

his wife and daughter were living alone in the Honeydon part of Eaton Socon off the Great North Road. She also continued to describe herself as a farmer.

Notes

* Hugh Gault is an independent writer and historian, His books include the first biography of Kingsley Wood, the second and concluding part of which was published in May 2017. Further details at www.grettonbooks.co.uk He has written many historical articles for a variety of publications and recently co-edited an issue of *The Historian* on Asa Briggs. See <https://www.history.org.uk/hanews/news/3337/the-historian-133-out-now> (the digital version).

1. <https://wordsonstone.wordpress.com/2016/12/31/veil-of-death/> – accessed 3 July 2017.
2. Eatons Community Association, *Eatons People and Places, Part 5: Cross Hall – Farmers, Lemonade and Golfers, 1799–2006* (St Neots, 2006), pp 43–44.
3. Probate, 20 August 1880.
4. Both the Cross Hall Farm House and Paxton Hall (East) illustrations come from a sales brochure when the Paxton Hall Estate was sold in 1920. My thanks to Cambridge University Library, Maps Room, for supplying them.
5. David A Broad, *The History of Little Paxton* (Little Paxton: Broad, 2006), pp 207–241. Also, Paxton Hall Estate sales brochure, 1 July 1920. Lot 3 of 27 was Cross Hall Farm comprising 159 acres of market garden, arable and pasture land, a five-bed farmhouse, farm buildings and two two-bed cottages.
6. *The Times*, 9 November 1840, p 3.
7. Ernest Perceval (1807–1896), the youngest of the 12 children of the assassinated Prime Minister Spencer Perceval, had also been in the 15th Hussars, retiring a year after Cardigan joined them when already his ‘regime was arousing . . . a good deal of discontent’. Hugh Gault, *Living History: A Family’s 19th Century* (Cambridge: Gretton Books, 2010), pp 256–261.
8. *The Times*, 17, 26 and 29 September; 6 and 22 October 1840.
9. *Ibid*, 23 October–12 November 1840.
10. *Ibid*, 3 November 1840.
11. Broad, *op cit*, pp 293–294.
12. *Walford’s County Families of the United Kingdom*, 40th annual publication (London: Chatto and Windus, 1900), p 417. The Marquis sat in the House of Lords as Baron Meldrum.
13. E J T Collins (Ed), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, vol VII (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p 1794.
14. P J Perry, ‘Where was the “great agricultural depression”? A geography of agricultural bankruptcy in late Victorian England and Wales’ (1972) 20 *Agricultural History Review*, pp 33–45 (p 36).
15. Collins, *op cit*, p 1853.
16. Perry, *op cit*, p 36.

Hugh Gault*

Luton Red Cross Band

In the article on Wrest Park, above, there were two mentions of The Luton Red Cross Band as providing the musical entertainment for events there. From previous reading I happened to know a little about this illustrious band which was founded in 1883 by six members from the Ashton Road Mission Band, because the mission band was not allowed to take part in competitions.

By the early 1900s the band had built up an excellent reputation and in 1908 they were the first brass band to compete abroad, at the Brussels Exhibition; they were also the first brass band to broadcast ‘live’ on radio from Alexandra Palace and the first brass band to play in a film: ‘Up for the Cup’ in 1929.

In 1910, the band's professional conductor was William Halliwell who also conducted other bands in the north of England, including the famous Wingates Temperance and Fodens Motor Works. On his recommendation Fred Mortimer, from Hebden Bridge in Yorkshire, was appointed bandmaster at Luton and in 1911, the entire Mortimer family came to Talbot Road and Fred found work in the local hat industry. The band had difficulty in paying the bandmaster, but fortunately Lady Zia Wernher of Luton Hoo became their patron and Fred was paid £2 a week. Fred's son, Harry (see below), with his brothers Alex and Rex, began to play in the junior band, but quickly moved to the senior band – Harry ultimately becoming principal cornet.

The *Luton News* (31 May 1917) said 'Luton has always been proud of its Red Cross Band', in that week it printed pictures of 20 bandsmen who had joined the Army. The newspaper featured the Army career of Lance-Corporal F W V Scott of the Royal Irish Rifles who joined the Luton Territorials in 1910 as a bandsman and was awarded the silver cup for being the smartest recruit. In 1914 he was mobilised with the 1/5th Bedfords and went to Gallipoli as a stretcher bearer, and into the 'big smash' when so many of the Bedfords were casualties. Invalided home with dysentery and jaundice, he was kept in hospital in England and discharged in 1916, starting work at hat manufacturers Carruthers Bros in King Street. After a short time his health improved so much that he re-enlisted. He joined at the same time and in the same regiment as band conductor Fred Mortimer and three others of the Red Cross Band and served in France.

Sadly, two days after publication of the band members' photos, Sergeant Alfred Mullett (Beds Regiment in France), of 142 Castle Street, Luton (who played the tenor horn), was killed in action as the result of a shell striking the parapet of a trench he was occupying with his Lewis gun team.

In those days the National Brass Band Championships were held at Crystal Palace (they had started in 1900, but were suspended during the war and reinstated in 1920). In 1923 the Luton band became National Champions of Great Britain, winning the '1000 Guinea Trophy' beating some of the best bands in the country – to date they are the only southern band ever to achieve that distinction. However, Ted Carter celebrated the event in an unusual manner because Fred Mortimer had asked him to switch to the flugelhorn for the competition. Ted vowed that, should Luton win, he would throw 'this damn coffee-pot' under the first train he saw. Which he did!

