

# The Story of Barnard Castle Brass Band



## INTRODUCTION

Barnard Castle is a market town in Teesdale County Durham with a population of about 5,000. The town has a very distinct identity of its own and has a long and proud association with its brass band.

This article is an attempt to record the origins and history of the band and to preserve this valuable part of the cultural heritage of the area.

Brass bands did not start to appear until around the 1830's. What public music that was about before that in the 18th Century came in the following limited areas.....

There was the folk music of the "common people" which has come down to us through the oral tradition (but was little reported on at the time as being "unimportant") .

There was music that was the preserve of the wealthy. There are records of Lord Barnard of nearby Rabb Castle employing a cellist and composer called John Garth to tutor his daughters in the 1740s and also sponsoring some public concerts in Durham. This would be classical music aping the concerts that were popular in "society " in London at the time.(1)

There was always Church music and there are plenty of records of Choir Masters and "singing men" being employed at the big Cathedral at Durham but such posts are unlikely to have existed in smaller towns such as Barnard Castle except on an amateur basis.

Most towns of any size continued to employ "Waits". These men (always) were paid a retainer to be available to play at public functions, usually to add gravitas to civic events. Waits were often required to play to mark the hours and to mark the time for curfew. The requirement on towns to employ waits was abolished by act of Parliament in 1835. A big town like Durham had about 5 waits so it is unlikely that there were more than a couple in Barnard Castle although the town is recorded as employing waits (2). Waits might play a shawm (a reed instrument) or perhaps a sackbut (trombone) or a trumpet (without valves).

In the early 19th Century a number of factors combined together to produce a fertile environment for the growth of Brass Bands.

Industrialisation with the growth of towns and cities with people employed in factories was one.

Huge improvements in manufacturing processes led to instruments being mass produced and so cheaper and more available to ordinary people. The introduction of valved instruments was a big step forwards. Manufacturers like Adolphe Sax in Belgium made a big impact selling a suite of instruments that all had the same fingering so that one player could be moved in the band to play any instrument. Brass instruments were very popular as they were played by the three strongest fingers on the right hand so that they were relatively easy to learn and accessible to all.

The title of earliest brass band in Britain is claimed by Stalybridge Old Band (1809) but most bands emerged in the 1860s or later. Some difficulties arise when deciding when a band started as often an earlier wind band, or a mixed string and wind band “morphed” into a brass band as these became popular. Alternatively a Town band of one sort lapsed and a new one was created. Some of the personnel from the old band might well have carried on into the new one.

It seems clear that the first band of significance in Barnard Castle was the Durham Militia band. The militia were local auxiliary forces brought about because of a perceived threat of invasion. The first wave of Militias were introduced by an act of Parliament in 1745 at the time of the Jacobite rebellions in Scotland and the later strain on the established army with the seven years war and a perceived threat of invasion from the Continent. It was the responsibility of the Lord Lieutenant of each county to maintain a military force. Men could be conscripted by a ballot but the wealthy could avoid this on payment of a £10 fee. The local militia (military reserves) of the time relied on a brass band partly for recruiting purposes. The Durham Militia was under the control of Henry Vane the 2nd Earl of Darlington, and as he lived at Raby Castle it seemed natural to base the militia in Barnard Castle a few miles away. The barracks were at Deerbolt on the site which is now a Young Offender’s Institution. It was 1759 before the Durham Militia were formed. The rules governing Militia meant that they could only be used in England and Wales as a support for the regular army. The connection with Raby Castle has continued right up to the present day as the current Lord Barnard is the Band President today.



Henry Vane 2nd Earl of Darlington

It is noteworthy that the first musical Director of the Militia band was one William Herschel who was a polymath man of many talents and as well as being an organist and composer went on to become Astronomer Royal discovering Uranus amongst other things. Herschel’s father was in the Hannoverian Military Band and Herschel emigrated to Britain as a place of safety. Herschel was in charge of the band between 1760 and 1761 and was an expert on the “hautboy” a sort of outdoor version of the oboe- this was not a brass band but a wind band or military band..



William Herschel,

## The Early Years up to 1900

The earliest record of a "Town Band" in Barnard Castle dates from 1815. However this information is gleaned from a newspaper article published in 1862 and there must be some doubt as to its accuracy. It appears that members of a Militia band formed the Barnard Castle Amateur band when the militia band was disbanded. Care should be taken with identifying what sort of band we are talking about and it is clear from the inventory of the Durham Records Office that it was common to use the terms "Barnard Castle Band" as a shorthand for what was really the Militia Band based in Barnard Castle. There is no written record of a band playing after that until another Militia Band in 1839 (3) at the opening ceremony at the Whorlton Bridge. However as there is no indication of the instrumentation we can't be certain that this was a brass band either. There is a splendid account in the Teesdale Mercury of August 1855 of a concert by a "Militia Band" from Barnard Castle. We may suppose that players who learned their craft in the military setting might have then gone on to play in the civilian band when it was set up. The account of the 1855 concert is such a vivid account it is worth reproducing it in full.

### *August - 22 - 1855*

**FETE AT BARNINGHAM.**—On Wednesday evening last, the 15th inst.

A display of Fireworks took place on the lawn in front of Barningham Hall, the seat of Mark Milbank, Esq., in honour of the fete day of the Emperor Napoleon. A large concourse of the inhabitants of Barningham, Newsham and the adjoining villages, assembled in front of the Hall, and at 9 o'clock the exhibition commenced, under the direction of Henry and Sussex Milbank, Esqs. Brilliant rockets, ending in a shower of stars (or what the juveniles denominated "fiery fish,") wheels, and other choice products of the pyrotechnist's art, were successively ignited, amid the "oh's" and "ee's" of the children, and the huzzas of the older spectators.

The militia band from Barnard Castle, were stationed on the lawn, and awoke the echoes with their lively tunes. While all were earnestly watching the ascent of some rockets, imagining themselves in perfect security from the sparks and fizzing's of the combustibles, a series of shrieks and laughs, mingled with cracks and rap-rappings, discovered the fact that their safety was only fancied, and that indeed some fun-loving wight(*sic*) had distributed a bountiful supply of "crackers," and other old-women frightening contrivances, among the crowd. No harm ensued from the trick, beyond the singeing of the hem of a young female's gown, and the total destruction of the postman's pocket, into which a "cracker" unfortunately found its way.

The bills announced that all "Rooshians" found on the premises would be immediately ejected, but we are happy to state that no disciple of Gladstone or Cobden appeared, at least we may judge so from the hearty cheers that resounded far and near when a worthy Newsham butcher

proposed three cheers for "the Emperor Napoleon!" In fact, the anti-Russian spirit so far pervaded the assembly, that sundry jocular remarks were elicited by the supposed Russian antipathy to razors displayed by several of the gentlemen present.

Should the patriotism of Englishmen slacken, and should they tire of the war, the malcontents will certainly not be found among those who assembled in Barningham Park on Napoleon's fete day.

Another letter in the Teesdale Mercury in 1856 suggests that there had been a band in the town which had gone defunct and the writer appeals for the band to be reformed.

### **August – 11 - 1856**

*To the Editor of the Teesdale Mercury.*

Sir, — In your last week's paper you observe very justly that Barnard Castle formerly boasted of one of the best amateur bands in the county, and that now it is impossible to get above half a dozen performers. The reason is obvious. For many years the band was liberally supported by the landed gentry of the neighbourhood, which support has since been withdrawn. At that time the instruments were all good, and the music new, and thus the band continued for a length of time; but instruments will wear out, and music will get old, and for a set of working men to supply themselves both with instruments and music was out of the question, more especially as their services were so seldom required. Thus the Barnard Castle band gradually declined, and on the formation of a band for the South Durham Militia, a split took place amongst the members, and the result was that five of the Middleton band were engaged during the training, and when the regiment was embodied for permanent duty a regular band was organised, which on the disembodiment of the Militia was disbanded —thus Barnard Castle was left without a band.. I perfectly agree with you that there is no want of musical talent in the town, nor have I any doubt that a good band could be formed in a short time, provided a few spirited individuals would supply the necessary funds for the purchase of instruments. I have seen all the members of the old band (now in the town) and those belonging to the South Durham Militia also, all of whom would be happy to commence practice again if they had the necessary instrument to enable them to do so, and I think if a committee was formed to collect subscriptions, it might be managed, as it certainly

is a disgrace to a town like Barnard Castle to be without a band, whilst almost every pit village in the county supports one.

Trusting some of our wealthy neighbours will take the matter into consideration,

I am Sir, your obedient servant, WILLIAM SMITH

The writer appears to have been successful as by the December of the same year a band has been formed and was playing in a concert at Raby Castle.

#### **BARNARD CASTLE BAND.**

The members of this Band have been practising assiduously during the past few weeks, under the able leadership of Mr Brandon. The services of the Band have been engaged for the Christmas Festivities at Raby Castle, but with the laudable desire of giving the townspeople a treat, they will perform a selection of popular music in the market place, Barnard Castle, on Friday next, the 26th

inst. (weather permitting), commencing at half past 1 o'clock p.m.

We have been favoured with the following programme.

Part 1.

March ... "Standard Bearer" ... Brandon

Overture ... "Barbieri" ... Rossini

Quadrille ... "Como" ... D'Albert

Polka ... "The Fairy" ... Brandon

Selection ... "Il Travatore" ... Verdi

An interval of 10 minutes.

Part 2.

Waltz ... "Pride of the North"... Brandon

Selection ... "Anna Bolena" ... Donizetti

Galop ... "Raby Hunt" ... Brandon

Quadrille ... "Bonnie Dundee" ... D'Albert

Valse ... "La Traviata" ... Montagne

Finale ... "God Save the Queen".

T. BRANDON, Bandmaster.

Bands arose in a number of different ways. It was common to have a “works band” set up by a colliery or a manufacturer as a public relations exercise. Sometimes a wealthy philanthropist would sponsor a band as a way for the working classes to “better themselves”. The other way was by public subscription. Instrument manufacturers were quick to offer “hire purchase” scheme so that if bands could raise an initial deposit the balance could be paid off over time. It seems likely that this was the model used in Barnard Castle.

Further exchanges in the “Mercury” show a subscriber asking for a concert with a reply from the band in the following weeks issue.

Note that the 1857 entry is the first time the band is referred to as a “Brass Band”.

### **MAY – 6 - 1857**

Barnard Castle Brass Band — *A Subscriber to the Band is anxious to know when they intend to favour the Public with a specimen of their talent? The days are now lengthening, and a little music of an evening, either ta the street, or any other public place, would have an enlivening effect, and no doubt be duly appreciated.*

### **MAY – 13 - 1857**

Barnard Castle Brass Band.— We are authorized to state, in reply to "A Subscriber," that the Band, for several months, have been industriously practising, with a view to the open- air performances alluded to; but the junior members, with characteristic modesty, are desirous of being fully competent, before making a public demonstration.

On the part of the Band, however, we venture to promise that, some fine evening, shortly, their harmonious strains will be heard in the Market Place. Until then, doubtless, “A Subscriber” will reserve his criticisms.

*Although our columns are open for the expression of opinion, we do not necessarily feel bound to adopt the views of our correspondents.*

Anonymous communications can on no account receive attention. Every contribution must be authenticated (in confidence) with the name of the writer.

By 1858 the band was well enough established to be hosting a band competition in the town attended by 3000 people!

### **September – 1 - 1858**

THE BAND CONTEST took place in the Castle Garth.

Six Bands competed, according to the following Programme, the order of precedence being determined by lot :

Barnard Castle—Leader, Mr T. Brandon.

Selection - - Anna Bolena - - Donizetti

Selection - - Il Trovatore - - Verdi

Darlington—Leader, Mr H. Hoggett.

Selection - - 12th Mass - - Mozart

Selection II Trovatore - - Verdi

Middlesbro' Tees Ironworks—Leader, Mr O.H. Fidler.

Selection - - Operatic

Valse - - First Love - - Farmer

New Shildon Sax Horn—leader, Mr E. De Lacy.

Chorus - - Hallelujah - - Handel

Selection - - Il Trovatore - - Verdi

New Shildon Philharmonic—Leader, Mr R.O. Bowran.

Selection - - La Sonnambula - - Bellini

Chorus - - The Heavens are telling

Staindrop—Leader, Mr T. Woods

Selection - - La Sonnambula

Selection - - Il Trovatore - - Verdi

Some little delay arose at the commencement, in consequence of two players in one of the New Shildon bands being objected to, on account of their belonging to the Wear Yacht Club Band. All was at length arranged, and the Barnard Castle Band was the first to mount the platform. Their performance elicited much applause, which was freely accorded to the succeeding bands.

After the performance of one piece each, the Bands united—numbering more than 100 performers—and played "Rule Britannia" with grand effect. At the termination of the contest the bands again joined, and performed the "National Anthem." The programme was completed at 6 o'clock, and the prizes, amounting in the whole to 20 guineas, were distributed as follow :— 1st, Darlington; 2nd, New Shildon Sax Horn; 3rd, Barnard Castle; 4th, Middlesbro' Tees Ironworks.

The Judges were H. Stoetel, Esq., Bandmaster, 16th Lancers, Edinburgh; and W. M. Foster, Esq., Bandmaster, 9th Infantry, Sunderland.

Their decisions gave the most perfect satisfaction. From the beginning, it was evident that the chief prize would be deservedly allotted to the

Darlington Band; but the other bands appeared more equally matched, and, in the opinion of competent authorities, had the Staindrop Band (which possesses an excellent leader in Mr Woods) been as careful in the performance of their second piece as in their first, one of the prizes would certainly have been awarded to them. We may remark, also, that the Barnard Castle Band has been but a few weeks in training, and several of the musicians are inexperienced; their success, therefore, in obtaining a prize, is highly creditable to Mr Brandon, their leader. Nearly 3000 persons were present at the contest, including the principal families of the town and neighbourhood. Among the visitors, we observed W.J.S. Morritt, Esq., of Rokeby Park; Henry Pease, Esq., M.P., Darlington.

