesday 14 March 1893 – performed cornet solos with Rosabel Watson’s Æolian Ladies’ Orchestra at a concert in the Brixton Hall
- Thursday 25 May 1893 – performed solos at a cosy “At Home” at Dover Mansions, Brixton
- Monday 5 Sep 1893 - performed *The Death of Nelson* - with Miss Clauson’s “Pompadour Band”, at the Bristol Industrial and Fine Arts Exhibition
- Wednesday 12 Oct 1893 – performed a solo with the English Ladies’ Orchestral Society orchestra at Newbury Parish Church
- Tuesday 21 Nov 1893 – performed solos, including that in Sullivan’s incidental music to Henry VIII, with the English Ladies’ Orchestral Society orchestra at Corn Exchange, Chelmsford
- Friday 24 Nov 1893 - performed *The Lost Chord* - with Miss Clauson’s “Pompadour Band”, at the Bristol Industrial and Fine Arts Exhibition
- Thursday 7 Dec 1893 – performed at the Annual Metier Concert at Stratford Town Hall, East London

- 28 Feb 1894 – gave solos at the Munt’s Hall, Clapham to celebrate the opening of the Battersea Polytechnic as part of the Juvenile Dress Ball and Carnival
- Monday 5 Mar 1894 – performed solos with Miss Clauson’s “Pompadour Band”, at the Royal Arsenal Association of Foremen’s concert at the Freemason’s Hall, Plumstead
- Tuesday 27 Mar 1894 – gave a performance as part of the Easter Matinee at the Town Hall, Leamington Spa, playing *Ave Maria*, *The Lost Chord*, and *The Death of Nelson*
- Thursday 29 Mar 1894 - performed solos, including Schubert’s *Serenade*, with the English Ladies’ Orchestral Society orchestra at the Grand Hall, Maidenhead
- Wednesday 25 Apr 1894 – performed at Albon Nash’s Benefit concert at St George’s Hall, Wimbledon
- Tuesday 5 June 1894 - performed solos, including *Cavatine (Il Barbière)*, with the English Ladies’ Orchestral Society orchestra in Noverre’s Rooms, Norwich
- Monday 10 July 1894 (for the week) - performed cornet solos with the Æolian Ladies’ Orchestra in promenade concerts at St Leonard’s Pier, Hastings
- Wednesday 1 Aug 1894 - advertisement in *Musical Times* – Lady Cornet Soloist. For concerts, At Homes, Banquets, Lessons, etc. Miss Beatrice Pettit, 86 Northcote Road, London, S.W. “I can strongly recommend Miss Beatrice Pettit as an excellent trumpet and cornet player, both orchestral and solo” – J.S. Liddle, conductor, English Ladies’ Orchestral Society. She was living with her father Samuel Pettit in Northcote Road in 1894
- In an interview by *The Princess* in August 1894, when asked if playing the cornet injured or disfigured her lips, she replied, “It makes the under surface of the lip a little stiff, but no one could observe any difference externally, and there is no disfigurement at all; besides, one is only conscious of that stiffness after a bout of rehearsals and concerts”. “Does it make dimples?” “I really don’t know”, she laughed, frankly; “I believe that when I’m playing I have dimples that I cannot boast of at any other time, but I don’t know if they are of the fashionable kind. By the way, it makes the lips very bright; that is the effort of playing”. In addition, commenting on the choice of instrument she said, “The taking such deep breaths as are necessary for smooth phrasing is itself exhausting, but the lung power increases so gradually that it subsequently becomes no effort to play. Cornet playing is extraordinarily like singing, so much so that most cornet solo pieces are transcriptions of melodious songs. People have an idea that all wind instruments entail puffed cheeks and purple faces; that shows ignorance. The cornet is an instrument which few know how to play, of the refinement of which few are aware. The work of producing the notes, far from being done by blowing out the cheeks, as is the manner with inferior players, is effected by the pressure of the lip and breath”
- Thursday 25 Oct 1894 – performed solos, including *Let Me Like a Soldier Fall*, with the Ladies’ Pompadour Band, at the Leicester Trades and Industrial Exhibition
- Wednesday 14 Nov 1894 – performed at Liddle & Ayres Annual Concert at the Corn Exchange, Wallingford, including the solo *For All Eternity (Mascheroni)*
- Saturday 5 Jan 1895 - performed solos with the Ladies’ Pompadour Band, at the Sheffield Trades and Industrial Exhibition at the Artillery Drill Hall, Edmund Road

