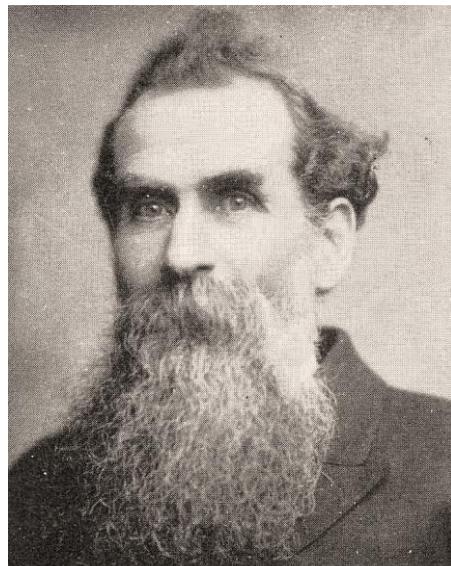


Hassocks Congregational Men's Rally Brass Band

Gavin Holman, 20 March 2023

A Congregational Church was established in the Sussex village of Hassocks in 1896, following an earlier Mission Church on the site. At some point, probably in early 1908, the Church members formed a brass band to provide music for their services and meetings. The Young Men's Rally Brass Band first appeared on Monday 8 June 1908, when it performed during a sports day which had been arranged to raise funds for the band. The band, conducted by Mr Crapps (late instructor of the Brighton Corporation Band), also gave a concert in the schoolroom in the evening. Magnus Volk, a local congregational worshipper, lent a meadow for the use of the sports. He was the founder of Volks Electric Railway, on Brighton seafront, designed the church hall, which was erected in 1907, and also invented a blower for the church organ, driven by water-power.

The band was established by the Reverend James Fanstone (1851-1937), the minister of the Congregational Church. During the late 1880's and early 1890's he had spent some time in Pernambuco, Brazil, where he carried out his missionary work with his wife, Elizabeth, née Baird (1863-1955). Two of his children, Brazillia and Albert, were born there. His elder son, James, played in the band, together with his nephew William Fanstone. It is not known if his other children – Ruth (1898-1991), Brazillia (1888-1947), Albert (1892-1985), and Bessie (1901-1990) - were band members. Ruth was certainly a musician, however.



Rev. James Fanstone

William Shippam, the village blacksmith of Keymer for 22 years, and his four sons were members of the band around 1911. William, 19, was a licensed hawker of oils and colours; Harry, 17, a carpenter/joiner; George, 13, a blacksmith's mate; and Frederick, 11, was in school. For years the Shippam family had tried to obtain a smallholding in the area, but the various legal restrictions and conditions made it impossible for them to do so and also continue their trades. As a result, they emigrated to Canada in 1912, moving to Assiniboia, Saskatchewan.

The band quickly became an active part of village life, supporting the Church and community's activities at various events.

- Wednesday 15 July 1908 – performed at the church sale of work in Hassocks, conducted by William Fanstone.
- Monday 16 November 1908 – gave a concert at the Ote Hall Congregational Church, Wivelsfield.

- Wednesday 2 December 1908 – provided musical entertainment at the Hurstpierpoint Mission Hall Sick Club's annual meeting, conducted by Mr Brooks.
- Friday 12 February 1909 – gave various musical selections at a meeting of the Hurst, Hassocks, Keymer and Clayton Liberal Association in the Drill Hall, Hurstpierpoint.
- Thursday 18 February 1909 – the band held a benefit concert for its own funds, in the Congregational Church Schoolroom. Among the various solo and recital items, the band played "*In This Hour of Softened Splendour*" (Pinsuti), a hymn tune, march "*The Lord's Day*" (Wright), selection "*The Hymn of Praise*" (Mendelssohn), euphonium solo "*The Village Blacksmith*" – soloist Mr Cottington, and march "*Celestial Sounds*" (Round).