When all was concluded, the bands played to the railway station. The streets were crowded, and the effect of the music was novel and delightful. In addition to the other attractions of the day, the romantic grounds of Rokeby were thrown open to the public.

The date of 1860 has for many years been held to be the foundation of the Barnard Castle Band. Indeed the band logo carries that date and it is displayed on banners. The evidence for this appears to be that there was an appeal for a public subscription to buy new instruments at this time. It now appears that this may just have been a reincarnation of a pre existing band. We have established that the band was referred to as a "Brass Band" in 1857 and it does seem that the band may have existed in some form a little before this. Sometime around 1857 would seem likely and in keeping with what was happening in towns and villages round about. It is worth noting that over the county boundary into what was then Westmorland the band in the town of Kirkby Stephen was established in 1857 indicating that there was a trend in the area . **EVIDENCE FOR THIS? 1860 date????**

### **April - 16 - 1862**

Barnard Castle, for a great number of years, has been in possession of a good Band. That the inhabitants are not deficient in musical taste, is evident from the success achieved by the Sacred Harmonic Society. This Society, with Mr W. Raper for conductor and manager, has attained a position of which the town may justly be proud. At the late Concerts of the Sacred Harmonic Society it would be perceived that the principal parts were taken by the members themselves, — and taken with a degree of musical skill rarely excelled. We have heard it remarked, by those who have had ample opportunity of verifying their judgment that the choruses at our local Oratorios are given with a power and expression, infinitely beyond what might have been anticipated from a somewhat secluded provincial district This, in passing; and now to come more immediately to our subject.

The origin of the Barnard Castle Band may be traced back to the establishment of the Durham Militia, nearly a hundred years ago

Henry, Earl of Darlington, Colonel of the regiment, in his enlightened efforts to promote the efficiency of the force under his command, did not forget the important essential—then too much neglected—of a good band of music. He engaged the first musical talent of the day, both of home and foreign extraction, and thus it was that the "Durham Militia Band" acquired a high character in the service. It is a curious fact, and may be unknown to many of our readers, that Sir William Herschel, the great astronomer (a Hanoverian by birth), commenced his career in England as a musician in the Band of the Durham Militia. Barnard Castle was - as it still is - the headquarters of the Militia; and

was imbued with a spirit so thoroughly military, that, at the end of the last century, it furnished one-fourth of the entire strength of the regiment. By degrees the Band came to be composed chiefly of Barnard Castle men, and, under the leadership of the Messrs Ferrier, it lost none of its well-earned distinction. After the Peace of 1815, the Militia was disbanded, and the musicians formed themselves into an association known as the Barnard Castle Amateur Band.

Those who remember the Barnard Castle Band of twenty or more years ago, will recollect the exquisite manner in which the Scottish airs, then so popular in the North, were rendered. The Band, on summer nights, was accustomed to perform out of doors, and it is impossible to describe the sensations excited by the fine old tunes of "Scots wha ha'," or the "Yellow haired Laddie," as the sweet strains arose upon the evening breeze, and were carried away, till the last faint echoes were lost in the recesses of the hills. A Scottish gentleman, then resident in Barnard Castle, and himself a gifted musician, has assured us that, out of Scotland, he has never heard the airs of his native country played with the same pathos and genuine feeling, as by the Barnard Castle Amateur Band.

On the resignation of Mr H. Ferrier, a few years ago, Mr Brandon became the leader of the Band. Mr Brandon is living in Barnard Castle, and it would ill become us to pronounce too high a eulogy upon him. We may, however, in common fairness, state that, as instrumentalist, vocalist, and composer, he is equally distinguished, and several of his pieces have attained more than a local reputation. On one or two nights in each week, during the winter months, the dulcet music of the Band may have been heard proceeding from the practice-room in the Town Hall; and we believe we are correct in saying that the Band has now a programme, which, when heard in the open air, will confirm the most favourable opinion that has been formed of the proficiency of the musicians.

The band next make the press couple of years later in 1864 playing at Barningham with the Barningham band.

Thereafter there is a gap in the record for 10 years until 1874 when it is clear that brass bands were as important at Christmas then, as they are today.

### **DECEMBER – 23 - 1874**

BARNARD CASTLE

Always, as Christmas approaches, I am, reminded of the old Barnard Castle Amateur Band, which flourished some twenty-five years ago. This Band was composed of excellent musicians, and at Christmas time, especially, their joyful strains were often heard in public. On each recurring Christmas Eve they performed in the streets, and, after playing "Sound the loud timbrel," "Life's a bumper," and similar compositions, they would strike into the airs of "Auld Lang Syne," "Roy's Wife," "The Yellow haired Laddie." or others of a like nature. Scottish airs they rendered exquisitely, and a venerable Scottish gentleman of my acquaintance, who lived for a number of years on the banks of the Tees, was accustomed to say that nowhere, out of his native country, had he heard the tunes of Scotland so well given as by the Barnard Castle Amateur Band. He accounted for this through the fact that this Band was founded upon the old Durham Militia Band; and the Militia, in the early part of the century, having for several years been quartered in Scotland, the Band had there acquired their proficiency in Scottish music, which the instruction of the same accomplished bandmasters (the late Messrs James and Henry Ferrier) had imparted to their successors. Be this as it may, the Barnard Castle Amateur Band were but rarely surpassed in their time: and their Christmas music is a delightful remembrance.

The band appears to have undergone one of those periodic dips in fortune in the late 1870,s. It would appear from newspaper articles of 1877 that the residents of Barnard Castle were being serenaded by the Militia Band rather than the civilian band. (The Militia had been reintroduced in 1852 whilst the regular army was engaged overseas)So it is that in 1882 there is yet another appeal in the local press to establish a new brass band.

### **APRIL – 5 - 1882**

It is narrated of an old Scottish lady that, on her first hearing the overture of an opera, she exclaimed that it was "As wearisome as the band of Nebuchadnezzar!" and no doubt, to her, the instruments might appear to be composed of "sackbuts, dulcimers," Etc. Etc. and the music possess none of the beauty for which the airs of her own country are so justly celebrated. The reproach of being like the band referred to by the old lady, could not, however, have been applied to the Barnard Castle Amateur Band (for instance), as it existed forty or fifty years ago, and whose performance of Scottish music obtained the approval of every North Briton who had the privilege of hearing it. The late Mr George Knox, schoolmaster (himself a musician of no mean attainments) used to say that, out of Scotland, he never heard the airs of his native country so well rendered as they were by the Barnard Castle Amateur Band. In explanation of this, we may remark that the band alluded to was founded upon the band of the old Durham Militia, and that regiment having been quartered for many years north of the Tweed, the band had there acquired its love for Scottish music, which it never relinquished, and which, under the excellent leadership of the late Messrs James and Henry Ferrier, was carried to such perfection.

Who that has ever heard the Amateur Band play "The Yellow-haired Laddie," "Roy's Wife," "Auld Robin Gray," and a score of similar airs, could forget the exquisite style in which they were rendered?—and who can wonder that Mr Knox was so filled with delight when he thus heard the popular airs of Scotland so well played in England? We are induced to make these observations through the fact that a circular has been forwarded to us, announcing that a Brass Band is about to be established at Barnard Castle, in succession to the Amateur and other Bands of the town that, one after another, have been broken up. One reason why the new Band is the more urgently required is the probability of the Militia having shortly to remove altogether from Barnard Castle to fresh headquarters, and the music of its band being thus lost to the town's-people. We believe that there is as much musical talent now in the town as ever there was (witness the Sacred Harmonic Society), and we are confident that funds will be forthcoming in aid of the proposed Brass Band. We are informed that several influential gentlemen of the town and neighbourhood have already promised their patronage, and we hope that the committee, thus encouraged, will not slacken in their efforts until the Band is brought into an efficient state, and has made its first public appearance.

A couple of newspaper articles in 1883 show that these efforts have borne fruit and the band is once again playing in public.

### **MARCH – 28 -1883**

The Barnard Castle Subscription Band played a selection of music, very tastefully, in the Market-place, on Monday afternoon.

### **OCTOBER – 10 - 1883**

The Barnard Castle Amateur Band (under the conductorship of Mr R. T. Woodhams, bandmaster) will play the following programme, in Galgate, to-morrow (Thursday) evening, commencing at 7 o'clock :—  
March ... "Wandering Refugee" ... S. Jones  
Selection ... Airs from "Iolanthe" ... Sullivan  
Valse ... "Dream Faces" ... Meisler  
Selection ... Airs from "Cloches de Corneville" ... Godfrey

Polka ... "Annie" ... R. T. Woodhams  
Schottische ... "Sweethearts" ... Round  
Select Airs ... "Patience" ... D'Albert  
God Save the Queen.

On Saturday afternoon, in the Market Place, the band will play the subjoined programme, commencing at 2.30 :—  
March ... "The Chancellor," from "Iolanthe," ... W. W. Woodhams  
Valse ... "Some Day" ... Lamethe  
Glee ... "Sailor's Welcome" ... Bishop  
Quadrille ... "Pirates of Penzance" ... D'Albert.  
Galop ... "Zasel" ... Duot  
Polka ... "Love Bird" ... ...Wright  
God Save the Queen.

By 1885 the band looks busy in 1885 but one notes that there is a change of leadership from Mr Nixon to Mr Grieve. There is no doubt that bands are more long lasting if they have a consistent and inspirational leadership over time.

The pattern reminds one of the story of a man who had a spade that he claimed to have had for 50 years. He had changed the shaft a couple of times and the blade once or twice but "it was the same spade". Thus it is with bands. It is clear that there has not been one unbroken lifespan of Barnard Castle band, rather a series of reincarnations!

### ***JANUARY – 28 - 1885***

The Barnard Castle Subscription Band, under the leadership of Mr F Nixon (Bandmaster) will play, this day (Wednesday), in the Market-place, the following programme, commencing at 7 o'clock p.m. :-

Slow march ... "Reception" ... Leconte  
Lancers Quadrille ... "Merry Songs" ... Newton  
Selection ... "Bonny Scotland" ... Metcalfe  
Waltz ... "Queenie" ... Smith  
Polka ... "Loving Hearts" ... Leaman  
Mazurka ... "Coquette" ... Linton

### ***FEBRUARY – 25 - 1885***

Barnard Castle Subscription Band. - This (Wednesday) evening, at 7 o'clock, the above band, under the conductorship of Mr F. Nixon (Bandmaster) will play the following programme in the Market Place :-

March ... "Steadfast and True" ... Scholes  
Quadrille ... "Majestic" ... Linton  
Fantasia ... "Bonnie Scotland" ... Metcalfe  
Waltz ... "See Saw" ... vocal ... Crowe  
Schottische ... "Sweet Hope" ... Smith  
Polka ... "Trip, Trip," ... Linton

### ***JUNE - 17 - 1885***

The Barnard Castle Subscription Band will play in the Market-place, this (Wednesday) evening, under the leadership of Mr A. Grieve, bandmaster, the following programme :-

March ... "Always Ready" ... E. Newton  
Selection ... "Bonnie Scotland" ... H. G. Metcalfe  
Valse ... "Sooner or Later" ... Josef Meissler  
Quadrille ... "Jolly Girls" ... T. Dawson  
Fantasia ... "Sacred Lyre" ... B. Newton  
Polka ... "Express" ... H. Round  
Selection ... "Pride of Ireland" ... H. Round  
March ... "Soldiers Last Letter" ... E. Newton  
"God save the Queen"

### ***SEPTEMBER - 9 - 1885***

The Barnard Castle Subscription Band will play the following selection of music in the Market Place, this (Wednesday) night, to commence

at 7 p.m. Mr A. Grieve, conductor.

March ... "Royal Lancaster" ... E. Newton  
Varsoviana ... "Arcedo" ... J Robinson  
Fantasia ... "Pride of Ireland" ... H. Round  
Mazurka ... "Coquette" ... S. Linton

Contest Valse ... "Mountain and Glen" ... H. Round  
Quadrille ... "Majestic" ... S. Linton  
Fantasia ... "Memories of Scotland" ... E. Newton  
March ... "The Faded Flower" ... Linter  
"God Save the Queen".

It must have been gratifying for the band that later that year they had some success in competition.

### **SEPTEMBER -16 -1885**

The Barnard Castle Subscription Band played a choice selection of music in the Market-place On Wednesday evening last. The Band has attained a high degree of proficiency, and their performance was listened to and applauded by a large and delighted auditory. Mr A. Grieve is the accomplished leader of the band.

There are a series of concerts advertised over 1885 and 1886 ( with the baton being passed back to Mr Nixon as band leader) and the bulk of these concerts appear to have been outdoors in the Market Cross area.

The photograph below is of the Durham Light Infantry band (made up from the militia

and others) and is dated 1885. There is no record of where the photograph is taken but it is very likely that this band was playing in Barnard Castle at that time, and members may well have "drifted" into the civilian band.





Durham Light Infantry Band

press x to close



Durham Light Infantry Band

press x to close

## From 1900 - 1950



It's hard to know where the above photograph should go. It was posted to our band secretary from a lady in Australia who claimed that was her grandfather's band from Barnard Castle. From the look of the clothing it looks as if it might be from before the first world war. Some of the present band members reckon that "these lads are too smart to be Barney boys!"

But the fashion was to dress in your Sunday best at the time, and if "grandfather" lived in Barnard Castle he is very unlikely to have played for another band. It was customary to have a long complicated band constitution and it was common to place a geographical restriction on players (eg they had to live within 3 or so miles from the town).