- Saturday 5 Jan 1895 - performed solos with the Ladies' Pompadour Band, at the Sheffield Trades and Industrial Exhibition at the Artillery Drill Hall, Edmund Road
- Monday 15 Apr 1895, and for the week, performed solos with the Ladies' Pompadour Band, at the Corn Exchange, Colchester
- Monday 22 Apr 1895, and for the week, performed solos with the Ladies' Pompadour Band, at the Public Hall, Ipswich
- Tuesday 14 May 1895 - performed solos with the English Ladies' Orchestral Society orchestra at the Public Hall, Ipswich, including *For All Eternity*, *The Lost Chord*, and *To Anthea*
- Thursday 16 May 1895 - performed solos with the English Ladies' Orchestral Society orchestra at the Corn Exchange, Romford
- Monday 20 May 1895 – performed as part of the concert supporting Epping Fire Brigade at Epping Town Hall
- Thursday 30 May 1895 - performed solos with the English Ladies' Orchestral Society orchestra in Noverre's Rooms, Norwich
- Wednesday 19 Jun 1895 - performed solos with the Ladies' Pompadour Band, at the South Shields Trades and Industrial Exhibition at the Royal Assembly Hall. The Band was still entertaining the crowds there on Monday 1 July
- Saturday 20 Jul 1895 (for the week) - performed cornet solos with Rosabel Watson's Æolian Ladies' Orchestra at St Leonard's Pier, Hastings
- Tuesday 17 Sep 1895 - performed solos with the Ladies' Pompadour Band, at the Mayor's Conversazione, at the Ipswich Museum
- Saturday 19 Oct 1895 – performed in the Ballad Concert at the Pier Pavilion, Southend-on-Sea
- Monday 2 Dec 1895 (for two weeks) - performed solos with the Ladies' Pompadour Band, at the Glasgow National Trades and Industrial Exhibition, in the East End of Glasgow
- Monday 27 Jan 1896 – returned to the Glasgow Exhibition for its last week
- Monday 18 May 1896 (for three weeks) - performed solos with the Ladies' Pompadour Band, at the Derby Trades and Industrial Exhibition, at the Royal Drill Hall, Derby. The band played two sets each day of 2½ hours apiece
- Monday 7 Sep 1896 - performed solos with the Ladies' Pompadour Band, at the Warrior Square Concerts in Hastings
- Wednesday 21 Oct 1896 – performed solo items, including *The Death of Nelson*, as part of the Trafalgar Night celebrations at the Middlesbrough Trades and Arts Exhibition at Middlesbrough Town Hall
- Saturday 14 Nov 1896 – performed in a ballad concert at Central Hall, Greenwich
- Wednesday 18 Nov 1896 – performed in Windsor Amateur Dramatic Society's Variety Entertainment, at the Albert Institute, Windsor, playing *Serenade*, and *The Better Land*
- Friday 20 Nov 1896 - performed the solo *Bid Me Discourse*, with the English Ladies' Orchestral Society orchestra at the Public Hall, Croydon
- Monday 30 November 1896 (for the week) - performed with the Ladies' Pompadour Band, at the Bristol Winter Exhibition, Drill Hall, Bristol; where her *The Lost Chord* was particularly popular

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CONTENTS

THE EXILE'S LAMENT	W. Mason	1
PATAPLAN POLKA	W. Mason	4
TRUTH IN ABSENCE	E. D. Boyer	9
POST HORN GALOP	W. Mason	12
SERENADE	W. Mason	16
TO ANTHEA	W. Mason	20
THE DEATH OF NELSON	W. Mason	24
UNA VOCE POCO FA (SARABANDE)	W. Mason	29

Compiled and arranged by  
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*In 1897 she featured on the cover of the new Turner's Cornet Journal, which contained various pieces that she performed*

