

GAINSBOROUGH BRITANNIA BAND.

Gainsborough is a small market town situated on the east side of the River Trent, having a population of about 15,000. The majority of the working class are employed by Messrs. Marshall, Sons & Co., of the Britannia Ironworks, who find employment for upwards of 2,500 men in their business as engineers, millwrights, and machine makers.

The Gainsboro' Britannia Band was formed at the above works (as its name implies) in 1878, by Messrs. John F. Cook and J. Vickers. At first the band only numbered some 8 or 9 members, but as the Britannia firm increased in trade so did the band increase in strength, until it reached 15 in number, which was considered at that time a large band for Gainsboro'. As time went on, further additions were made, and in 1882 the band could muster 24 performers.

It was in this year that the band made their debut on the contest stage, at Droylsden, under the conductorship of Mr. James Crabtree, in whose hands the band had made great improvement. They failed, however, to score against the Yorkshire and Lancashire combinations, but nothing daunted, they settled down to steady practice, determined to, if possible, raise themselves to the title of a "prize" band.

With this worthy object in view, Mr. Hugh Whitham, of Cleckheaton, was engaged as conductor, and under the care of that gentleman, the band made remarkable progress. At the time Mr. Whitham took the band in hand they were playing on a lot of very indifferent instruments, and acting on the advice of their conductor, the bandsmen began to agitate for a new set. Accordingly a subscription list was opened, which was handsomely patronised by the numerous friends and supporters of the band, the result being that a set of Besson's Prototype Instruments were eventually obtained.

With the advent of these much-needed instruments a great improvement was noticeable, and by diligent practice and by paying strict attention to their talented conductor, who was ably seconded by their bandmaster, Mr. Thomas Fox, the band advanced with rapid strides. During Mr. Whitham's term of conductorship they won upwards of £100, which fact speaks volumes for the abilities of their diligent conductor, when we consider the raw material with which he commenced. Having so many engagements nearer home Mr. Whitham was at length compelled to give up his position, the result being that for a while the band gave up contesting.

After a brief period of inactivity, however, the band once more came forward, and with the help of Messrs. Marshall and the workmen (who are staunch supporters of the band) they engaged Mr. Samuel Schofield, of Middleton, near Manchester, as their teacher and bandmaster, a very promising young man, full of music, like most of the "Lankies." Under the baton of Mr. Schofield the band continued to make headway, winning many prizes, and fully maintaining their position as champion band of Lincolnshire. Some time ago Mr. Edwin Swift, was engaged as professional teacher, and as a natural result very marked progress has been made.

The present season has been the most successful in the whole history of the band. They have taken several first prizes this year, notably at Wisbech (where they beat Kettering Town), Blankney, and Handsworth Woodhouse. During their career they have taken 13 firsts, 9 seconds, 5 thirds, 5 fourths, and 2 fifth prizes, the total value exceeding

£250, a record which any band might well be proud to show.

The people of Gainsboro' are, it is needless to say, very proud of the Britannia Band, and their movements and transactions are followed eagerly by hundreds of their fellow-townsmen, who are perhaps as delighted as the bandsmen themselves when the "old band" wins a prize.

The Britannia Band is far and away the best in the county, and if it but continues to practise and persevere in the future as in the past the title of "Champion Band of the Midlands" appears no unreasonable ambition. Indeed at the present rate of progress we may ere long expect to see the band one of the finest in the kingdom and not afraid of meeting the Northern "cracks."

Before we conclude this brief history we must not forget to mention that all the members of the band are employed in Messrs. Marshall's works. One of the original founders of the band, Mr. John F. Cook, is still playing with them, while several others have been in the band for many years.

The following is a list of the members of the band:—

Soprano—R. Smith.	2nd Baritone—H. Cornock.
Solo Cornet—S. Schofield.	Solo Euphonium—F. Tankard.
Do. J. Hubbard.	
Do. A. Belcher.	2nd Euphonium—C. Cawson.
1st Flugel Horn—J. Cook.	
Repiano—E. Lämmer.	Solo Trombone—J. Mason.
2nd Cornet—E. Robinson.	2nd Trombone—W. Pycock.
Do. H. Jackson.	
3rd Cornet—J. Brewin.	Bass Trombone—E. Price.
Do. W. Lambert.	
Solo Horn—C. Creaser.	Eb Bass—H. Staniland.
1st Horn—H. Cockson.	Do. E. Blyth.
2nd Horn—E. Dawson.	BBb Bass—J. Milburn.
1st Baritone—T. Douse.	Do. T. Woodliff.

MR. ROBERT SMITH, SOPRANO.

Robert Smith was born at South Ferriby, Lincolnshire, in 1871. His musical career commenced at 11 years of age, he then playing 3rd cornet in the band of his native village. At the age of 12 he was playing 2nd cornet, and at 14 he was playing assistant solo. At 15 he removed to Beverley and joined the Beverley Old Band as solo cornet, which position he held for 2 years. He then became associated with 3rd East Yorkshire Regiment as solo cornet. In 1891 he returned to his native place to become bandmaster of the Band in which he first played. In 1892 he went to Gainsborough, joined the Works Band, and became their soprano. Upon the Eb cornet he has made wonderful progress, and is a most promising player.

MR. S. SCHOFIELD, BANDMASTER.

Samuel Schofield was born at Middleton, near Manchester, in 1862. He is a member of a musical family, and the youngest of six sons; his father and five brothers being members of the Old Middleton Band. Showing Mr. Schofield's natural musical gifts, it is only fair to state that not until he attained the age of seventeen, was he allowed to touch a cornet, and practise thereon, his widowed mother fearing that ill effects would follow the adoption of this instrument, and would end fatally, as our friend was then only in a weak state of health. However, once on the job, Sam made great progress, and in the first twelve months he was assistant solo-cornet in all contests, with the Middleton Band. Shortly after this he preferred the soprano, which he kept for three years. In 1884 he again returned to the Bb cornet, and played solo in Middleton Band in all its successes, including Belle Vue July Contest in 1889,