The Mortimers moved back north in 1924/1925, to join the Fodens Motor Works Band at Sandbach in Cheshire where they were to enjoy even greater success. When the Mortimers left Luton Ted Carter, Ernie Davis (a product of the junior band) and Albert Coupe led the band.

In the 1960s BBC radio programme 'Challenging Brass', each band performed a short programme which was broadcast and judged by qualified adjudicators. In

1965 Luton lost in the semi-final to Camborne Town. After the final, the four semi-finalists (Rushden, Camborne, Hanwell and Luton) joined together for a 'massed bands' concert.

On 22 April 1972 the band won the Championship section of the W D & H O Wills Brass Band Championships. These Championships ended in 1973 so the band were allowed to keep the trophy.

When in 1972 double-bass player Fred Hargreaves died he left about £10,000, and gave approximately £500 to his family and the rest to a trust fund for the band which provided them with a small income in hard times.

In 1978 on soprano cornet Eric Capron became solo champion of Great Britain. During the 1970s and 80s the band continued to make radio broadcasts and appeared on local television. They made a number of recordings and filmed a promotional video for London's Trocadero which was shown in MGM cinemas.

Their last win at contests was at the 1997 Aylesbury Contest when they won the 'Open' section playing 'Trittico' by James Curnow, conducted by Phillip Littlemore.

In May 2014 they held a reunion concert for the Luton Band and a celebration concert to commemorate the momentous achievements of the Luton Red Cross Band and the 90th anniversary of winning the National Brass Band Championship on 29 September 1923. It is not clear when 'Red Cross' was dropped from the band's title or what was the historic connection with the Red Cross.

Harry Mortimer

Harry Mortimer became one of the greatest celebrities of the brass band movement. In later years he was also associated with the famous Luton Girls' Choir which arose from his lifetime friendship with its founder Arthur E Davies, a boy soprano and pianist. As young men they performed as a duo at the Luton Salvation Army Citadel. During the war years and after, Harry was brass and military band adviser to the BBC. At the 150th British Open Championships in 2002 at Symphony Hall in Birmingham tribute was paid to Harry on the centenary of his birth.

As a cornet player in the National Championships, Harry Mortimer made his playing debut in 1913 at the age of 11. With the Luton Red Cross Band he won four prizes: in 1920, 4th; 1921, 6th; 1922, 2nd; 1923, 1st. As mentioned above, 1923 was, and remains, the only time a southern band has won the National Championships of Great Britain. While living in Luton Harry worked for the Great Northern Railway and Vauxhall Motors but music always came first.

When he moved to the Fodens Band on 29 December 1924 Harry was not yet 23. With Fodens he gained 10 more prizes at the Nationals between 1925 and 1938 – in the years 1932 to 1938 taking first place.

As a conductor he had an amazing record at the British Open, National Championships and the Regional Qualifying Contests with various bands from 1945 to 1957, achieving 33 first places in all the Contests, and was the Guest Conductor at

the Grand Festival Concert following the National Championships in 1949–1955 and 1981.

He made 97 records, 21 as a soloist. As a cornet soloist he appeared at the Grand Festival Concerts in 1924, 1930, 1931 as well as a Command Performance at Windsor Castle for the King and his family in 1938. He formed the 'All Star Concert Band' in 1951 and conducted them on a total of 17 78 rpm and 16 45 rpm records followed by his 'Men O' Brass' whom he conducted on 28 LPs between 1958 and 1978. He organised the brass band movement's tribute the Queen for her Silver Jubilee in 1977 with a Massed Band Concert at the Royal Albert Hall. He organised the British Open Championships from 1976 to 1991 and when he died he had been awarded a Doctorate, CBE, Hon D Lit and was a FRNCM.

Harry Mortimer was born on 10 April 1902 and died on 23 January 1992. He was 89 years old.

My father and uncle were heavily involved in brass bands, my father as principal trombone and my uncle as a conductor. When I was young I heard a lot about Harry Mortimer and he was always spoken of with the greatest respect and almost with reverence. I saw him once on TV at a concert as a very old man listening to a young cornet soloist playing beautifully with the tears streaming down his face.

Harry Mortimer's life shows that with exceptional talent one can rise from humble beginnings to great heights. Harry's brothers Rex and Alex both became musical directors and led successful bands.

References

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Ted Martin

Publication Received

Bedfordshire Local History Magazine, October 2017 ['September' on back cover], No 100, Bedford Architectural, Archaeological and Local History Society. This issue contains articles by Stuart Antrobus on 'Some Significant Women with Bedford Connections'; Bob Ricketts on 'Consuming passions – Shops and Shopping in Georgian Bedford (1714–1837)'; Stuart Antrobus on 'Holidays at Home in Bedford during the Second World War'; and Stuart Antrobus again on 'Bedford's Commemorative Plaques'. Bob Ricketts reviews *Bedfordshire Archaeology*, Vol 27; *Newnham: a Roman bath house and estate centre east of Bedford*; and Part 2 of Richard Morgan's article on Dr George Witt which appeared in this publication in Spring 2017. There are also items on the Bedford Architectural, Archaeological and Local History Society and the Royal Flying Corps Home Defence Squadron 75 at Goldington. The magazine costs £3.50 and is available from the Eagle Bookshop, 103 Castle Road, Bedford MK40 3QP.