- Wednesday 13 Jan 1897 – performed on her cornet in Windsor Amateur Dramatic Society's *The Glass of Fashion*, at the Theatre Royal, Windsor, playing *Queen of the Earth (Pinsuti)* and *The Holy City*
- Tuesday 12 Jan 1897 - performed cornet solos with the Æolian Ladies' Orchestra at the Newbury Literary and Scientific Institution
- Monday 25 Jan 1897 – performed *Queen of the Earth* in a concert with the Byzantium Ladies' Orchestra, at St Michael's, Wandsworth Common
- Monday 8 Feb 1897 – performed on the cornet with the Coward-Kempton Quartette at the Soirée Musicale of the Staines Choral Society, at Staines Town Hall
- Tuesday 2 Mar 1897 – participated in a concert at the Public Hall, Loughton
- Thursday 15 Apr 1897 – took part in a fund-raising concert for the Post Office Orphan Homes, at the Queen's Hall of the People's Palace, London, playing *The Deathless Army* and *Queen of the Earth*
- Monday 19 Apr 1897 - performed with the Ladies' Pompadour Band at the Children's Entertainment, at the People's Palace, Mile End Road, London

- Saturday 1 May 1897 - performed in a Grand Concert at the People's Palace, Mile End Road, London
- Monday 10 May 1897 (for the week) - performed with the Ladies' Pompadour Band, twice daily, at the Winter Gardens, Bournemouth
- Saturday 12 Jun 1897 – performed solo items as part of Grand Ballad and Operatic concert on Southampton Pier
- Monday 6 Dec 1897 - performed with the Ladies' Pompadour Band, in a concert at the Bow and Bromley Institute
- Saturday 1 Jan 1898 – performed in a ballad concert at Central Hall, Greenwich
- Monday 28 Feb 1898 - performed the solo *Mona*, with the Pompadour Ladies' Band, at the Royal Arsenal Association of Foremen's concert at the Woolwich Polytechnic
- Wednesday 9 Mar 1898 – took part in Miss E.A. Knight's concert at Wandsworth Town Hall, playing *The Holy City* and *Love's Sweet Song*
- Thursday 31 Mar 1898 (for two weeks) – performed as cornet soloist with Madam Hansford's Empire Lady Orchestra, twice daily, at the Fair Trades and Cycle Exhibition, St George's Hall, Kendal. The orchestra's uniform was cherry-coloured velvet, old gold trimmings, white fronts and cuffs, gilt buttons and round caps.
- Sunday 10 Jul 1898 - performed with the Pompadour Ladies' Band, at the Tynemouth Palace, in their farewell appearance
- Thursday 15 Sep 1898 – performed with the St Cecilia's Ladies' Orchestra, conducted by Charles Cooke, in the celebrations for the coming-of-age of the Ipswich High School for Girls at Ipswich Town Hall
- Saturday 1 Oct 1898 – performed *The Death of Nelson*, *Love's Old Sweet Song*, *Una Polka*, and *Sunshine Above*, in the concert to celebrate the anniversary of Lincoln Temperance Society, at the Corn Exchange, Lincoln
- Thursday 13 Oct 1898 – performed as part of the Clayton Quartette Party, which was also assisted by her sister Ethel Pettit on cello, at the Guards Depot, Croydon. In this concert she was handicapped in her cornet solos by the piano being pitched half a note too low, but nevertheless she surmounted the difficulty
- Thursday 20 Oct 1898 – performed with the Clayton Quartette Party at the Drill Hall, Hednesford, in aid of the Foresters' Court
- Saturday 19 Nov 1898 - performed in a concert at the Woolwich Polytechnic
- Thursday 8 Dec 1898 – played *Ever and Always* in a concert at Caterham
- Saturday 17 Dec 1898 - performed in a concert for the Epping Forest Musical Society in the Pavilion at the Royal Forest Hotel, Chingford
- Thursday 12 Jan 1899 - performed in Miss Carrie Smart's Annual Concert at the Mountview Lecture Hall, Islington
- Saturday 14 Jan 1899 – played *Ever and Always* in a concert at Aylesbury – the Hazell's Printing Works New Year's Gathering, at the Corn Exchange. In addition to her solo performances, and that of others, the Printing Works Brass Band, under Bandmaster B. Payne, provided music for dancing
- Monday 30 Jan 1899 – played *Ever and Always*, and other solos, in a concert at St Michael's Hall, Wandsworth Common, as part of the Clayton Quartette Party
- Tuesday 31 Jan 1899 – played *Ever and Always* in a concert at Highbury