Hassocks Congregational Church Brass Band, c. 1911

- Monday 12 April 1909 – the band played at the Easter sports, tea and concert of the Congregational Church, in Marcus Volk's meadow. Four of the members (James Fanstone jnr., William Fanstone, Frances Geering and Herbert Geering) also performed in a brass quartet.
- Saturday 24 July 1909 – the band took part in the Brighton Hospital Parade, which also included the Brighton Tramways Brass Band and the combined Hove and Portslade and Brighton No. 2 Salvation Army Bands.
- Saturday 18 September – the band took part in the procession for Hassocks' first Hospital Saturday carnival. They were joined by the Southdown (Poynings) Brass Band and the Twineham Drum and Fife Band.
- Monday 21 February 1910 – the band provided musical accompaniment to a talk at Hurstpierpoint Mission Hall on "Life in Prison".
- Tuesday 19 July 1910 – the band played various selections at a meeting at Hurstpierpoint Parish Room, which was arranged to protest against the proposal to alter the King's Protestant Declaration.

- Saturday 23 July 1910 – the band entertained the visitors at the temperance demonstration in the Orchard Tea and Pleasure Gardens, Hassocks, which was arranged by the Hassocks branch of the British Women's Temperance Association. Their efforts were rewarded with a 'good tea'.
- Saturday 17 September 1910 – the band took part in a hospital parade was held at Hurstpierpoint, raising funds for the Sussex County Hospital, the Village Nurse Fund and other charities. It was arranged by the Court "Prosperity" of Foresters, the "Loyal Star of Hope" Lodge of Oddfellows, and the Hurstpierpoint Volunteer Fire Brigade. The Southdown (Poynings) Brass Band also provided music.
- Saturday 24 September 1910 – the band provided music for the Band of Hope Demonstration at Preston Park, Brighton.



- Sunday 2 October – the band provided the music for a church parade for the Hurstpierpoint Oddfellows to commemorate the Order's centenary.
- Thursday 22 June 1911 – the band provided music for the celebrations at Hurstpierpoint for the coronation of King George V.
- Saturday 9 September 1911 – the band, together with the Hurspierpoint Town Band, provided musical entertainment at the Hassocks and District Charity Carnival, which included a procession to Keymer and Ditchling.
- Saturday 30 September 1911 – the band provided music for the Fireman's Competitions at Hassocks.



Members of Hassocks Congregational Church

The band does not reappear until the late 1920's. Further research is required to determine the fate of the band after 1911. It is most probable that it did not survive WW1, but was re-established some 15 years later.

- At some point during the year prior to April 1927, the band gave a sacred concert for the Hassocks branch of the League of Nations Union.
- Sunday 30 September 1928 – the band, conducted by H.J. Lurway, provided musical selections at a meeting of the Burgess Hill Brotherhood at the Central Hall, Burgess Hill.

This is the last known appearance of the band.

Other local brass bands were:

- **Hurstpierpoint and Hassocks Amalgamated Brass Band** - Founded in 1887, conductor Henry Hine. Still active in 1894. Bandmaster was Mr Simmonds in 1887-1888. Also known as Hassocks Brass Band.
- **Hurstpierpoint Rifle Volunteers Brass Band** - Founded in 1881, conductor E. Blackman, initially with 11 players (who had been members of the Hurstpierpoint Brass Band and St John's Brass Band). It was the band of the 2nd Sussex Rifle Volunteers (K Company).
- **Hurstpierpoint Temperance Brass Band** - Founded in autumn 1884. Still active in 1898. Conductor was Mr Dance in 1884, Mr Ball in 1885, H. Joy

in 1888, and Mr Wells in 1898. It was associated with the Hurst Church of England Temperance Society, and was also known as the Hurstpierpoint C.E.T.S. Brass Band.

- **Hurstpierpoint Town Brass Band** - Active in 1880. Still active in 1911. Conductor was C. Newman in 1897, and E. Stringer in 1903. Also known as Hurst Town Band.
- **Keymer and Hassocks Brass Band** - Active in 1888



Hassocks Congregational Church



Hassocks & Keymer villages, c. 1910