By 1900 it seems that the band had once more ceased to play in public. A public meeting was organised in an attempt to get things going again .

### **JUNE – 6 – 1900**

A PUBLIC MEETING, to arrange for the resuscitation of the Town Band, will be held at MILNER'S TEMPERANCE HOTEL, on WEDNESDAY, JUNE 6th, 1900. Chair to be taken at 8 p.m. All those interested are particularly requested to attend.

And it clearly didn't take very long to get fund raising activities underway. The "Mercury" reports a flurry of activity of concerts where volunteers sang or played, and a process of public subscription was launched where local worthies made a contribution to a fund to purchase instruments.

### **JULY – 25 – 1900**

The first concert in connection with the Barnard Castle Band and Town Improvement Committee is announced for Thursday, the 2nd of August. A treat is in store for all visitors musically inclined.

### **OCTOBER – 17 - 1900**

BARNARD CASTLE TOWN BAND FUND.

THE FIRST OF A SERIES OF CONCERTS in aid of the above Fund will be held IN THE VICTORIA HALL, ON FRIDAY, OCTOBER 26TH, 1900. The following ladies and gentlemen have kindly promised their services:—Miss Wightman, Miss Preston, Miss Ottaway, Miss Finlay, and the Misses Smith, the Rev. J.T. Penrose, M.A., Mr Jon. Awde, Mr R.H. Finlay, Mr Austin Graham, Mr H. P. Friend, Mr Tom Borrowdale, Mr B.B.Gent, etc.

Doors open 7-30. Commence 8 prompt.

Admission:—Reserved Seats, 2s. (Family Tickets, admitting 3, 5s. 6, 10s.); Second Seats, 1s. Gallery, 6d. Back Seats, 3d.

Plan of Hall at "Teesdale Mercury" Office, where Reserved Seats may be booked.

Tickets can be obtained from Mr J.G. Hall, Mr J.E. Tilburn, Mr Wm. Nevison, Mr J. Coates, Mr G. S. Stainsby, Mr Geo. Brass, Mr J. Radge, Mr T. Borrowdale, Mr Jos. Appleby, and the Hon. Sec, Mr R.Woodhams.

### **OCTOBER – 31 - 1900**

TOWN BAND FUND.

The series of concerts in aid of this fund was successfully inaugurated on Friday evening last, when, despite a raging storm of wind, sleet, and rain, a goodly company assembled in the Victoria Hall. No doubt many who would have been present preferred their firesides on such a night, but they "missed a treat" by being absent. After a bright opening duet on the piano by the Misses Smith, the Vicar—the Rev. J. T. Penrose—led off with a fine rendering of the very appropriate Shakespearian song, "Blow, blow, thou winter wind." Miss Preston followed with a pleasing song, entitled "There's a land," but she certainly scored more in her sprightly and charming rendering of "When love is kind," which she contributed in part two. The ever popular Mr B. H. Finlay was in fine form, and elicited rounds of applause from his admirers, encores being demanded to both his numbers. Mr Wightman kindly took the place of Mr Awde—who was suffering from a severe cold—and delighted everyone by his manipulation of his banjo, "Oliver Twist's" request being emphatically formulated. Miss Wightman's powerful and telling voice was heard to effect in her two songs, "The Holy City," and "Only a Rosebud." She was ably accompanied in her second song by the composer, Mr J. T. Wightman, her talented brother. She responded to vociferous encore with "Maggie." The Vicar charmed everyone with that fine old Irish ditty, "The low-backed Car," done in Irish to perfection. Mr Austin Graham gave a most artistic rendering of Rudyard Kipling's recitative ballad, "Danny Deever," whilst his portrayals, in character, of the coster sketch, "The Nipper's Lullaby," was most realistic and effective. A valuable recruit to local talent was found in our new neighbour, Mr H.P. Friend, who possesses a fine voice and sings with great taste, his songs, "The Old Soldier" and "Out on the Deep," being well received. The second part was opened by a fine rendering of "La fille du Regiment" as a piano duet, which is certainly the most popularly enjoyable form of piano music. The Misses Wightman and Ottaway and Messrs B.B. Gent and B. Woodhams contributed to the programme two fine old quartets, "Cherry Ripe," and "Good Night, beloved," which folk never tire of hearing. Mrs Preston, Mrs Friend, Miss Finlay, Miss Greta Graham, and Mr T. Borrowdale accompanied the various items. The concert altogether was most enjoyable, and if, as is probable, the next of the series has as good a programme, it will do more than "command success"—it will "deserve it." After defraying all expenses it is estimated a sum of £8 will be available for the Band Fund. The committee take this opportunity of thanking all those who have contributed towards the success of this their first concert. For the information of the public, the committee also report that they have received an estimate for repairing the instruments; £26 will be required for this purpose alone, before the band can commence. Any subscriptions, therefore, will be gladly received, and acknowledged in the columns of the "Teesdale Mercury."

It is perhaps worth publishing a list of the contributors as it is likely that many of these contributors will have family who still live in the area.

### **NOVEMBER – 11 - 1900**

LIST OF SUBSCRIBERS TO THE

BARNARD CASTLE BAND FUND :-

	£	s	d
Mr R. T. Richardson ...	5	0	0
Mr Jno. Smith, J.P....	2	2	0
Dr. Munro, J.P. ...	2	2	0
Mr J.G. Hall ...	1	1	0
Mr J. E. Tilburn ...	1	1	0
Mr H. C. Watson ...	1	1	0
Dr. Welford ...	1	1	0
Mr J. G. Johnson ...	1	1	0

Mr J. W. B. Heslop ...	1	1	0
Messrs McLean & Co...	1	1	0
Mr J. A. York...	10	6	
M. J. Arrowsmith...	10	6	
Mrs Gothorpe ...	10	0	
Mr R. Baker...	5	0	
Mr W. Dalston...	1	0	
J.G...	2	0	
Mr R. Wandless ...	2	0	
Mr J. Wandless ...	2	6	
Mr E. Robson ...	2	6	
Mr Jos. Wilkinson ...	5	0	
Mr G. Elliott...	2	6	
Mr R. B. Morton ...	2	6	
Mr W. Ascough ...	2	6	
J. W.S. ...	1	0	
H. R. B...	1	0	
An Old Bandsman...	5	0	
Mr T. Garbutt...	5	0	
J.C...	1	0	
H. W...	1	0	
Mr R. F. Law ...	2	6	
Mr R. Arrowsmith...	2	6	
Mr R. Robson ...	1	0	
Mr J. Thompson...	2	0	
Miss E. Nevison...	2	6	
Mr J. Taylor...	1	0	
A Friend...	1	0	
A Friend...	1	0	
Mrs Smith...	0	6	
Co-operative Stores...	5	0	
Mr Jno. Evans...	1	0	
Mr J. E. Davis...	3	0	
Mr J. Littlefair...	2	0	
Mr A. Armstrong...	2	6	
Mr A. Morton ...	1	0	
Mrs Merry weather...	1	0	
Mrs Cooper ...	1	6	
Mr Geo. Morton...	7	6	
T. Raine ...	1	0	

**DECEMBER - 12 - 1900**

SUBSCRIBERS TO BARNARD CASTLE BAND FUND:—

	£	s	d
Previously acknowledged	26	3	6
Mr R. A. Davison ...	10	6	
Mr Wm. Dent ...	1	1	0
Mr R. N. Hopkinson ...	10	6	
Mr C. T. Bell ...	2	6	
Mr Jno. Ward ...	2	6	
Mr W. J. Windross...	2	6	
Mr D. Badcock ...	2	6	
Messrs Howson & Reay ...	5	0	
Mr J. Thompson ...	2	6	
Mrs W. Ward ...	2	6	
Mrs Winpenny ...	10	0	
Mr J. T. Pearson ...	2	6	
Mr Wm. Hodgson ...	10	0	
Mr J. I. Dawson ...	10	6	
Mr H. P. Friend ...	10	6	
Messrs J. Burn & Son ...	1	0	0
Mr Geo. Carter ...	5	0	
Mr Hy. Walker ...	5	0	
Mr Sang ...	2	0	
Mr C. J. Balfour ...	10	6	
Mr Hy. Appleby ...	2	0	
Mr T. Berry ...	2	6	
Mr Wrathall ...	2	6	
Mr Wm. Lockey ...	2	6	
Mr J. T. Young ...	5	0	
Mr G Blackburn ...	2	0	

Mr T. Wilson ...	2	6
Mr W. Nevison ...	2	6
Mr J. G. Welford ...	2	6
Mr J. H. Dawson ...	5	0
Mr Jas. Harris ...	5	0
Mr C. E. Raine ...	2	6
Miss Kirby ...	2	0
Dr. Sevier ...	1	0
Mr M. J. Dixon ...	10	6
Miss Barker ...	2	6
Mr Geo. Peacock ...	2	0
Mr T. B. Illsloy ...	5	0
Mr C. B. Martin ...	5	0
Mr P. Hodgson ...	1	0
Mr H. Jones ...	1	0
Mr J. Morgan ...	1	0
Mr Wm. Young ...	1	0
Mr Jno. Nevison ...	1	0
Miss Corps ...	1	0
Mr Geo. Porter ...	1	0
Mr J. J. Bailey ...	5	0
Mr R. Blenkinsopp ...	2	6

Further appeals went out for a conductor and by the end of 1900 great progress had been made prompting the following letter to “The Mercury”

### **DECEMBER – 19 - 1900**

#### **The Town Band.**

It may now fairly be assumed that Barnard Castle will soon be in the possession of a good brass band. The need of an organized body of local musicians has long been evident, and the probability is that we should never have been without trained instrumentalists but for the fact that we have had a military band along with the headquarters of a militia regiment always with us, and we have come to lean upon it.

When the services of a band, therefore, were required, they could be practically obtained for the asking, and private enterprise was lulled into lethargy. But the time came when the 3rd Battalion Durham Light Infantry Militia and the band of the regiment were told off for active service in South Africa, and, to celebrate the achievements of our troops abroad, we had no clarion-note to sound, and then it was that the people looked around, and, having satisfied themselves that the nucleus of a band was present, and that considerable latent musical ability was practically going a-begging, a determined effort was made to focus the talent, and to organize a band on a sound footing.

The effort has met with much appreciation, and we are now doubtless within measurable distance of having a tuneful band ready and willing to play on festive and special occasions, and also able to discourse Christmas carols and appropriate yuletide music. This is much to be thankful for, and the more especially are we grateful because of the associations of old times. It is interesting, at this moment, to recall the fact that when the regimental band of the Durham Militia was formed, a young Hanoverian, who had but lately arrived in England, and whose testimonials were approved, was appointed bandmaster. His name—familiar enough to most of our readers—was “William Herschel”. After remaining in the militia a few years, he removed to Leeds, where he taught music. He subsequently took up his residence at Halifax, as organist, and then went to live at Bath. Turning his attention to astronomy, he became one of the greatest discoverers of the age ; wealth and fame poured in upon him ; and, as Sir William Herschel, the celebrated astronomer, his name will go down to posterity. He died in 1822, aged 84, Sir John Herschel, Bart., also an eminent astronomer, was his only son. In more modern times the names of Ferrier and Brandon appear as leaders of the Town Band, and the popular airs then played were long remembered by the grateful inhabitants.

And this is the self-same town - “Where music dwells lingering, and wandering on as loth to die like thoughts whose very sweetness yieldeth proof that they were born for immortality.”

By April 1901 the band had held its first AGM in its new incarnation; details of which are faithfully recorded in the pages of “The Mercury”.

### **APRIL – 17 - 1901**

#### **BARNARD CASTLE TOWN BAND.**

The first annual general meeting of the newly formed town band took place in the band-room, on Friday last.

Mr J. Smith, JP. presided, and expressed his great gratification at the progress they had made. Indeed, it was a most pleasant hour he spent before the meeting listening to the various pieces they performed so well, considering the short time since the practices commenced. Great credit it due to the band master, — the latter explained that it was a great pleasure to come amongst them. They paid every attention to his instructions, and he was most favourably impressed with the progress they had made. He was glad to say they had advanced so much. He was prepared to bring them before the public, and let the inhabitants see that the old tradition and reputation of Barnard Castle for music could still be maintained, and expressed a hope that good

engagements would be forthcoming, which would give them encouragement, and assist the funds which were necessary to keep the band in a good state of efficiency.

The official reports show that the management have accomplished a great deal, Fifteen instruments have been thoroughly repaired, and two new instruments purchased. Other initial expenses have been met, and provision is made to carry on the band free of debt until the end of June. But other instruments are required before the band is complete, which will cost about £ 20, It was intended to raise this amount by concerts, but lack of performers and other causes prevented this. The committee are exceedingly thankful to the town's people who have so generously contributed towards the funds, but as there are yet many who have not subscribed, they take this opportunity of asking for their support. The band is making great progress at practice, and intend playing out at frequent intervals in the course of a week or two.

The following gentlemen were elected on the committee for the ensuing year:—Messrs J. G. Hall, Geo. Morton, and Geo. Brass; Mr Geo.S. Stainsby, property man; Mr B. Woodhams, honorary, secretary and treasurer; with the trustees, Messrs R. T. Richardson, J.P., J. Smith, J.P., and J. E. Tilburn as *ex-officio*.

And so a busy summer of engagements followed.

### **MAY – 1 - 1901**

The first appearance of the Town Band was heartily welcomed at Barnard Castle, last Friday night, the street being thronged with spectators, who highly appreciated the quick-step music played. The town was quite cheerful under the spell, and, by universal acclaim, the musicians acquitted themselves remarkably well.