- Wednesday 1 Feb 1899 – participated in a concert at Battersea Town Hall, under the auspices of the Clapham Junction and Lavender Hill Early Closing Association. During the evening bills were well circulated begging the ladies of Battersea to “give up late shopping, and so prevent overwork, which causes loss of health and life”
- Thursday 2 Feb 1899 – participated in a concert at the new Victoria Hall, Rolleston Street, Salisbury, playing *Serenade*, *The Queen of the Earth*, and *The Lost Chord*
- Saturday 4 Feb 1899 - performed in a Grand Concert at the People’s Palace, Mile End Road, London
- Thursday 9 Feb 1899 – performed in a concert at the Corn Exchange, Aylesbury, for the Aylesbury Co-operative Society, as part of the Clayton Quartette Party
- Tuesday 21 March 1899 – performed cornet solos with Rosabel Watson’s Æolian Ladies’ Orchestra at a concert for the Newbury Literary and Scientific Institution, including Frances Allitsen’s *Song of Thanksgiving*
- Saturday 8 Apr 1899 – played *Twain* (by Mawson Marks) in a concert at Forest Gate
- Wednesday 12 Apr 1899 – played *Twain* in a concert at Wadhurst
- Tuesday 2 May 1899 – performed various solos in a John Pullen’s 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Benefit concert at Battersea Town Hall
- Thursday 22 Jun 1899 – played *Twain* in a concert at Torquay
- Monday 26 Jun 1899 (for the week) – performed as part of the Clayton Quartette Party at the Victoria Pavilion, Ilfracombe
- Thursday 20 Jul 1899 – performed with the Bolero Ladies’ Orchestra in an al fresco concert at Cranbrook Hall, Ilford
- Monday 24 Jul 1899 (for the week) - performed twice daily as part of the Clayton Quartette Party at the Tynemouth Palace
- Saturday 14 Oct 1899 – performed with the Clayton Quartette Party at the Drill Hall, Hednesford, in aid of the Court Hednesford and Rawnsley Rangers of the Ancient Order of Foresters
- Saturday 4 Nov 1899 - performed in the Epping Forest Musical Society’s Bohemian Concert, at the Royal Forest Hotel, Chingford
- Wednesday 6 December 1899 – performed in Windsor Amateur Dramatic Society’s Bohemian Concert, in the Victoria Rooms of the White Hart Hotel, Windsor
- Wednesday 24 Jan 1900 - performed with the Clayton Quartette Party at the Penge Conservative Club concert at Childwick Hall
- Thursday 22 Feb 1900 – took part in a concert for Edmonton Woodgrange F.C., at Lower Edmonton Town Hall
- Thursday 15 Feb 1900 - performed with the Clayton Quartette Party at the Windsor Conservative Club, playing *The Flight of the Ages*, *Killarney*, *Una*, *The Soldier’s Song*, *Mona*, and *Soldiers of the Queen*
- Saturday 17 March 1900 - performed in a St Patrick’s Day Grand Irish Concert at the People’s Palace, Mile End Road, London
- Tuesday 10 Apr 1900 – took part in a concert for the George Street Ramblers Football Club, at the George Street Congregational Church, Croydon

- Monday 23 Apr 1900 - performed in a concert at the Windsor Conservative Club, playing *The Sailor's Grave*, *Queen of the Earth*, *Killarney*, *The Holy City*
- Wednesday 8 Aug 1900 - performed with the Clayton Quartette Party at the Sports Ground, Redhill
- Saturday 29 Sep 1900 - performed in a ballad concert at Central Hall, Greenwich
- Saturday 6 Oct 1900 - performed in an Entertainment at the People's Palace, Mile End Road, London
- Monday 29 Oct 1900 – performed at the Lee Board of Works Valedictory Dinner at the Cannon Street Hotel
- Sunday 27 Oct 1901 – performed at the Sunday Lecture Society's concert in Woking Public Hall
- Tuesday 28 Jan 1902 – performed with the St George's Glee Singers, for the Newbury Literary and Scientific Institution at the Town Hall, Newbury
- Saturday 21 Mar 1903 - performed in a Grand Irish Concert at the People's Palace, Mile End Road, London
- Wednesday 5 Jan 1916 – advertisement in *The Era* – “Wanted Known, Miss Beatrice Pettit, Solo or Orchestral Cornet; disengaged; London only. Address 43 Palmerston Crescent, Palmers Green, N.” The advertisement was repeated on Wednesday 8 March 1916



Madame H. E. ANGLESS'S, POMPADOUR LADIES' ORCHESTRA.  
PERMANENT ADDRESS: 78, NORWOOD ROAD, LONDON, S. E.