

Anthony Yorath and the first Crystal Palace Gold Medal

Gavin Holman – 13 October 2020

Recently I came across a cabinet card photograph of a young-looking cornet player. No name was attached to the card, merely the details of the photographer – F.W. Vidler (manager) – the London Photographic Co. Ltd., 48 Langer Road, Kensal Rise, London. The rear of the card mentioned “patronised by Her Majesty the Queen”, which indicated that it was probably produced before 1902 (when Edward VII was crowned). The cornetist was posing with his cornet and a display of medals won in competition. Enlarging the image of his beribboned medal, it was clear that that medal was one of those awarded at the National Brass Band Championships at the Crystal Palace. This further restricted the date to 1900 or 1901.



By a process of elimination, and investigating various newspaper and genealogy sources, it became clear that the photograph was of Anthony Yorath, principal cornet of the Arael Griffin Colliery Band at Abertillery. The medal would have been similar to that pictured here – except instead of this bronze medal awarded to members of the winning band, his would have been gold, for the soloist’s prize.

Anthony Yorath was born at Abertillery on 18 October 1877 to his parents Anthony (b. 1850) and Anne (b. 1855, née Summers). In 1881 they lived in Cwm Street, Abertillery, and Anthony senior was a journeyman shoemaker. By 1891 they had moved to 1 James Street, Abertillery, and the family had increased to include the children Mary Jane (1875), Anthony (1877), John (1882), Anne (1883), Florence (1886), William Henry (1888), and Aaron (1890). At this time Anthony junior was employed as a coal miner (aged 14), and his older sister as a domestic servant. Anthony had earlier joined the Abertillery Salvation Army Band on cornet in 1889, and he moved to the Arael Griffin Temperance Band in 1892.

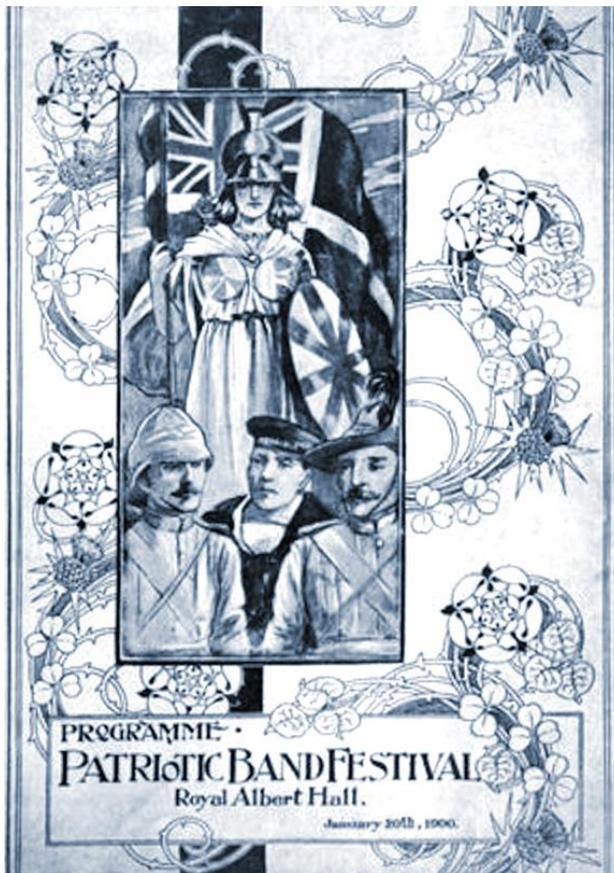
The Arael Griffin Colliery Temperance Brass Band was based at Abertillery, Monmouthshire. It was founded around 1879 as Abertillery Temperance Band, and was conducted by J.G. Cordey in 1885, Edward Sutton in the 1890’s and Harry Bentley from 1899. The secretary was J.H. Munro in 1890-1892, H.H. Ashley in 1897, Richard Evans in 1899, and M. Emanuel in 1900. Anthony Yorath was the band’s principal cornet in 1900, but it is not known when he joined. The band disbanded in 1902 (it was succeeded by the Abertillery Town Band).



The Seventh Annual Contest of the South Wales and Monmouthshire Brass Band Association was held on 5 July 1897 at Abertillery. Arael Griffin Temperance Band, conducted by Edward Sutton, took second prize with their performance of *"Meyerbeer"* by H. Round. The gold medal for best cornet soloist was awarded to Anthony Yorath.