### **MAY – 29 - 1901**

#### THE PROCESSION.

Glorious Weather prevailed at noon, when the procession started from the head of Galgate, the route extending for fully one mile. The fine Town Band—and they played marvellously and surprisingly well throughout the whole day, thanks to Mr Bainbridge, the conductor—was stationed in the enclosure, and the leafy trees looked very picturesque as the wheelmen moved apace through the avenue.

Fully fourteen thousand persons lined the main thoroughfare. At half-past one o'clock, the President, accompanied by Mrs Clark, in their own private carriage, headed the imposing spectacle, his immediate attendants being the two Misses Clark, charmingly dressed in black and white—their father's racing colour's, their bicycles also being decorated in like fashion. Not as large in numbers as in former years, only some two hundred taking part in the procession, yet it was the best for variety, quality, and splendour of costume perhaps ever seen here.

### **JUNE – 19 – 1901**

The Barnard Castle Brass Band will (weather permitting) perform a selection of music in the Market Place, Barnard Castle, this (Wednesday) evening, commencing at 8 p.m. A collection will be taken in aid of the band fund, at this and all subsequent performances.

#### THE MARCH THROUGH THE TOWN.

The band of the 4th Battalion, ably assisted by the Town Band, headed the procession, and immediately following were the members of the Reception Committee and the members of the Urban District Council As the column filed down Galgate—the Boulevard—the spectacle was very fine. Hundreds lined the thoroughfare—hundreds more kept pace with the troops. Flags and streamers were seen everywhere, and all Barnard Castle and his wife were out. "Auld Lang Syne," "The girl I left behind me," and other popular airs were played, and right merrily did the soldiers and the populace foot it, to the martial strains of the joint bands. Conspicuously lavish in decorations was the Conservative Club, and most appropriate were the mottoes: — "A hearty welcome to the 3 rd Durham's," and "We gladly greet you, but mourn your losses. "The "Nor'-Easters" of the County School Boys will certainly never be forgotten, nor will the fine military bearing of the men.

It is interesting to note that many of these concerts to place outside or around the marginal shelter of the market cross. It is little wonder that the market cross still to this day forms the basis of the band logo.

Throughout the rest of 1901 the band was busy. Band activities were reported on in full and the following give a flavour of the varied sort of events that we might expect of a brass band in. Market town.

### **JULY – 24 - 1901**

The Town Band continues to make satisfactory progress, and their open-air performances are a source of great delight to visitors and townspeople alike. Mr Bainbridge, the tuneful yet modest leader, is to be congratulated on his splendid efforts.

### **JULY – 31 - 1901**

The Town Band will play in the Flatts, on Sunday.



**AUGUST – 14 - 1901**

BARNARD CASTLE TOWN IMPROVEMENT AND BAND COMMITTEE.  
 GRAND ILLUMINATIONS, PROMENADE CONCERT, and DANCING in the INNER BAILEY. Programme of Music:  
 On THURSDAY, 15TH AUGUST, 1901, by the BARNARD CASTLE TOWN BAND;  
 On MONDAY, 19TH AUGUST, 1901, by the RICHMOND CORPORATION BAND.  
 To commence at 7-45 p.m. Admission, 3d, Season Ticketholders, Free.  
 SEASON TICKETS may be obtained at the Gate, or from O. J. BALFOUR, Treasurer. F. A. WAITE, Secretary.

**SEPTEMBER – 25 - 1901**

EGGLESTON AGRICULTURAL AND POULTRY SHOW.  
 The Barnard Castle Town Band under the conductorship of Mr J. Bainbridge, played a fine programme of music, to the evident delight of all present.

**OCTOBER – 16 - 1901**

VICTORIA HALL, BARNARD CASTLE.  
 A GRAND CONCERT

Will be given in the above Hall, ON FRIDAY, OCTOBER 25TH, 1901,  
 IN AID OF THE BARNARD CASTLE TOWN BAND.

The following Ladies and Gentlemen have kindly given their services towards this worthy object:—

PART I.—Consisting of Songs, Musical Sketches, Instrumental Solos, etc.

Solo Violinist, MISS HITCHIN. The Mount

Solo Japanese Violinist, MR T. WIDDOP, Stockton

*Vocalists:*

MISS PRESTON. Westwick Lodge

MISS LILY HESLOP (the Clover Juvenile Soprano), Barnard Castle

MISS NELLIE RAINE, Bishop Auckland

MR HIGGINBOTHAM, Barnard Castle

MR T. WIDDOP, Stockton

MR G. WILLSHAW, of Durham

Accompanist - - MISS FINLAY, Barnard Castle.

PART II—that SCREAMING FARCE entitled “THE MATRIMONIAL AGENCY,”

When the characters will be sustained by MISS FOTHERGILL. MISS WRIGHTSON, MISS ALICE THOMPSON. MISS FINLAY, MR J. W. BEWICK, MR EDWIN BERRY.

MR WM RICHARDSON, and MR C. F. WOODHAMS, all of Barnard Castle,

THE TOWN BAND WILL GIVE SELECTIONS of Music during the Assembly and the Interval.

Doors open at 7-30, Concert to commence at 8 p.m.,

ADMISSION: 2/, 1/-, 6d, and 31.

Plan of the Hall at the "Teesdale Mercury" Office, where Reserved Seats are booked.

Family Tickets to Reserved Seats, admitting Three Persons, 5 s.; Six, 10s.

Other Tickets may be obtained of the Committee and Members of the band.

R. WOODHAMS, Hon. Sec

### **NOVEMBER - 13 - 1901**

**BARNARD CASTLE TOWN BAND.**

The committee of the Barnard Castle Town Band have pleasure in announcing that, after paying all expenses, a profit of £9 4s 1d was made at their concert, held on the 25th October last. This sum will be devoted to the purchase of new instruments. The committee take this opportunity of thanking the ladies and gentlemen who so kindly gave their services, especially Misses Fothergill and Finlay, who were largely responsible for the organisation and success of the concert.

### **DECEMBER - 11 - 1901**

Town Band, — The Committee have agreed to entertain the members of the Town Band at a supper to be held on 27<sup>th</sup> Inst. and will be glad if any of the supporters of it will join them. Tickets can be obtained from Mr J.G.Hall

### **DECEMBER - 25 - 1901**

**Our Festivities.**

THE seasonal attractions announced for Christmas and the New Year are as appropriate as the weather. Religious functions loom largely in the list, and we note that special missions, extending over some weeks, will take place at Barnard Castle early in 1902. We are especially pleased to learn that the members of the Town Band are to be invited to the festive board. A town, or even a village, without a band, is a dead-and-alive sort of a place at any time, but, with the musical traditions of Barnard Castle, the absence of a trained band of musicians is well-nigh culpable negligence. Besides, for services already rendered the men are deserving of every encouragement. The Rifle Club mean to have a little initial fling-off in a few weeks and kind-hearted friends have well thought of the children. Our wish is that rational enjoyment rather than the mere semblance of excess may characterise the holidaymaking and that all may resume their wonted occupations with increased rather than diminished vigour of body and mind.

The year 1902 appears to have been another full and successful one. The band played numerous concerts, most of them outside in such places as Bowes Museum grounds, the Inner Baily of the Castle, the Market Place, Flatts Wood, with torchlight processions through the Town and "promenade concerts" being in vogue.

The band also competed, band competitions being all the rage at the time. Competitions are recorded at Middleton in Teesdale, and Bishop Auckland, with Barnard Castle settling at about 3rd in the table.

There is a fabulous piece in the "Mercury" in January 2002 where the assembly is still flushed with the countries success in the Boer War which is worth reproducing here for the flavour of the times which it invokes.

### **JANUARY - 1 - 1902**

**"MUSIC WITH ITS VOLUPTUOUS SWELL"**

**THE TOWN BAND ENTERTAINED THE OLD-TIME ROLL OF MUSICIANS AND LOCAL SOLDIERS FROM SOUTH AFRICA.**

Last Thursday night, at the King's Head Hotel, the members of the Town Band and a few friends, including the active committee, were sumptuously entertained to dinner by Mr John Smith, J.P., of Groves Park, and Mr B. I. Richardson, J. P., of the Starlings. The menu was very choice, and the viands were exceptionally well served, so that once again the reputation of this well-known hostelry was fully maintained. Mr Richardson presided and Mr Smith occupied the vice-chair.

The loyal and patriotic toasts having been pledged in a bumper.

The Vice-Chairman proposed "The Navy, the Army, and the Reserve Forces," and, in the course of a telling speech, again deprecated the action of their friends, the greatest enemies Briton had, the pro-Boers of this country. He said that such men were neither more or less than traitors, (Applause).

Sgt Woodhams, of the Royal Irish Fusiliers, who has just returned from South Africa, and who has more than once been wounded in action, appropriately returned thanks. On behalf of the army and the volunteers he thanked them, but of the navy he could not say much, as he did not belong to that branch of service, English soldiers, he could sincerely assure them, very highly appreciated the way in which their countrymen and countrywomen had remembered them in the performance of their arduous duties of South Africa, and for the loyal and patriotic and kind way in which soldiers had been received on their return to the shores of old England. Personally he could also thank his many friends for the manner in which they had trusted him since he came back to Barnard Castle, (Applause).

One of the strongest incentives to the majority of the soldiers in Africa, and an influence which made them fight with more determination and bravery in their heroic endeavours to uphold their glorious empire, was the conviction that in the tented field the men were looked after by friends at home. (Loud applause).

The little comforts that were sent out to the front were very highly appreciated, and his audience could scarcely believe how and with what eagerness English soldiers rushed for the mails to get a line from "home, sweet home." (More applause).

He knew titled ladies who wrote to private individual soldiers' fine letters of encouragement, and the direct result of all this attention and kindly feeling made the men resolute and firm and brave. (Cheers). As to His Majesty's navy, when he arrived in South Africa the British forces had not guns of the calibre sufficient to reach the Boers. But, when the navy arrived up the Mooi River, they got the naval guns to work and, advancing, they were able to shift the Boers pretty smartly—(Cheers) — and what did British soldiers now call the navy? They called the royal navy "England's salvation," (Renewed applause). As regards the volunteers, he had not met any Barnard Castle riflemen in South Africa. He had, however, met volunteers attached to the line regiments—there were none in his corps, because it was an Irish regiment—but in the Scotch' Fusiliers, the Royal Fusiliers, which was a City of London regiment, he had observed volunteers. These battalions joined their brigade after the relief of Ladysmith, and he must honestly say that the way in which those volunteers did their duty to their then Queen and country was a perfect marvel, (Applause). They were fully equal in all respects to the regular army, and to seasoned and trained troops. (Cheers). The gallant Sergeant said he could not stand longer, as he unfortunately had a "game" leg, and again thanking them most heartily for the very kind reception which the people of Barnard Castle had accorded to him, the plucky veteran resumed his seat amidst continuous applause.

Mr Hugh Salvin Raper, who was wounded in action with the Imperial Yeomanry, said his experience in South Africa was small as compared with that of Sergeant Woodhams. The Boers found a mark in him very soon—(laughter and applause)—whether or not it was owing to his good looks he could not definitely say. (Laughter). In his brief active service his experience was that his comrades were the trusted sons of the empire, and were second to none in loyalty and devotion to their king and country; and he believed that if more men were wanted of stamina and pluck, Barnard Castle would be the first place to supply more volunteers. (Applause). As an inhabitant, and a native-born man of the place, he thought that in history Barnard Castle had furnished a bigger percentage of soldiers to the standing army and to the navy of the country than any town in England of the same size; and, judging of the present day martial spirit and the loyalty of the young men of this town, he could safely say that they would not for one moment tolerate the pro-Boer element in their midst in any shape or form. (Applause). The friends he had left behind him in South Africa were friends whom they all knew, and they would share with him in his devoted wish that they might all come back in a body—(applause)—not one absent. He knew well that their hearts were fired with devotion to their country, and one and all of that little contingent which left Barnard Castle went out to South Africa with a single eye to do their level best for the weal of old England, and, to his certain knowledge, they were all ever ready at the stern call of duty. (Cheers) He thanked them for the hearty manner in which they had invited him to respond to that toast. (Applause).

Mr J. Q Hall remarked that the unexpected often happened, and he thought that the axiom was verified on that occasion, because they had been told on all hands, when they were trying to establish that band, that it was absolutely no use attempting such a thing. He was very pleased to think, however, that those people who had formed this opinion had made a very great mistake, (Applause). He must compliment the members of the band on the high standard of efficiency which they had attained. Having only been established one year, they had a roll of twenty-four members, and it had been his pleasure to act on that committee, and to go down to the band-room and hear the members practice. He must say that the measure of success which they achieved was due to the very efficient conductor whom they had. (Applause). In years gone by they had always been compelled to go out of the town for a band. Now they need not go out of the town for a band, but, on the contrary, they had a band which they themselves were not ashamed to send out of the town, and, during that summer, the band had been engaged at several shows and different places, and he had been very pleased with the remarks which he had heard from critics. All who had heard the band had spoken favourably of it. (Applause). He hoped sincerely that nothing would mar the harmony which then existed between the bandmaster, the members, and the committee for many years to come. (Applause).

Mr John E. Tilburn hardly knew that he could add anything to what Mr Hall had said. That gentleman had said precisely what Mr Tilburn had thought. Personally he was very proud of the band, and he never thought that such proficiency would have been attained in so short a time. He thought the bandmaster must be proud of his men, and that the men were proud of their conductor, even as they of the town were proud of them all. (Applause). It was true that certain people thought that they could never get a band up, but they had got up a band, and a very good one indeed, and last summer he was proud to see them accepting and filling with every credit engagements at the local agricultural shows. By next year he hoped they might be still more improved. (Cheers).

