

FIFTY YEARS - AND NOT OUT

47th Glasgow Boys' Brigade Band

The pioneer brass band of The Boys' Brigade is the 47th Glasgow (Cathedral) Company's Band, which now numbers 28.

This company, under the captaincy of Mr. J. R. Garroway (later Major Garroway, V.D., of the 4th Lanarkshire Rifle Volunteers), was formed in the autumn of 1886 in the Lennox Halls, under the

year or two later when the present church halls were built to replace the former hall, which was demolished. The band still practises in the halls then built.

The first parade of the band was in the Spring of 1887, to the Glasgow Battalion Inspection in the Burnbank Drill Grounds, when it took part in the presentation of the colours to the Battalion.



shadow of the Cathedral. At the close of the year, Captain Garroway presented the company with band instruments, about thirty in number, including three clarinets, which were, however, later discarded.

The first bandmaster was Mr. William Burton, an ex-army bandmaster at that time in charge of the band of the 4th L.R.V. (now 8th Scottish Rifles), but he retired from this position after six years. Other professional gentlemen with military or naval experience were Mr. Howell, bandmaster of the 1st L.R.V., and Mr. Jarvis, bandmaster of the Glasgow Police Band. Mr. James Girvan, who was one of the original members of the company and of the band, was an officer of the company at this time, and took over the band, considerable progress being shown during his tenure of the position. Mr. Girvan took an active part in Glasgow Battalion affairs, and was the convener of the band's committee for several years, doing much to foster and improve the musical status of the Glasgow companies.

To revert to Mr. Burton's time, the training of raw boys, when the original band was formed, was no light task and, in addition, Mr. Burton had to write the scores himself, as the present day facilities of printed music suitable for young bands were then not available. With practice on only one night per week, satisfactory progress was made, notwithstanding the fact that the hall was inadequate. More suitable premises were obtained a

THEN (1886)

-and NOW



A boys' brass band was, at that time, something of a novelty in the West of Scotland, although there were a few connected with training schools. There were many requests for the services of the band; in fact, for the first few years more than could be accepted.

Apart from company and battalion duties, such as field inspections, leading the praise at church parades, hall demonstrations, all of which have been con-

tinuous, many outside engagements have been undertaken. It would probably not be of any great interest to enumerate the excursions, flower shows, etc., which the band has attended with success, but several of the more important will probably invite attention. It was not until 1901 that the band really became prominent, when the Corporation of Glasgow gave the band its first engagement to play in the public parks. Lieut. Girvan was the bandmaster, and it was indeed a feather in his cap and in that of the company to achieve this so early, so far as boys' bands were concerned. Let us state here that the work of the former bandmasters helped to lead to this first notable engagement. In the same year, 1901, the band had the honour in playing a notable part at the opening of the International Exhibition at Kelvingrove Park before Their Royal Highnesses The Prince and Princess of Wales. Since 1901, the band has performed in the Glasgow public parks almost every year.

After Mr. Girvan's retirement, Mr. Forbes Taylor, who was also an officer in the company, was appointed bandmaster, retiring in 1905, when Mr. Alex. Orr became conductor and the band made steady improvement during their stay. Mr. Orr had reluctantly to resign, having to go to California for business reasons. Mr. Taylor again took up the reins and was in charge of the band until his appoint-

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In 1912, Lieut. F. W. Wood, bandmaster of the Scots Guards, wrote to the Glasgow Corporation stating that he would like, on his next visit to Scotland, to hear what they would consider a good boys' band, and the 47th was mentioned to him. When the Scots Guards' Band

next visited Glasgow, Lieut. Wood got into touch with the 47th and, later, visited the church halls to hear the band. From the band's repertoire he chose several items, and it may show the standard of the band at this time, when he made comment particularly on the playing of "The Blue Danube" Waltz and the selections, "Zampa" and "Lohengrin." Later, Lieut. Wood (when with his band at the Toronto Exhibition) sent music for the 47th.

From the first captain of the 47th, every officer commanding has been enthusiastic in band work.

The honour of the first Boys' Brigade brass band to broadcast also belongs to the 47th. The bandmaster was Captain Taylor. The band also had a second broadcast.

Although not brass band news, the fact that the 47th won the Lord Leverhulme Trophy for bugle bands—open to junior bands of Great Britain—may be of interest. And it may be worth while relating how it happened. The company had three or four bugles, used occasionally for bugle and brass march purposes, and Mr. Alex. Ogilvie (assistant bandmaster, an ex-boy of the band and a tremendous enthusiast), who was himself an excellent bugler, thought we might purchase a few bugles and enter the competition. We did!

There have been eleven bandmasters of the 47th, viz. :—

- Mr. Burton—6 years.
- Mr. Howell—2 years.
- Mr. Jarvis—3 years.
- Mr. Girvan—5 years.
- Mr. Taylor—13 years.
- Mr. Orr—2 years.
- Mr. A. McKinnon—1 year.
- Mr. Ogilvie—1 year.
- Mr. N. Kerr—2 years.
- Mr. J. Duncan—2 years.
- Mr. W. Blench—1 year
- and
- Mr. R. Tennant—11 years (present bandmaster).

We may be pardoned for moralising, but one may ask how this band has kept going the whole time and through the years of the Great War. Whole hearted enthusiasm, not only from the boys themselves, but from everyone connected with the company, and with the unanimous help and sympathy of the Church behind it. That is how it has kept going!

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