Monday 3 January 1898, Lancaster Town Band (Blaina) held a contest for quartets and solos. Arael Griffin band members took the majority of the prizes – in the quartette contest, test piece *"Spring"* Anthony Yorath's quartette from Arael took first prize, with Walter Moor's quartette, also from Arael, taking second place (another Arael quartette, that of D. Stevens, took 5th place). First prize for the duo – went to Messrs Stephens and Derry from Arael, playing *"Honoured and True"*. Anthony Yorath took first place for the solo competition (any instrument) for his cornet solo. The band only lost out on the bass solo prize, which went to R.D. Rees of Aberdare, playing *"Queen of the Heart"*.

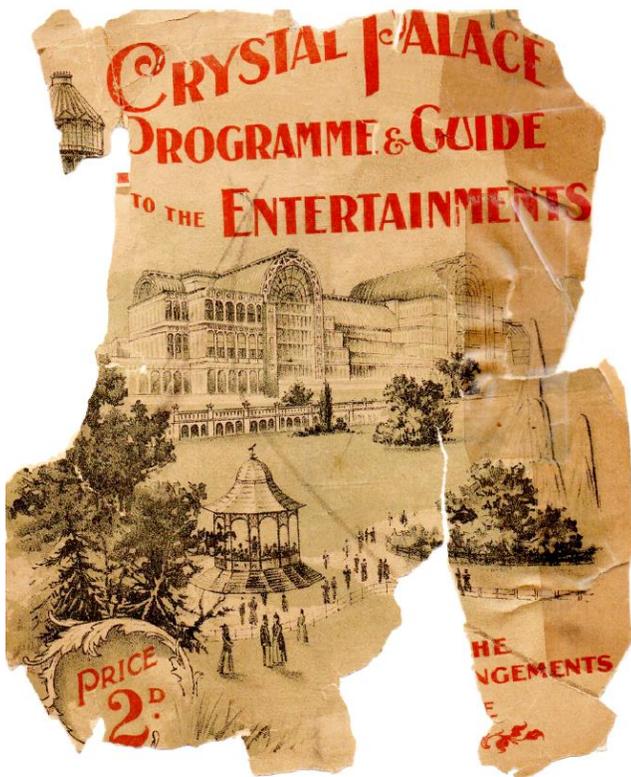
The prizes awarded to bands and soloists at contests had varied considerably over the years, during the latter half of the 19th century. Cash amounts, silver trophies and instruments were the most common, with medals often being awarded to individual bandsmen or soloists. Those won at brass band contests or solo/duet/quartette competitions were highly prized and usually worn or displayed with pride.



Following a very successful contesting year in 1899, which included eight firsts, two seconds and a third place in eleven contests, the Arael Griffin Temperance Band was invited to represent South Wales at John Henry Iles' 'Patriotic Band Festival' at the Royal Albert Hall, London, on 20 January 1900, which was in aid of the Daily Mail Kipling Poem Fund, raising money for the wives and children of soldiers, sailors, and sick and wounded servicemen. The other 'champion' bands they shared the stage with were Besses o' th' Barn, Black Dyke, Wyke Temperance, Hucknall Temperance, Nantlle Vale, St Albans City, West Hartlepool Operatic, Clydebank, and Kettering Rifles, together with a number of vocal soloists, including Clara Butt, a choir, the Band of the Grenadier Guards, and 60 drummers, all of whom variously interspersed the brass band performances. The programme started with Madame Bertha Rossow singing *"Onward Christian Soldiers"*, and included *"Moses in Egypt"* by the St Albans Band, *"Beauties of England"* by Arael Griffon Band, *"Selections from Mendelssohn"* by Hucknall Temperance Band, *"William Tell overture"* by Wyke Temperance Band, *"Selections from Othello"* by Besses o' th' Barn, *"Elijah"* by Black Dyke, *"Heroic"* by West Hartlepool,

and *"The Absent-Minded Beggar"* march (Sullivan) by the massed bands.

Following this, the Arael Griffin Band was also invited to take part in the National Brass Band Championships at the Royal Albert Hall, on 21 July 1900. This contest, which consisted of three sections and twenty-seven bands from across England and Wales, was the first of the ongoing series of such competitions, which continue to today. The test piece in the Championship section was “*Gems from Sullivan’s Operas*” arranged by J. Ord Hume, and Arael Griffin Band were drawn number seven to play, conducted by Henry Bentley, and managed to achieve fifth place, winning £8 – with Denton Original Band taking the coveted first place, £75 and the unique *Thousand Guineas Trophy* (then known as the *National Challenge Trophy*). However, the gold medal for the best cornet soloist in the contest was awarded to Anthony Yorath of the Arael Griffin Band. He then had the privilege of playing a cornet solo at the massed bands concert following the conclusion of the contest, at 7 p.m.