The Vice-chairman remarked that he was very proud to contribute his quota in this regard, and to toast right heartily "Success to the Barnard Castle Town Band," which sentiment he hoped every gentleman in the room, and every inhabitant of Barnard Castle and the neighbourhood would cordially endorse. The absence of a band on the news arriving of the relief of Ladysmith and Mafeking caused men to think, and the idea was started to get up a new band, as the other bands had been squeezed out of existence. But, Barnard Castle without a band seemed a state of things all together out of place. He was determined to do all that he possibly could, now that the band was established, to further its interests, and he counselled them to stick close to the rules, and especially that rule which enjoined regular practices. They should love the pursuit of music rather than the thought of any remuneration which they might get. Mr Smith then, in a most interesting speech, traced the history of local bands, embracing a period of fifty years, and enumerated such names as Harry Farrier, Willie Baine, John Baine, William Hudson, Charles Baine, George Nicholson, Henry Bowman, Mr Raper's grandfather, and the latter's sons, George and Thomas, together with fine musicians from Middleton-in-Teesdale. Nor could he forget Richard Pearson, the drummer. Coming to a later period, there was Mr Thomas Brandon, who was a very clever musician, and who then conducted, at Barnard Castle, one of the best bands in the North of England, at that day, (Applause). He now wished the present Town Band an equal career of usefulness and efficiency, and a similar reunion each succeeding Christmas. (Applause).

The Chairman said his early associations and the memories of the old Barnard Castle bands came back to him as a kind of relief which had afforded him pleasure as he listened to the speech of the Vice- Chairman. The origin of that little meeting Mr Richardson attributed to a kind of spontaneous combustion. It was a matter which he had been turning over in his own mind for a fortnight, and he found, from conversation with him that it was exactly the view which Mr Smith had entertained. The Chairman invoked self-control and even military discipline in the newly organised band. There should be no striving for mastery, and much would depend upon themselves in harmonious working together. Practicing scales was tedious, and he had gone through it himself, but if they really wanted to be efficient members of the band each must do his own part in private. There must be one

hour's practice every day, and they must be prepared to make that sacrifice at home. Quartet and quintet parties could be formed out of the band, but personal application to each individual part was necessary in order to ensure complete success. (Applause).

Mr Bainbridge, the conductor, responded, and said the men had done splendidly, and he was very proud of them. All the credit was not due to himself: credit was due to the bandsmen, who had paid every attention, and who were always willing right loyally to submit to all needful correction. (Applause),

Mr Tilburn proposed "The Secretary," and Mr Woodhams, the honorary secretary and treasurer, replied. He said that with regard to the

financial position of the band, a great deal had been accomplished with the funds at his disposal. All the instruments belonging to the old band had been thoroughly repaired, and several new Bessom class A instruments had been purchased and paid for, besides meeting all other incidental expenses. The band was now almost fully equipped, and might be considered fairly well floated. Yet, he pointed out, assistance was still needed to bring it to a high state of efficiency, and he would like to take this opportunity of appealing to the public, who have most willingly subscribed so far, for further support. With such support there was then no reason why Barnard Castle should not have a band to compare favourably with any in the kingdom.

Mr Stainsby played Sullivan's "Lost Chord" on the cornet, and Messrs Leonard Bell, J. Smith, B. T. Richardson, T. Hunter, B. Woodhams, G. Parkinson, and others enlivened the proceedings with songs 'Auld Lang Syne' and the National Anthem finished a first-rate entertainment.

Annual Band Dinners seemed to have been something of a special event. It is noteworthy in 1903 for the following comment by the conductor,

Mr Bainbridge, bandmaster, admirably replied, stating that in the three years which he had led the band there had never been a wrong word, and he did not think that during that time he had ever seen a man worse for drink. (Applause).

It's unlikely that the present day conductor could make the same comment!

Mr Bainbridge continues to lead the band into the next year.

It is interesting to note that the sort of foul ups that cause embarrassment in this day and age were happening a hundred years ago!

### **MAY - 25 - 1904**

A Misunderstanding.

Yesterday afternoon it was officially announced that the Town Band was engaged to play at the al fresco concert in the Castle Grounds, and that they had made default in not attending. Last night, however, Mr John Pattison, the secretary of the Town Band, waited upon us, in company of Mr Tom Chatt, also a member of the Band, and declared that they had never heard a syllable about the engagement of the band in the first instance.

Things seemed to have progressed nicely for a few years, In 1907 the band had a new leader in Mr Coates.

### **APRIL - 10 - 1907**

BARNARD CASTLE TOWN BAND.

Chiefly owing to the strenuous efforts of Mrs Ross (wife of Sgt Ross, of the 3rd Battalion Durham Light Infantry) a very enjoyable concert and entertainment took place in the Victoria Hall, last Friday night. And at the outset it must be stated that the town is indebted to the talented lady who undertook the arduous task of training the juveniles and completing the arrangements.

Mr Higginbotham presided, and, in the course of a brief address, he said, that, owing to the death of a relative, Mr W. Emerson, the appointed chairman, had been unable to fulfil his engagement. They were all sorry for the untoward circumstance, but Mr Higginbotham would not detain them long by his observations. The object of that concert, he said, was to provide funds to enable the band to get new instruments, which without saying, was a noble cause. A band of music in any community was a great acquisition, and an important factor was to have a good conductor.

In Mr John Coates, the new leader, they had secured a good man. He had known Mr Coates for a good number of years—for fourteen years at least—and during the past twenty or thirty years he (the Chairman) had been connected with music in its various forms. Mr Higginbotham had no hesitation in saying that they had selected a most able man, and he hoped that they would rally round Mr Coates and give him every support. He trusted that there would be no discord, and that nothing but harmony would prevail. (Applause).

It was much to the credit of Mrs Ross that she had arranged that entertainment, and it was still more to her praise that that lady intended the entertainment to become an annual event, (applause)—and though they were practically helping the band funds by their presence that night, yet he had no hesitation in saying that they would all get their money's worth in the shape of an all-round treat.

The first part of the entertainment was of a miscellaneous character, provided by Mrs Ross, Misses L. Bennett, Dora Ramsdem, E. Baker, G. Baker, T. Ascough E. Brown, E. Stoddart, L. Peat, F. Taylor, H. Raine, and V. Murray, and Messrs J. Richardson and W. Heslop, and the band. The concluding item was a good performance of Egerton's pantomime, "Beauty and the Beast," wherein the characters were ably sustained by the ladies named and Messrs J. H. Walton, Richardson, and Heslop. Mrs Ross was directress, and that lady and Miss G. Baker ably undertook the duties of accompanists.

A letter to the "Mercury" in 1907 is interesting. The financing of bands has always been a rather murky affair. It was common for the instruments and uniform to belong to the band rather than the players. However it was not uncommon for the proceeds of "gigs" to be distributed amongst the players. This letter is clearly a piece of PR to persuade the public that bandsmen weren't making a fast buck out of performances. One wonders what the truth of the matter was!

### ***JUNE – 19 - 1907***

Barnard Castle Town Band: A Misconception.

Dear Sir, an erroneous idea being prevalent in the town with regard to the sums of money collected when the band plays in the Flatts Wood, etc., I wish on behalf of the bandsmen to state that not one single penny finds its way into their pockets.

The money is paid into a fund now being formed to purchase new instruments (the majority of the old ones being almost useless) and repairs necessary to bring the band to an efficient state.

As it is not generally known, I may say that the members themselves contribute a sum equal to 13s each per annum to the funds, and I take this opportunity to ask that the visitors and townspeople alike will support their efforts by giving liberally to the much-needed object. Thanking you, I am, yours faithfully, J.W. BROOK, Hon. Secretary.

Public notices in 1907 suggest that the band was not exclusively a brass band at the time as reed instruments were being played. This is not surprising given the close association with the military bands where reed instruments were common.

### ***OCTOBER – 9 – 1907***

Barnard Castle Town Band.

Those wishing to take out Reed Instruments are requested to give in their names at once to JOHN COATES, Bandmaster; or J.W. BROOK, Secretary.

### ***OCTOBER – 23 – 1907***

Barnard Castle Town Band.

Those wishing to take Brass or Reed Instruments please attend Band Room on Monday, October 28th, at 7 p.m. prompt. J.W. BROOK, Secretary.

It must have been a day of great excitement when Baden Powell (now famous as the founder of the Scout movement but then a war hero) made an appearance in the town.

### ***MAY – 5 – 1908***

#### **Lieut.- General R. S. S. Baden-Powell, G.B., at Barnard Castle.**

The heroic defender of Mafeking, who visits Barnard Castle, today, having returned from leave of absence on Saturday, assumed, on Monday, the temporary command of the Northern Command, vice Major General A.J.A. Wright, CB.

#### **Opening of the Season.**

The Barnard Castle Town Band will commence their season's playing - out in the Flatts Wood on Sunday afternoon. The following programme will be rendered: — March — The Cameronians—H.B. Lowell; Selection — Ione—from E. Petrilla's opera; Cornet solo—My Dreams — F. Paolo Tosti; Valse — Ensueno Seducto—J. Rosas; selection— Havana— Leslie Stuart; Indian romance—Hobomoko—Ernest Reeves; Valse—Venus on earth — Paul Linche; Intermezzo—Starland - Lawrence B. O'Connor; God Save the King.

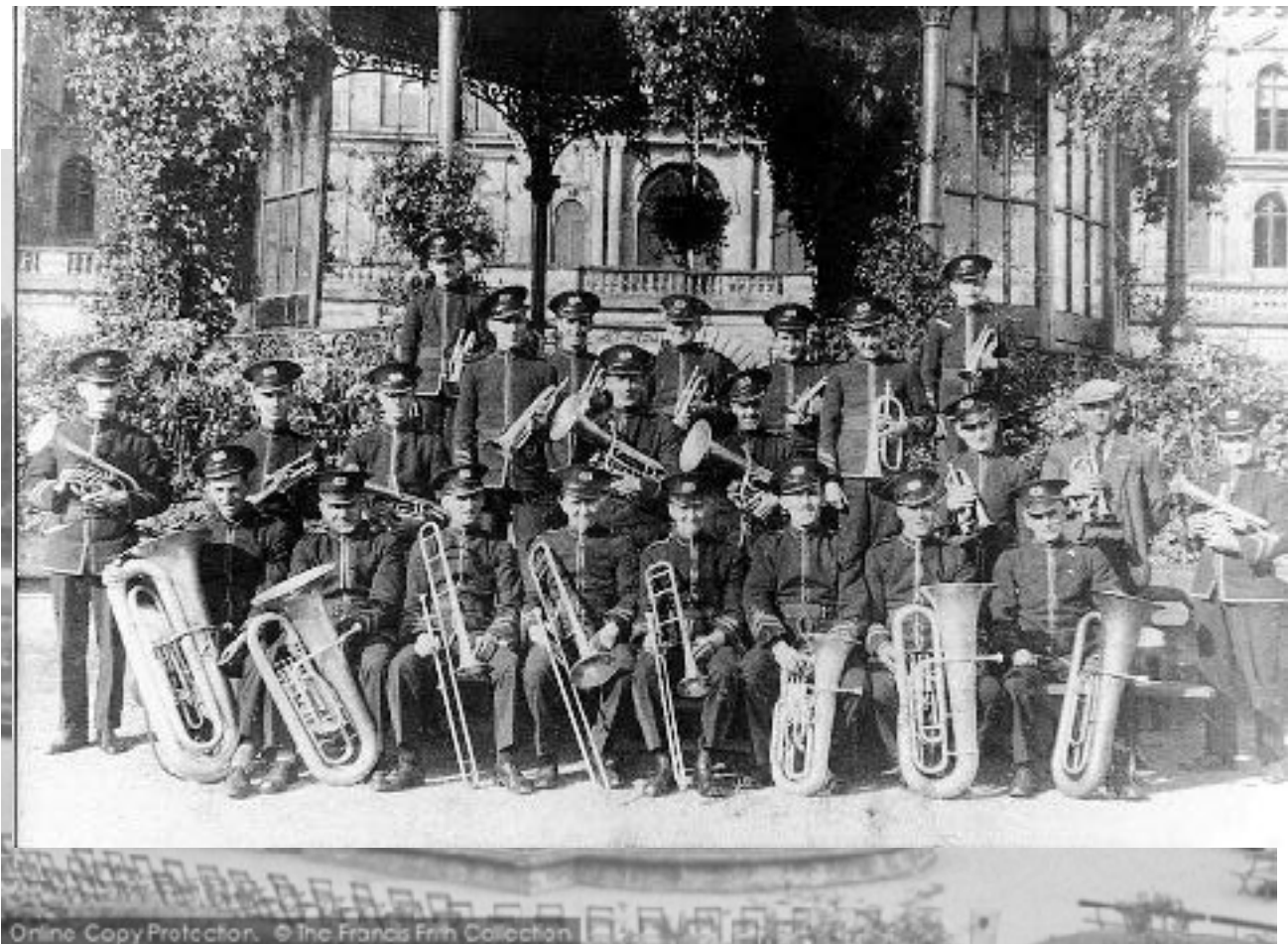
Things had been going very nicely, but then in 1910 in quick succession there was a newspaper appeal for more members (evidently unsuccessful) shortly followed by the recall of all instruments and the band going into abeyance.

### ***NOVEMBER – 23 - 1910***

Those wishing to join the Barnard Castle Town Band may call at the Band-room, King Street, on Friday Nights, between 7 and 9 o'clock.

### ***NOVEMBER – 30 – 1910***

THE TRUSTEES of the Town Band have, decided to call all Instruments in.



What an irony it is that at a time when the band appears not to have been operating a splendid Bandstand was constructed in a prominent position in front of the Bowes Museum in the town!

This splendid edifice was erected in 1912 and was cast by the Lion Iron foundry company. Of Kirkintilloch in Scotland . Further details on bandstands can be found in the splendid book “Bandstands , Pavilions for Music, Entertainment and Leisure” by Paul Rabbitts. By a happy coincidence Paul played with Barnard Castle band as a young man!

