

CASTLEFORD TEMPERANCE BRASS BAND.

The town of Castleford is situated on the banks of the River Aire, about ten miles from Leeds, and the inhabitants are mostly dependent upon colliery and glassworks for their livelihood.

The Castleford Temperance Brass Band, whose career has been most remarkable, was formed in October, 1891, with the old instruments then used by the Rothwell Temperance Prize Band; and with a few willing workers the band soon drew themselves out of debt.

From 1891 to 1894 the band was simply an "engagement" band. Only one contest was attended, and this was at Castleford in 1892, but they only secured a part of the first prize for best and neatest uniform.

It should be mentioned that the present secretary, Mr. Charles Williams, is one of the oldest members of the band, having held that position for at least six years.

The active career of the band may be said to date from August, 1894, when the present bandmaster, Mr. J. W. Stamp, and secretary were in office. A deputation was selected from the band to wait upon twelve gentlemen of the town, with a view if possible of raising the sum needed for a new set of instruments, and a suitable place for the band to make a home. The deputation were successful, and the twelve gentlemen decided to be bondsmen for the amount required, one of whom is the treasurer (R. Huntington, Esq.)

In November, 1894, an order was placed with Messrs. Besson and Co., of London, for a complete set of first class silver-plated and engraved instruments. A building in Church-street was also secured for a home for the band, which consists of a splendid reading room and band room (of which the present secretary is caretaker), the cost being over £400 for a start.

Hard practice for the band now became the rule, and Mr. Stamp during this trying period worked very hard, every minute of his spare time being devoted to the band's welfare.

As the result of this hard and incessant labour, the band was soon brought out to contesting form, their first attempt being at Woodhouse in 1896, securing fourth prize out of 20 competitors. A few more contests were attended that season, but without any prizes being won.

The band at this time were playing "Maritana" for "own choice" selection. At this period Mr. Stamp had confidence that a more classical selection would suit the band, and his choice fell upon Mr. E. Swift's "Meyerbeer," which proved successful, Mr. Stamp doing his utmost to work the selection up. On Easter Monday, in 1897, he journeyed with his band to Elsecar contest, and divided 1st and 2nd prizes with Wharfedale Silkstone, a feat which speaks for itself of Mr. Stamp's abilities as a band teacher. From this time up to the present the band has never looked behind them, winning a prize at nearly every contest they have attended.

It was in 1897 that a great victory was won at Rochdale on Whit Friday at Whitworth-road march contest, where they won first prize out of 14 bands, beating both the Yorkshire and Lancashire cracks.

At this period the band decided to present Mr. Stamp with some valuable article, in recognition of his untiring efforts with the band. The choice fell upon a splendid gold albert and medal, which were subscribed for by members and friends.

When we consider that the band are nearly all miners (including the bandmaster), and that there are five bands to support in the town, we may be sure they have been severely handicapped, what with buying two sets of instruments and uniform, etc., therefore we must consider this a truly remarkable record.

Mr. Stamp cannot have too much praise for the results obtained, which have been accomplished without the help of a professional conductor. Without a doubt he has worked hard both day and night to keep the band in the position it holds at the present time.

This season (1898) Mr. Stamp has been handicapped by having to go short-handed to contests, owing to his men being on the sick list, which is, of course, a serious matter, and a great drawback in contesting. We hope he may be long spared to show the abilities he possesses and the love he has for the noble Art. A more steady, kind-hearted and trustworthy man it would be hard to meet. He is a great believer in strictness, holding the opinion that so long as a man is in the position of bandmaster he must have the confidence of his men, which, without a doubt, Mr. Stamp has, he being the sole trainer of the band.

LIST OF PRIZES WON.

1896.

Contest.	Selection.	Prize.
Woodhouse	"Maritana"	4th

1897.

Elsecar	"Meyerbeer"	div. 1st & 2nd
Rochdale	March	1st
Skelmanthorpe	"Meyerbeer"	5th
Nortonthorpe	"Meyerbeer"	div. 3rd & 4th
Brotherton	"Meyerbeer"	1st
Brotherton	March	1st
Garforth	"Meyerbeer"	div. 3rd
Garforth	March	1st

1898.

Kippax	"Mems. of Mozart"	4th
Ilkley	Test-piece	2nd
Yeadon	Test-piece	div. 4th & 5th
Rothwell	"Meyerbeer"	3rd
Hemsworth	"Zampa"	3rd
Hemsworth, special prize, Euph. medal, won by G. H. Waddington.		