ARAE GRIFFIN (Abertillery) TEMPERANCE BAND.

Conductor—Mr. H. BENTLEY.

Soprano Cornet	...	...	HENRY MUNRO
Solo Cornet	...	...	A. YORATH
1st Cornet	...	...	WILLIAM CRIDLAND
"	...	...	GEORGE CONWAY
"	...	...	THOMAS ADAMS
Repiano Cornet	...	...	R. CRIDLAND
Repiano Flügel-Horn	...	...	W. THOMAS
2nd Cornet	...	...	J. CHIVERS
2nd Flügel-Horn	...	...	J. YORATH
3rd Cornet	...	...	J. DAVIES
3rd Flügel-Horn	...	...	RICHARD EVANS
Solo Horn	...	...	J. HOWARD
1st Horn	...	...	E. WINSTON
2nd Horn	...	...	J. MORGAN
Solo Baritone	...	...	H. ASPLEY
2nd Baritone	...	...	WILLIAM HOWARD
Solo Euphonium	...	...	H. BENTLEY
2nd Euphonium	...	...	J. H. HARRIS
Solo Trombone	...	...	WILLIAM DERRICK
"	...	...	CHARLES CRIDLAND
2nd Trombone	...	...	ENOCK EVANS
"	...	...	ALBERT SHORT
Bass Trombone	...	...	W. M. THOMAS
E flat Bass	...	...	H. LOYD
"	...	...	THOMAS PARNELL
B flat Bass	...	...	E. SHORT
BB flat Bass	...	...	WALTER MOORE

The band at the contest

In South Nave.

INTERNATIONAL MUSIC EXHIBITION.

NO EXTRA CHARGE.

GRAND BRASS BAND CONTESTS AND FESTIVAL,

In connection with the above Exhibition.

Organiser and Director - Mr. J. HENRY ILES.

PRIZE LIST.

CONFINED TO BRASS BANDS.

First Section (limited to Fifteen Bands).

FIRST PRIZE, THE CHAMPIONSHIP OF GREAT BRITAIN AND THE COLONIES, the winners of which will be the holders for the year of the **National Challenge Trophy** of the value of **ONE THOUSAND GUINEAS**, and a Cash Prize of Seventy-Five Pounds.

2nd Prize, £30. 3rd Prize, £20. 4th Prize, £12. 5th Prize, £8.

SPECIAL PRIZES.

Beautifully Mounted Baton for the Conductor of the Band winning the 1st Prize.

Presented by Messrs. HAWKES & SON, London.

Gold Medal for the Best Cornet Soloist. Presented by Messrs. BESSON & Co., London.

Gold Medal for the Best Euphonium Soloist. Presented by Messrs. BOOSEY & Co., London.

Gold Medal for the Best Trombone Soloist. Presented by Messrs. HAWKES & SON, London.

Gold Medal for the Best Soprano Cornet Soloist. Presented by the Proprietors of the *British Bandsman*.

Gold Medal for the Best Horn Soloist. Presented by Messrs. R. SMITH & Co., Band-music Publishers, 188, Strand, London.

7 p.m.

On Handel Orchestra.

GREAT CONCERT by the Massed Bands.

Under the Direction of
SIR ARTHUR SULLIVAN
Assisted by
MR. AUGUST MANN.

Organiser—MR. J. HENRY ILES.

PROGRAMME.

1. CORNELIUS MARCH. By Massed Bands. Conducted by Mr. AUGUST MANN.
2. ANNOUNCEMENT OF PRIZE WINNERS.
3. EXHIBITION PERFORMANCE, by the Winners of the Third Prize.
4. TROMBONE SOLO, by the Winner of the Gold Medal.
5. EXHIBITION PERFORMANCE, by the Winners of the Second Prize.
6. CORNET SOLO, by Winner of the Gold Medal.
7. EXHIBITION PERFORMANCE, by Winners of the Grand Trophy.
8. EUPHONIUM SOLO, by Winner of Gold Medal.
9. TANNHAUSER MARCH. By Massed Bands. Conducted by Mr. AUGUST MANN.
10. DISTRIBUTION OF PRIZES, BY SIR ARTHUR SULLIVAN.
11. GRAND FINALE BY THE WHOLE OF THE MASSED BANDS. "A.M.B." March
"Rule Britannia." "God Save the Queen."
Conducted by Sir ARTHUR SULLIVAN.

Reserved Seats, One Shilling.

In September 1900, Anthony was solicited to take a position with the Band of the Grenadier Guards in London. He travelled to London and successfully played the requisite tests given to him by the bandmaster, Mr Williams, after which he was offered a position in the Band.