It is an even greater tragedy that the bandstand was demolished in the 1950s. There was talk in the press at the time of relocating the bandstand to another site in the town but sadly nothing came of it. If ever there was a project in need of a lottery grant it would be the rebuilding of the bandstand!

The following photograph (undated) shows the band at a later date in front of the Bowes Museum bandstand.

It is no surprise to see that in common with virtually all the bands in the country there is no evidence of a band during the Great War from 1914 onwards as all the men would have been conscripted and would be away fighting in France.

A note of 1916 confirms that instruments had been lent out to the Durham Light Infantry .

### ***OCTOBER – 18 - 1916***

#### **Barnard Castle Town Band.**

A meeting of the trustees and members of the committee was held in Hall street office on Monday, when there were present Messrs R.T.Richardson (chairman), J. G. Hall, G W. Morton, G.S.Stainsby, T. Henderson; and J.Appleby (honorary secretary).—It was reported that the instruments lent to the 17th Durham Light Infantry band on Thursday safely arrived, in charge of Company Sergeant-Major Drew, from Cannock Chase, where they had been in use since the battalion left Deerbolt Camp last spring. After careful inspection they were again allowed to be deposited in Mr Richardson's loft in Hall street, and Mr Stainsby, one of the trustees, kindly undertook to supervise the town's property, power being granted to him to dispose of one or two of the older instruments and to lend playable ones under certain conditions —A letter is to be sent to Col. Caulfield acknowledging receipt of the instruments, and expressing the owners' gratification that they had been a source of enjoyment to the men in camp,

and satisfaction at their good state of preservation. It was also mentioned that several other instruments belonging the town have not yet been returned, so letters of inquiry are to be sent to those supposed to be in possession of same.

As is to be expected there was attempt to revive things in 1919 once the war was over. By April 1919 the band had reformed and was performing under the leadership of Mr Smith. The following undated photograph shows the band by the Bowes Museum bandstand but from the style of the clothing it must have been at some stage between the two World Wars.

For the remainder of 1919 the band had a full programme. There are sporadic reports of band activity for the next few years. During which time Mr Robinson took over as band master. In 1926 there was a drive to provide the band with a new uniform.

### **SEPTEMBER – 22 - 1926**

#### **BARNARD CASTLE TOWN BAND**

##### **Scheme for Providing Uniform.**

At a meeting of the Barnard Castle Town Band on Monday evening at the Barracks a definite step was taken for the collection of funds to defray the cost of the proposed uniform. Mr A.H. Nicholson presided, there being also present Messrs C. T. Singer and G.S. Stainsby, trustees; Mr Richard Watson, J.P., Chairman of the Barnard Castle Urban Council; Mr A.W. Robinson, bandmaster, etc. The Secretary (Mr E.H. Wilkinson) said the committee felt the time had come when a definite step should be taken to provide the long-considered uniform.

The Treasurer (Mr Parkinson) showed a balance in hand of £41 9s. 6d. raised by band performances, dances, etc., and reduced by liabilities to £35. Mr Robinson said the estimated cost of the uniform was £100, or about £3 15s. per member including cap. It was eventually agreed to place £30 to the special uniform account and to make a public appeal for the remaining sum required, Messrs A.H. Nicholson and C.T. Singer offering their services as collectors in collaboration with four members of the band. The appeal is to be made by the trustees and all donations will be published in the " Teesdale Mercury."

Records for the next few years show no big changes. There was an exchange of views in the letters column of the "Mercury" with correspondents complaining that a dance band had been employed Foran event rather than the town band of "loyal ex servicemen" . At around this time many bands across the country were losing players to dance bands where musicians could make money so this is no surprise.

The next noteworthy events are in 1931 where it looks as if the band was in danger of folding because of internal disputes. This was resolved by the end of 1931.

### **MAY- 20 - 1931**

#### **Barnard Castle Prize Band.**

Col. H. C. Watson presided over a special meeting of the committee and band members on Thursday evening, when the question of carrying on was freely discussed. It was agreed to fulfil the Whitsuntide programme, having been engaged to play for the North Eastern Cyclists' Meet, the Barnard Castle School sports, and also in the Museum Park on Sunday. A further meeting will be called to consider the future of the band.

### **AUGUST – 12 - 1931**

#### **BARNARD CASTLE TOWN BAND.**

A meeting of the Trustees of the above Band will be held in the NEW BARRACKS, on THURSDAY, AUGUST 13TH, 1931, at 8 p.m. prompt. All past and present Members are asked to attend and a cordial invitation is extended to anyone interested in the future welfare of the Band. - G. W. WILKINSON, Hon. Secretary.

### **AUGUST – 19 - 1931**

#### **Barnard Castle Prize Band.**

No business was done at a meeting on Thursday night, called to consider the future of Barnard Castle Prize Band. It is understood that a further meeting will be held after the trustees confer with the outside committee.

### **AUGUST – 26 - 1931**

Now that the internal differences of Barnard Castle Town Band have been settled it is to be hoped that harmony will prevail literally and figuratively. For some time discord has been asserting itself in strident fashion among musicians of whom the town is proud. The cause, of course, was just a little misunderstanding. The rift in the lute has on many occasions upset an otherwise harmonious company; the band includes some very clever musicians and their recent successes in even national contests prove that their ability can compare very favourably with that of other bands. We shall increase our, interest and watch for the gaining of fresh laurels and hope that the bandsmen will receive the encouragement they deserve.



In 1932 it appears that the band were using a part of the barracks as a band room.

There are records of meetings in 1933 showing that there was a band room in Dunelm Square at the time. It is also recorded that the Bandmaster at the time was a Mr Robinson and that he left the area in 1933.

By the end of 1933 the band were calling themselves "The Barnard Castle Prize Band" and Maurice Wright was the man wielding the baton.

In the next few years the band seems to have been functioning normally. The next big event was recorded as the band played at a ceremony to mark the death of King George V.

## Band in 1930's

### ***JANUARY – 29 - 1936***

#### YESTERDAY'S MEMORIAL SERVICE

Barnard Castle, the capital of Teesdale, with the rest of the British Empire yesterday honoured the memory of the King who has passed. All classes and religious denominations and the members of many local organisations joined in the memorial service in Barnard Castle Parish Church, which was filled.

Shops were closed at 11 o'clock, and in Galgate, soon afterwards, the procession was formed which slowly made its way to the church by way of the Horse market and the Market Place, led by the Town Band under Mr M. Wright, playing Handel's "Dead March" in C, popularly known as the Dead March in "Saul," one of the oratorios in which it is played.

After the band came the members and officials of the Urban Council and the Trustees of the Bowes Museum, Fire Brigade, the British Legion with their banner, the Worshipful Master and Brethren of the Barnard Lodge of Freemasons, police and postmen, Rangers, Guides, and Brownies, Boy Scouts and Church Girls' Brigade.

In the lead up to the second World war it appears that the band was again going through one of those spates of internal politics that bands are famous for! If the War didn't cause enough problems the band might have folded anyway.

### ***DECEMBER – 1 – 1937***

Only nine members of the Barnard Castle Town Band attended the annual meeting held on Wednesday evening in the Bandroom at Dunelm Square. Mr W. I. Watson was voted to the chair, and at the outset of the proceedings referred in feeling terms to the death of Mr J. E. Hall a member of the band for many years. He moved that Mr Hall's efforts on behalf of the band for many years are placed on record and that a letter of sympathy be sent to Mrs Hall. The proposal was agreed to, all present standing in silence.

Officers were appointed for the year as follows President, Mr W.I. Watson; secretary, Mr W. Bailey; treasurer, Mr N. Allinson; property man, Mr T. Henderson; librarian, Mr J. Jenkins; bandmaster, Mr M. Wright; assistant bandmaster, Mr Trevor Wright; auditor, Mr N. H. Nicholson; vice-Presidents, Mr C. J. Smith, J.P., Dr. Leishman, Mr M. Aden, Mr V. Walton, Mr W.F. Smith, Dr. C.B. Robinson, Dr. I. Griffin Ward, and Mr W. Peat; outside committee, Messrs S.E. Harrison, Walton, C. Ridsdale, J. Parkin and Langstaff; members committee, Messrs Hurst, Parkinson, Bailey and Henderson.

The accounts showed receipts totalling £30 13s. 11d. and after meeting expenses, including an overdraft of £1 14s. 9d. last year, there remained a balance of £3 1s. 3d. The accounts were adopted. The President expressed regret at the apparent

diminution of practical interest in the band by the members, and said it was really disheartening to see so few players. Unless the members did their best to make the band a success it would be of little use to continue. There was a provision in the regulations that if the membership fell below a certain figure the trustees could call in the uniforms and the instruments. He hoped such a step would not be necessary. The proceedings concluded with a vote of thanks to Mr Watson for presiding.

### **AUGUST – 9 - 1939**

What is to become of the Barnard Castle Town Band? The question ought to appeal to all who have in time past been able to appreciate the performances of our local musicians. A town of the size of Barnard Castle ought to be glad to give its support to any body of bandsmen who can render such a good account of itself as that which the Barnard Castle Band has been doing for the past- fifty-five years.

Assured of financial support—always provided that the players are anxious to perform for the pure love of presenting popular musical pieces—we have to peer more closely into the inner workings of the movement, and it is here, one fears, that there is found to be a fly in the ointment, or to adopt a musical synonym, a rift in the lute, the fly being a lack of unanimity as to the choice of a leader and the rift a consequent cleavage in respect of loyalty to the leader chosen by the majority.

Until a leader can be found who can command the confidence and respect of the entire band, what hope is there of the band being heard again?

In 1941 it was decided to sell the band instruments to pay off debts.

### **JULY – 9 – 1941**

#### **Band Instruments to be sold.**

At a meeting of the committee of the Barnard Castle Town Band, Mr S.E. Harrison presiding, when Mr G.S. Stainsby accepted the office of secretary, it was decided to dispose of four surplus instruments in order to liquidate an overdraft of £7. Messrs Stainsby, W.F. Smith (treasurer), and M. Wright were appointed to draw up a valuation of the Band's instruments. It was decided that all the remaining property of the band should be retained with a view to restarting it after the war.

However there must have been a change of heart and by the end of the same year a band had been cobbled together from members of the Home Guard.

### **SEPTEMBER – 17 - 1941**

#### **Barnard Castle Band.**

Mr S. E. Harrison presided on Tuesday evening at a meeting of the committee of the Barnard Castle Band. It was reported that a satisfactory start had been made with the reconstituted band now composed of members of the Home Guard. AFS. ARP. and other home services. Mr M. Wright, Bandmaster, stated that the practices had been well attended and he hoped soon to be able to get a good band together. It was stated that young lads wishing to join would be welcomed.

The offer of Barnard Castle Rotary Club to run a dance at an early date on behalf of band funds was gratefully accepted. It was decided to ask Mrs Harrison to be kind enough to design a poster to advertise the dance. It was reported that at the concert to be given by a military band in the Bowes Museum Park on Sunday afternoon a collection would be made for the town band funds.

There is then something of a gap in the records although there is a report of a successful Christmas concert in 1949

### **DECEMBER – 14 - 1949**

**BARNARD CASTLE TOWN BAND**  
FIRST POST-WAR  
**BAND CONCERT**  
in  
**The Victoria Hall,**  
(By Courtesy of M.B.C. Cinemas Ltd.)  
on  
**SUNDAY, 18th DECEMBER, 1949, at 8 p.m.**  
DOORS OPEN at 7-30 p.m.  
**Mr A.M. HARVEY will preside.**  
**ADMISSION PROGRAMME 1/6<sup>d</sup>.**  
CHILDREN HALF PRICE. Prices include Tax  
*Proceeds to Band "Uniform Fund."*

### **DECEMBER – 29 - 1949**

#### **Successful Band Concert**

Mr A.M. Harvey presided at the first band concert that was held at the Victoria Hall on Sunday evening, and in his address said that the band performance speaks for itself—a little bit of everything. Likewise your enthusiastic appreciation. But a concert like this doesn't just happen. Much unseen labour goes towards its production. This Band, supported only by the residents of Barnard Castle and district, has to compete against large industrial works bands - no easy feat in these days when competition and expensive equipment and high costs of organisation. But our bandsmen slog away in their own time, and have gradually by sheer hard endeavour got Barney Band on the map again.

Now I suggest that it is up to all townspeople to support and encourage the efforts of the Barnard Castle Town Band, both by attending band concerts and giving, as befits the individual purse, contributions to the Band uniform fund. Thereby making the labours of the Band and its first aim a success: - that is to be in uniform by Whitsuntide.

What an asset to the town to have a uniformed band—smart, efficient, and able to go anywhere - fitting in with all sorts of functions in different parts of the Country, publicising and bringing credit to this grand old town, shortly, a subscription list will be opened, and on behalf of the band I ask you one and all to support it, no matter how small a contribution it will be welcomed.

In conclusion, I ask you to give a very hearty vote of thanks to the band as a band for their very splendid effort tonight, and also to M.B.C. Cinemas for the loan of the hall; Coun. Maude; the guest artists, who gave their services free; the Bandmaster and band secretary and treasurer, for all the work they do and Coun. G.A. Carter for the loan of the extension to the stage.

Coun. G.E. Maude said that he was proud to be president of the Band and would continue to help them all he could. The programme has only been made possible by the hard work and continual practice by the members, and I appeal to all parents to send their boys along to learn to play an instrument as it is only by a steady flow of youngsters coming along that the Band can be maintained.

Practice nights are Tuesday and Friday at 7-30, and anyone desiring to play should call on the bandmaster, Mr E. Maurice Wright; at 7, King Street.

