

*John Morgan looks back over  
100 years of music-making in  
Cwm by the*

# Pioneers of Brass

**EXACTLY** one hundred years ago a group of young miners from Cwm, headed by a Mr. Fred Clarke, walked over the mountains to Markham, to purchase some musical instruments they had heard were for sale. It is rumoured that these same young men spent most of their leisure time during the following months on the mountains, learning to play their newly acquired possessions, well out of earshot of their not too enthusiastic townfolk.

The young men have now disappeared, but the memory of these "Pioneers of Brass" is echoed each time the current bandmen of the town take the stage in their maroon and black labelled uniforms.

## A REMINDER

One of the original instruments has also survived the blasts of a century, and this battered trombone is a reminder to today's bandmen of the efforts of their predecessors in establishing the Cwm Town Silver Band.

During the early years the band, under its conductor Mr. Fred Clarke and, subsequently, his son Edward, established quite a local reputation in an area where most villages boasted their own musicians.

Mr. Edward Clarke was followed as conductor by Mr. Sam Roberts, who held the baton until the outbreak of the First World War. Not a great deal is known of the band during the war, but a number of its members were engaged on active service.

## 1925 A YEAR TO REMEMBER

After the war, Mr. Owen Gullick became bandmaster and in 1923 Mr. John Probert emerged as leader. His enthusiasm produced some of the band's finest performances, and in 1925 they threw off the gloom of the depression years by capturing the Junior Shield at the Crystal Palace Championships.

Following Mr. Probert, the band had a series of conductors, including Mr. Joe Williams, Mr. Tom Valentine, Mr. Sam Rogers, Mr. David Stevens and Mr. Oliver Jones.

## REGIMENTAL BAND

In 1937 Mr. Bill Rogers took over the baton and it was under his guidance that they became the Regimental Band of the South Wales Borderers. It was during



Cwm Town Band 1910 version.

this period also that the band played for His Majesty King George VI. Mr. Rogers continued as bandmaster after the war until his untimely death in 1951. The band was then taken over by Mr. Cliff Trivett, who is now bandmaster with the Ebbw Vale Municipal Band. Mr. Trivett had the difficult task of rebuilding the band with youngsters, but succeeded in bringing them up to competition standard.

## PRIZEWINNERS

His successor was Mr. Roy Lewis, who took the band through a very successful 2½-year period, during which they won prizes at 12 contests, including second place in the Welsh National Eisteddfod at Ebbw Vale in 1958.

In 1960 Mr. Nigel Mumford was appointed bandmaster, and under his direction the band has steadily enhanced their reputation in brass band circles.

## MINERS SON

The son of a miner, Mr. Mumford began his musical career with Rhymney Youth Band as a trombone player and also played with the National Youth Orchestra of Wales. He studied at Cardiff College of Music and Drama and, following military service with the Grenadier Guards' Band, took up an appointment as a brass music teacher with Monmouthshire County Council.

Besides his work as a music teacher and conductor, he is also active in the South Wales and Monmouthshire Brass Band Association. He also assists in the organisation of the Monmouth-

shire Youth Contest and the Monmouthshire Youth Orchestra.

## VERSATILE ASSISTANT

The assistant bandmaster at Cwm is Mr. Adrian Hughes Aubrey, who is also leader of a very enthusiastic beginners' section. He started playing with Cwm Band as a boy, but left the district. He was a member of the Band of the Durham Light Infantry and has played at all major tattoos. He was also a member of one of the bands for the Queen's Coronation procession and has appeared on television.

Besides military music, Mr. Aubrey has played with dance bands, modern jazz groups, and sung in choirs, opera groups and close harmony groups. He studied the trumpet with Professor Paul Lerens, principal trumpet player of the Berlin Symphony Orchestra, and was a student of the Cardiff College of Music and Drama for three years. On leav-

ing college, Mr. Aubrey became a brass music teacher with Monmouthshire County Council.

For the major part of the band's life, the members were predominantly mineworkers and the conductors were miners. During later years the pattern has gradually changed and today the majority of the players are steelworkers or the children of steelworkers. Among the present members are an electrical engineer, an electrical apprentice, two crane drivers, a fitter/turner, a computer operator, a clerical worker and two labourers, all employed at Ebbw Vale Works.

## TRADITION SAFE

One thing is certain, these steelworkers can be expected to uphold the finest traditions of the band and to give of their considerable musical talents in establishing the band amongst the finest in the Principality.



Cwm Town Band.