In 1901 Anthony was living at 155B Buckingham Palace Road, Belgravia, in lodgings with 16 other men connected with the army, ranging from pensioners, to soldiers to an army tailor – his profession being given as 'musician'. At a concert of the Grenadier Guards Band at the Alhambra, London, in February 1901, Anthony performed "The Lost Chord" to great acclaim, obtaining the

largest encore of the evening. In May that year he was a guest with the Arael Griffin Band playing at the Abertillery Sports, held to raise funds for the Cottage Hospital. Anthony appeared dressed in his Grenadier Guards Bandsman's uniform.

On 2 June 1902, he competed in the cornet solo competition at the Brecon Eisteddfod, playing "The Lost Chord", securing the first prize of one guinea.

During his time in London with the Grenadier Guards he met his future wife, Mabel Chivers (b. 1876), both of them living in Tower Hill and they married in Bristol in March 1904.

In March 1905, Anthony was playing with the Abertillery Salvation Army Band, conducted by Bandmaster Veal. At a social held in the Salvation Army Hall, he also contributed a cornet solo and a duet with his brother John (a.k.a. Jake) Yorath.

The Weekly Mail, Saturday May 6, 1905

Revival Trophies – Mr Anthony Yorath, Abertillery.

"I was convinced that it was useless trying to fight the battle alone, and so I cried to God for help," were the striking words uttered to our representative by Mr. Anthony Yorath, Abertillery. one of the Salvation Army converts. Mr. Yorath is a brilliant cornetist, having won innumerable prizes as soprano and solo cornet. He was for years a prominent player in the then famous Abertillery Temperance Brass Band, and it was with intense regret that the inhabitants of the Abertillery district and elsewhere, for his fame had spread, saw that he was giving way to drink. Their sorrow has now been changed to rejoicing, for Anthony is now not only a teetotaler, but an earnest and humble Christian. His fine musical talent is being devoted to the Salvation Army band, to which he has made an immense difference. Mr. Yorath's story is as follows: "I was born at Abertillery 27 years ago, and was brought up a staunch teetotaler. Having a great delight in brass bands, I joined the Salvation Army Band at twelve years of age, and got on so well that three years later I took my place in the ranks of the Abertillery Temperance Band. In 1900 the Temperance Rand competed at the Crystal Palace for the 1,000 guinea trophy open to the world. We



Mr. ANTHONY YORATH (Abertillery).

gained a good position, whilst I was awarded the open championship gold medal for solo cornet players. In the joy of gaining such a high, honour, which brought with it awful temptations to drink, I gave way, and from a staunch life abstainer I fell to a common drunkard. About last Christmas I told my wife I was going to be better, but was bound to have a good time Christmas. I had a good time, as I called it. Of course, you know what that means. Then I tried to keep my promise to be better. For a month of the New Year I kept very well, until one day I fell away. On February 2 I went to the house of my brother Jake, who lives in Abertillery, and who also is a good cornet player. Jake was leading a wild life, too, and he, like myself, was under deep conviction. I asked him to come to the Salvation Army hall with me, and, after talking it over a bit, he consented. So we started, and got to the door of the barracks; but he would not go a step further. He absolutely refused to come in, and tried to go back, but I would not let him, and at last, after a struggle. I pulled him into the barracks. Once inside both of us felt the peace of God come upon us, and we there and then openly gave ourselves to the Lord. Ever since that time I have felt a far happier man, not to mention how much better I am physically, as, for one thing, I have got rid of my old companion, the heavy head."

Mrs Yorath's Story. Mrs. Yorath, a young and prepossessing woman, was deeply thankful for the change. My husband has entirely changed," she said. "The difference it has made to our home life is beyond words."

In 1911 Anthony was living in Abertillery, at 107 Princes Street, with his wife Mabel and their son Ivor Cyril (b. 1906), and he was employed as a coal miner once more.

3 March 1915, Anthony joined the 10th Service Battalion of the South Wales Borderers (1st Gwent), and his place of residence was recorded as 28 Pandy Road, Bedwas.

Some time after WW1 the Yorath family moved to Somerset, probably near to Mabel's parents. Ivor Cyril, their son, went on to become a musician himself, becoming the principal cornet player with Radstock Silver Band and successfully conducting a number of brass bands from the 1930's to the 1970's, including Radstock Silver, Sankey's Castle Works, City of Coventry, Jaguar Cars, Arley Welfare, and Daventry Silver bands.

Anthony's wife, Mabel, died in 1928, and at some point he moved to Bristol city, where he is recorded as living at 7 Great Anne Street in 1939, as an unemployed hawker. He died in March 1949 in Bristol.



Anthony Yorath, photographed c. 1901