Programme Comments,

All the numbers by the Band were well rendered. The Cornet solo, "To My Old Kentucky Home," was played with great success by Trevor Wright - the best number undoubtedly.

In "Songs by Stephen Foster," both cornet and trombone players were heard to advantage, the euphonium (Bandsman Kavanagh) was particularly effective.

The attendance was spoiled by the inclement weather but over 200 were present.

## 1950 - 2000

The second part of the 20th Century started in busy style with the band playing at a wide variety of engagements. There is an interesting note in The "Mercury" of an ex bandmaster emigrating to America and starting a band there. It is pleasing to see an example of the spreading of the brass band way across the globe.

### **MARCH - 15 - 1950**

Their many friends in Barnard Castle will be pleased to know that Mr and Mrs Coates (pictured at their 60th wedding anniversary breakfast) who now live at Brandon (U.S.A.) are keeping in very good health and wish to be remembered to all their old acquaintances in the town. Prior to emigrating in 1911, they lived for many years in Coronation Street.

Mr Coates. Born at Bowes, was the town bandmaster and worked as foreman stonemason for James Kyle and Sons, contractors of Barnard Castle and Newcastle. Mrs Coates, born in Brailes, Warwickshire, was a sister of the late Daniel Bailey. Hall Street, who died recently.

When he got to Brandon, Mr Coates formed a band from members of his own family. He is an ardent hunter and still insists on shooting his quota of ducks. There are two daughters. 5 sons in the family, with 13 grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren.

A great deal is made of the fact that the band were equipped with a new uniform that year. The styles of uniforms in those days had a very military look ( unsurprising after the influence of two world wars).

### **JUNE - 28 - 1950**

Barnard Castle Town Band Equipped with Uniform

The town may well congratulate itself and should be very proud indeed to have not only a full band playing exceptionally well but now one fully equipped with uniforms. The uniform is certainly up-to date and a credit to those who ordered it This should add to the atmosphere and spirit of the many functions the band are so often called upon to attend.

It is due to the initiative and unceasing effort of the band chairman, ex-Councillor A.M. Harvey that the band can today turn out so well equipped. He was elected chairman in October and immediately made a drive to have the band in uniform for Whit. This, however, was not accomplished since delivery could not be obtained before 24<sup>th</sup> June.

To permit of the uniform being put into use immediately, the band being engaged to play on Saturday first for the National Savings effort, and again for the D.L.I. Association church parade on Sunday, a short ceremony of initiation has been arranged for Friday evening at 7-30 p.m. in the William Hall.

Granted fine weather the band will thereafter march down to Thorngate and up to Scar Top where a short programme will be given.

Councillor Victor Cartier. Vice-chairman of the Urban District Council will introduce the band in uniform to the town. Mr A.M. Harvey - presiding. Admission will be free and a large attendance is hoped for.

Donations to date have been most encouraging and thanks is tendered to all those who have so willingly supported this very great effort. A very special invitation is therefore given to all subscribers to come out and see the Town Band in their new uniforms on Friday night. Once completed the subscription list will be published in these columns.

## ***JUNE - 28 - 1950***

### **BARNARD CASTLE TOWN BAND.**

#### **Initial Presentation of the Band in Uniform**

**THE WITHAM HALL.**

**FRIDAY NEXT, 30th JUNE 1950**

**at 7-30 p.m.**

**Mr A. M. HARVEY will preside.**

**INITIATION by**

**Councillor VICTOR CARTER,**

**Chairman, The Urban District Council.**

**A Special Invitation is extended to all those who have so kindly subscribed.**

**To those who have not as yet been approached, an appeal is made to give generously,  
since quite a sum has still to be raised to complete the Uniform Fund.**

By 1951 the band was competing in the Durham league and hosted a competition in the Castle.

## ***AUGUST - 29 - 1951***

### **BAND CONTEST**

Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> at 3 p.m.

In the Castle Inner Bailey

(Enter through King's Head Yard).

The following Bands up to time of going to Press have entered: —

Durham Shakespeare (Durham City)

Hylton Colliery (Sunderland).

Whitworth (Spennymoor).

Tow Law

Leasingthorne Colliery (Bishop Auckland)

Barnard Castle Town Band

All competing for the Rutherford Cup and some for the Rea Cup.

Admission 1/6 (inc. Tax).

Children 6d,

Tee, Ices, Minerals and Fruit on sale in grounds.

Come along and support "The Barny Band"

Proceeds to Town Band and Amateurs F.C.

## ***- 5 - 1951***

### **Band Contest**

#### **SUCCESSFUL BARNARD CASTLE VENTURE**

The staging of a brass band contest in Barnard Castle attracted a large crowd of people to the Inner Bailey on Saturday afternoon.

Six bands from the "C" and "D" sections of the Durham Brass Band League took part, and they were chiefly drawn from the colliery areas.

Included in the competitions were the local Town Band and the others comprised Durham Shakespeare, Hylton Colliery, Whitworth (Spennymoor), Tow Law, and Leasingthorne Colliery. The Stockton Malleable Works and were also entered but failed to put in an appearance.

After the competing bands had marched to the Inner Bailey the contest was formally opened by Mrs A.M. Rutter Chairman of the Council who welcomed the visiting bands to Barnard Castle. She congratulated the sponsors of the contest, the Barnard Castle Band and the Barnard Castle Amateurs Football Club, in their co-operation in reviving interest in brass band music in the area.

The two sections of the contest were for a march and for a waltz. Each piece was the selection of the individual band and resulted in an interesting choice of compositions being played.

Two challenge cups were available for competition, together with miniature cups for cornet, euphonium, and trombone.

The adjudicator, Mr Cecil Peacock, conductor of the Easington Public Band, prior to giving the results of the contest, thanked the committee for selecting him as judge. The setting, within the walls of the old castle, was ideal, and the acoustic value was excellent. He congratulated all the competitors on their performances and had a word of sympathy for those who had not secured prizes. The contest had been very even and in the waltz section only one point divided first and second. Mr Peacock had some sound words of advice for the bandsmen and urged them to support their conductor by conscientious practicing.

The results were: March 1- Durham Shakespeare. 82 points: 2- Tow Law. 80 points: 3- Hylton Colliery. 78 points.

Waltz 1- Durham Shakespeare. 80 points: 2- Tow Law. 79 points: 3- Whitworth (Spennymoor). 76 points.

The miniature cups went to the players in the winning band.

The march selection of the Durham band was "Jupiter" and their waltz selection was "Bachanell". Mrs Harvey presented the Rutherford Challenge Cup to the winner and Mrs P. Rea presented the cup which she gave, to Whitworth (Spennymoor) Band, who with 76 points received most points for "D" section bands. Bouquets were presented to Mrs Rutter, Mrs Rea and Mrs A.M. Harvey.

Mr Hodgson president of the Durham Brass Band League, complimented the joint committee on the splendid arrangements and the admirable choice of the setting for the contest. He expressed the wish that he would like to see all such events held, if possible, in similar pleasant surroundings.

Barnard Castle Town Band secured 74 points in the contest and performed creditably. Mr Maurice Wright, the conductor, later said that he was satisfied with their playing and easily surpassed the standard revealed at the rehearsals during the previous week.

## **SEPTEMBER – 19 - 1951**

### **NARROW MISS FOR A CUP**

#### **BARNARD CASTLE BAND SECURE 2nd PLACE IN CONTEST**

On Saturday, Barnard Castle Band (conductor Mr Maurice Wright) travelled to Hunwick to take part in the Band Contest held in connection with their annual carnival. The adjudicator, in his remarks, paid high tribute to the playing of the first and second bands and mentioned that there was very little to choose between them.

The first prize and a handsome silver cup for a waltz was awarded to Leasingthorne Colliery with 76 marks, Barnard Castle being second with 75 marks, Hylton Colliery was third with 73 marks. Barnard Castle also did well in the march, securing 76 points.

Whilst regretting the loss of one mark, the band is quite satisfied with the result. Their enthusiasm under the leadership of Mr Maurice Wright has, made them a band to be reckoned with in brass band circles and they are confident that in the near future, the laurels of complete victory will come their way. Their supporters Barnard Castle and district heartily endorse their confidence.

Competing continues to take place in 1952 with a little more success this time.

## **JANUARY – 30 – 1952**

### **THE BAND DO WELL IN CONTEST**

Barnard Castle Town Band took part in the annual grading contest at Spennymoor on Sunday in connection with the Durham Brass Band League preparatory to the forthcoming season's contests.

Mr Fred Ferguson, who has been giving additional coaching to the band in addition to normal preparation by the Bandmaster, Mr Maurice Wright was conductor of the band.

In the senior "A" section the Northern Echo Cup was won by The North-West Durham band, Crookhall Colliery, conducted by

Mr J. Stubbs, who with a two point's advantage defeated Easington Colliery Public Brass Band, who have held the trophy for the past two years. Blackhall Colliery band was third.

Most of the bands in the "D" Section in Durham competed and Eden Colliery (Consett) and Langley Park Colliery Bands, who won prizes, qualified to move to Section "C" of the league.

In the "D" Section, in which Barnard Castle Band competed, the test piece was Golden Age and Barnard Castle with a total of 155 points was fourth. In the test for hymn tunes the local players secured second place with a total of 165 points, only two less than the Eden Colliery Band.

Both, Mr Ferguson and Mr Wright together with the players and officials were very satisfied at the performances put up by the band. Although they failed by the narrow margin of four points to qualify for promotion to the "C" Section their attempt was very praiseworthy. Their playing in the hymn tune competition was considered very thorough and the members of the band agreed that the results were a very fair reflection of the playing standard.

The adjudicator was Mr Cyril I. Yorath and the trophies were presented by Mr Sydney Lavers.

## **AUGUST – 27 - 1952**

### **NINE BANDS TO COMPETE IN LOCAL CONTEST.**

Preparations are now complete for the second annual band contest which will be held in the Inner Bailey of the Castle next Saturday afternoon at 3 p.m.

The bands already entered include Tow Law, Hamsteels Colliery, Hunwick, Spennymoor and Whitworth, Butterknowle, Langley Park, Murton, Kibblesworth Colliery, and Barnard Castle.

They will march from Marshall Street through the town to the Castle Ground.



Three silver challenge and three miniature cups are offered and each band will play a march (own choice) and waltz (own choice). The miniatures will be for solo trombone, Euphonium, and Cornet. Mrs Wright, the octogenarian mother of the Wright brothers, has kindly consented to present the cups to the winning bands. The committee felt that it was a fitting tribute that she should have the honour as a gesture of appreciation for all that the family have done to foster and keep alive band music in the town. The adjudicator is Mr Kitto, the conductor of the famous premier class band, Thornley Colliery. Admission to the contest is only 1/6. Refreshments, etc. on sale.

The following photograph is found in the band archives which must relate to one of these events. It is evident that for a period of around 30 years the Wright family were prominent in the band. Mr Maurice Wright was the conductor and at one time a total of nine members of the Wright family played in the band. It seems likely that the lady in the fur stole is the octogenarian Mrs Wright and the bandsmen are members of the family. ( They were closely related to the Hunt family who may be involved in the photograph) The isa tradition in brass bands of families being involved. Todays band has a father and daughter, a mother and daughter, a brother and sister, and twin sisters! Other members of the band have had family members playing in the past.

By 1953 the band were calling themselves the ‘Barnard Castle Silver Band’ - a bit of a fashion at the time where the brass instruments were all silver plated to look a bit more “bling”! By the end of the same year they were the “Barnard Castle Silver Prize Band” in a further act of one-upmanship.

The band also took part in the famous Durham Miners Gala that year.

### ***JULY 22 - 1953-***

Barnard Castle Town Silver Band took part in the 70th gala of the Durham Miners' Association at Durham City on Saturday when they marched with the New Brancepeth Lodge of the Association. This was the Lodge's last appearance at the gala as – the colliery is closing down. The band under its conductor Mr Maurice Wright, and Mr S. Holmes, chairman, was also present.

This is a worthy honour for the Band and their conductor, Mr Maurice Wright, and shows that their service is appreciated well outside the confines of the town.

By 1954 the band was rehearsing in the “Three Horseshoes” pub. Maurice Wright finally retired that year and handed over the baton to Mr F Lucas, although Maurice stayed with the band to “strengthen the cornet section”

### ***DECEMBER – 8 - 1954***

What came as a great surprise to Mr Maurice Wright who has conducted the Barnard Castle Town Silver Prize Band for so many years took place at the usual band practice on Tuesday evening in the Bandroom. Recently Mr Wright relinquished his conductorship of the band and invited Mr F. Lucas; (who has recently come to live in the area and has the florist business in Galgate) to be bandmaster and he accepted the position.

Mr Wright himself decided to stay in the band and strengthen the cornet section. The bandmen got together and as a mark of appreciation decided to buy Mr Wright a little memento as a token of appreciation and invited Mr J. M. Jones, who is President of the Durham County Brass Band League to, make the presentation.

Mr S. Holmes, treasurer of the band, presided over the ceremony and Mr Jones in presenting the beautifully engraved dress watch to Mr Wright said that he had had many varying duties to perform all over the County since his election as president of their league but none so pleasant as to be asked to convey to Mr Wright with this token of their esteem, and the thanks of all the bandmen and committee members to him for the many years of hard work that he had put in to train and keep in existence the Barnard Castle Town Band. The watch would remind him of the deep friendship that existed between him and all the members of the band and of the grand spirit of co-operation that had kept the Band going through thick and thin times over all the years. In thanking the Band, Mr Wright said it was a gift that he never dreamt of and very beautiful. Mr Wright joined the Barnard Castle Band on its formation just after the First World War and learned to play under Mr G. Stainsby the local bandmaster. Went to Easington Colliery Band, one of the leading bands in the North, as soprano player a few years later and studied the cornet under a professional teacher- Mr Grant. He stayed there for two years then came back to Barnard Castle to follow his trade as a baker. He played with the band at the Crystal Palace Contest as solo cornet when they gained the fourth prize. Later he was made bandmaster and conducted at the Crystal Palace. For a few years he was bandmaster for Middleton Band, and during this time they got a new uniform and won quite a few contests.

The New Bandmaster Mr F. Lucas, who has undertaken the conductorship of the band, is a life-long musician and was the one of the youngest professional orchestra conductors when only 17 years of age was for a long period Bandmaster of the Durham Light Infantry, and has been musical director of many theatres in the North-East and was conductor of the Sunderland Symphony Orchestra. Asked for his opinion of the prospects for the Band, Mr Lucas felt confident that given the support and if the band continue practising and maintained interest that at the next league grading contest the Barnard Castle —Town Silver Prize Band would be promoted. Their greatest need at the moment is new instruments.

### ***DECEMBER – 15 - 1954***

#### **Barnard Castle Band**

The Annual general meeting of the Barnard Castle Silver Prize Band was held in the Bandroom, Three Horse Shoes, on Tuesday, 30th November, Mr S. J. Holmes in the chair.

The secretary, Mr J. Kavanagh, reviewing the year's report, regretted that in view of bad weather conditions the Band were only able to play on the Scar Top on three occasions. The Band had been engaged once again to play at Durham Miners' Day, and had received tenders for the Band's services as far afield as Shap, in Westmorland. They had presented concerts at Brough, which were much appreciated.

At this juncture the Chairman conveyed on behalf of the Band their deep appreciation to their conductor, Mr M. Wright, who has relinquished the post of conductor to become a playing member of the cornet section, Mr Wright has been associated with the Town Band since its formation and its present good standard was the result of his patience and perseverance he had shown during his period of leadership combined with the interest and loyalty the bandmen had given him. The Band had competed in several contests in the past and whilst they had not been trophy winners the remarks had been very encouraging, failing only by a very small margin. To mark the appreciation of the Band it was decided to present Mr Wright with some small token of esteem at a later date.

The Chairman remarked that they been most fortunate in having as his successor Mr F. Lucas, whose experience and knowledge was keenly appreciated and the Band are confident that, given the full support, the Band can look forward to a very successful year.

Thanks were accorded to Mr G. Maude, the Band president, who has been compelled through ill health to resign the post of president. The vacancy was left open until the chairman had approached a gentleman of the town to accept the position. Mr S. Metcalfe, vice chairman, was elected Chairman for the ensuing year.

Mr S. J. Holmes was elected treasurer, the post he has also had since the resignation of Mr R. Henderson. Thanks were also accorded to Mr C. Kelly, Three Horse Shoes Hotel, for the use of the band room. In presenting the balance sheet, the treasurer felt they could to some extent feel satisfied with the balance of £43 as their chief means of support, playing during the summer, had been drastically curtailed owing to bad weather conditions. The need for increased funds was urgently required to replace some worn out instruments.

The winter programme commences with a carnival ball in the Witham Hall on Friday, the 10th December. The playing members of the Band were thanked for their support and interest during the past year.

We have little evidence of further activity until 1960 when the band chose to celebrate their 100th birthday. As we discussed earlier it is not at all clear how they decided on 1860 as the birth of the band but that's what happened.

"in 1960 the band celebrated its one hundredth birthday with a dinner when members were presented with medals bearing their names. Prominent musicians were the Wright family with Maurice as conductor, his two sons Raymond and Norman, his son-in-law Paddy Hunt, his brothers Tees, James, Trevor and Alan and his nephews Alfie and Trevor Walton."

By 1967 the band had only six players and once again ceased to exist. Fortunately the players decided to loan the instruments to the local school Ball and the music teacher Bill Partington was able to make good use of them with local children.

## Band in 1975



In 1973 after meeting all the youngsters Ronnie Henderson re-formed the band with Trevor Wright as conductor. Once again the name was changed to its present name Barnard Castle Band.

In 1974 Trevor injured his arm in a fall and the baton was taken over by Peter Hartley, who led the band to many victories at contests and promotion from the fourth to the second in the Durham Brass Band League, twice reaching the finals in London

To celebrate the Queens Silver Jubilee in 1977. Cyril Beere, the secretary of the re-formed band and Personnel Director of Rothmans at Darlington was persuaded to run a "one off" entertainment contest for championship section bands in the Beehive Centre at Rothmans. Roy Newsome, a famous name in Brass Band circles was persuaded to help. The purpose of this was to help raise some much needed funds for Barnard Castle Band. The competing bands were Carlton Main, Frikley Colliery, Ever Ready, Fairey, Grimethorpe (who won) , Tredegar and Whitburn.

This "Brass in Concert" was such a success that it became an annual event moving from the Beehive to the Dolphin Centre, then to Spennymoor Leisure Centre and since 2005 has been a "sell out" at the Sage, Gateshead and is now considered to be the best entertainment contest in the brass band world.

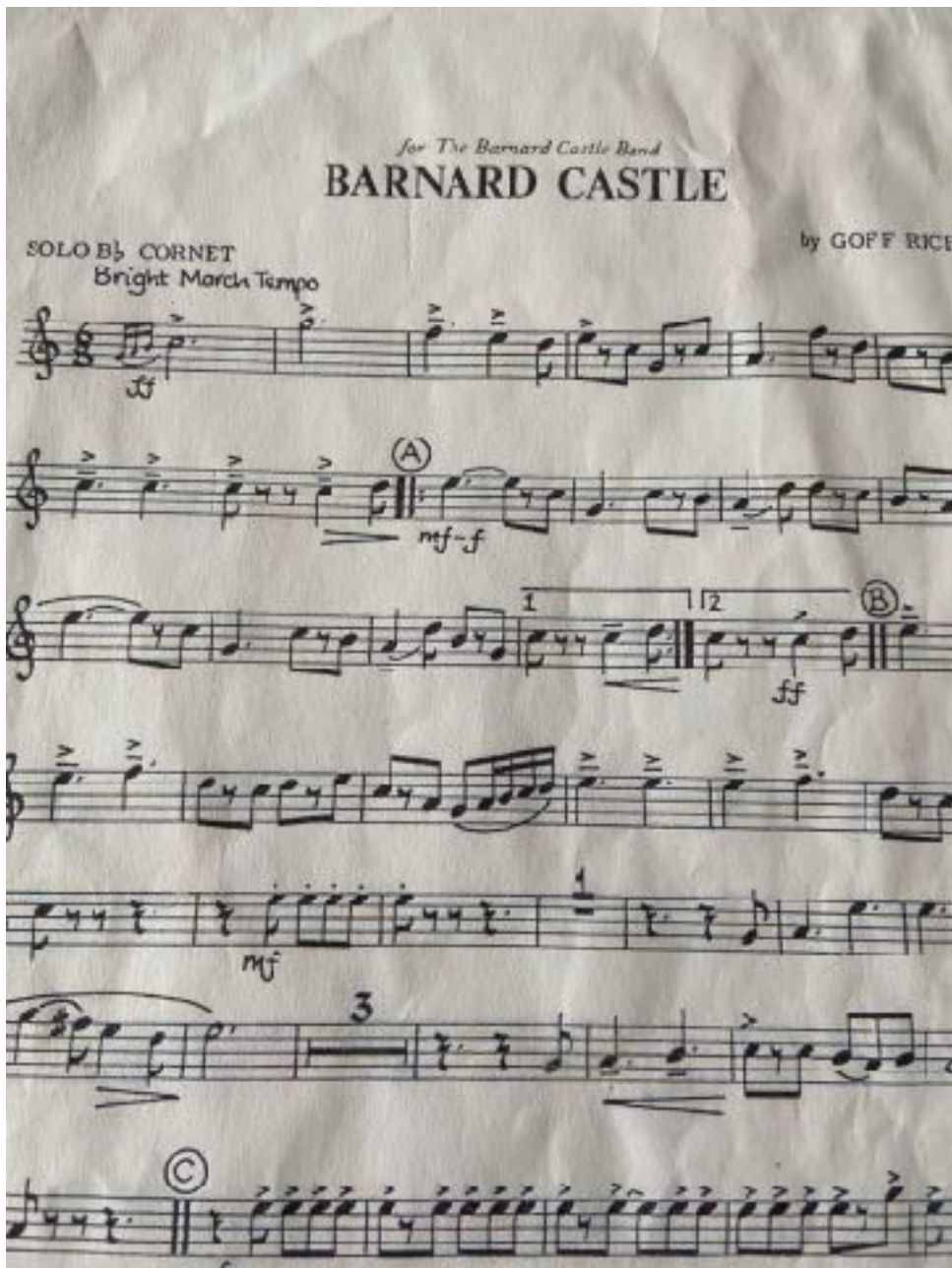
The bands ongoing involvement with Brass in Concert has created links between the town and some of the best brass bands and musicians in Britain and Europe.

One of the long lasting consequences of this was that for the 1980 competition "Songs of the Quay" a composition by the famous Cornish composer Goff Richards was chosen as a set piece that all the competing bands needed to include in their programme. Goff Richards attended the concert and a friendship developed with Cyril Beere. Cyril subsequently asked Goff if he would consider writing a signature march for the band.

The march "Barnard Castle " was paid for by Ralph Finch of "Teesdale Travel Bureau" and was first performed in public at the newly reopened Witham Hall in Barnard Castle on 6th May 1981 and was conducted by Goff Richards himself.

"Barnard Castle" has been played by the band to end every performance since 1981. It has become the custom for there to be some audience participation at the "trio" - you have to be there to experience it! On one occasion when the music had been accidentally omitted from the concert folders the audience refused to leave the hall until someone went to the band room to get it!

The march is now an established part of the brass band repertoire throughout the country - but nobody plays it like "The Barney Band"!



Peter Hartley died in 1980 at the age of 47 and will always be remembered as one of the "greats" in the history of the Barnard Castle Band.

In the early part of the 1990's the musical direction was taken up by Gary Hutchinson who was one of the original members of the 1973 re-formed band. The first fruits of the bands new

endeavors were born in 1992 when the band achieved National Brass Band League Section 4 Regional Champions and Section D Durham League Champions status.

This success led to the band qualifying for the National Finals in London. 1993 saw a similar picture of success in the National and Durham League competitions which resulted in the band being promoted into the National and Durham League 3rd Section. Adding to 1993's honours was the George Allen Entertainment competition trophy.

As a result of continued success in major competitions in 1994, which included being placed 1st. in the Murton Colliery Entertainment Contest, the band won further promotion to the National Brass Band League Section 2 and Section C in the Durham League

## The Band in 1982

Back Row from the left:



Keith Gowland, Nigel Harle, Thomas Stubbs, Syd Wilkinson, Kim Rabbits, (conductor) Stan Morris, Richard Wilson, Gary Hutchinson, Colin Johnson, Ronnie Henderson, Philip Hartley, Howard Wilson, Rachel Howe

Front Row from the left:-

Ian Massey, Colin Massey, Jane Skipsey, Neil Mitchell, Nigel Harvey, Paul Rabbits, Hillery Stoddart, Susan Doran, Evelyn Mitchell, Nichola Barningham, Veronica Kaye, Ted Hutchins, Monica Jeffreys, Fiona Massey, Leslie Skipsey.

Given that the band had risen from Section 4 to Section 2 in only two years it was all the more remarkable when the band was placed 3rd in the 1995 National League Area contest lead to the band being promoted to the National League 1st Section in 1996.

Confidence high, the band entered the 1996 Durham League Championship with only one aim - to win. And win we did with a 2 point margin, taking along the way "Best Principal Cornet, Best Euphonium and Best Bass Section".

Promotion followed to Section B in the Durham League.

Hard on the heels of the Durham League came the 1996 National Area Contest. This was to be a severe challenge to the band playing Gilbert Vintners former Championship test piece "Spectrum". A creditable mid table result confirmed the Barnard Castle Band as a worthy 1st Section band.

A long overdue change of uniform to short black jackets with gold epaulets and black trousers was made possible by the generosity of the Watson family of The Jersey Farm Hotel & Restaurant.

Later that year the band recorded a tape entitled "We have all the time in the world" 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001 saw the band consolidating its position in the First Section of the National League being placed 3rd, 6th, 5th, 8th and 6th in the Area Contests.

2002. and the age old curse of brass bands struck again as Gary Hutchinson the Musical Director had to relinquish his position due to relocation within his company and a number of key young players disappeared to university and careers.

The band managed to fulfill engagements using players borrowed from other bands but were unable to compete in the Area Contests and as a result the band slipped from the First Section to the Fourth Section.

Ronnie Henderson died in October 2004 and will be fondly remembered by many young musicians in the area.

In March 2005 Louis Johnson the bands chairman who, like Ronnie Henderson, had been involved in the reforming of the band in 1973 passed away.

Having carried the Bass Drum on every parade for thirty years Louis had been the driving force of the band.

In April Gary Hutchinson returned to the area to take up the role of Musical Director again and in May along with Broughtons Brass, Stanhope Silver and Ferryhill Town, the band recorded tracks for the Brass Band Aid CD to raise funds for the World Vision Charity.

May 2006 the band was placed 2nd in Section 4 of The National League Area Contest and so qualified for the National Finals held later that year at the Harrogate International Centre where, under Gary Hutchinson's direction for the last time, the band was placed fourth.

The loss of young players to university and work commitments has over recent years led to the band having to rely on our friends from the military bands based at Catterick to fill seats. But the uncertainty of their availability to fulfill engagements has made it impossible for the band to compete in either the Durham or National Leagues.

The band has been grateful to a number of conductors over the past years, each in their own way have helped to shape and develop the band along the road of improvement.