

# Ubiquitous Ambassadors - Knottingley Silver Band

*By Terry Spencer*

## **ORIGINS & EARLY HISTORY: CIRCA 1860 – 1900**

“They say that Macnamara’s  
Was the finest in the land  
But we know a damn sight better,  
It was Sammy Marshall’s band.....

...They played everywhere at Christmas  
- as traditional as mince pies,  
And they must have been quite special  
To earn the logo ‘Silver Prize’.”

*Frank Webster Chambers*  
*‘A Memory Jog: Further Memories of Old Knottingley*  
*Carey J. Chambers (ed), (1995)*

The origin of Knottingley Band is obscure. In 1980 the Band celebrated its conjectured centenary year, the date being taken from an old letterhead of 1880. However, a subsequent documentary source has been located which indicates that the genesis of the Band may lie much further in the past.

The records of the long defunct Knottingley Brewery Co. reveal that in April 1861 the proprietor, John Carter, made a donation to Knottingley Town Band. There is clear evidence therefore that a band was in existence early in the second half of the nineteenth century and as the name ‘Knottingley Town’ or ‘Knottingley Brass Band’ was commonly used prior to the adoption of the title ‘Knottingley Silver Prize Band’ early the following century, it would suggest that the year 1880 merely marked the reorganisation of the Band which was already well established by that date.

The roots of brass band history are lost in time but immediate influences date from the late eighteenth century when the growing popularity of fairs and markets increasingly became the haunts of musicians. A simultaneous development was the growth of church bands as small groups of parishioners banded together to provide musical accompaniments for divine worship. The musical nucleus was forged into a cohesive whole by the advent of the Industrial Revolution which by the early nineteenth century as an antidote to the harsh drabness of working class life, engendered the genesis of small bands which were to develop as an important element of popular working-class culture in many small towns and villages. Numerous brass and reed bands were formed at that period, with many having but a short existence. Others, however, such as Kippax village band, established in 1814, proved more durable and thrived in the burgeoning atmosphere of national security and patriotic pride which characterised the Victorian era.

Nominally subscription bands were primarily of working class membership and dependent upon the financial support of working class communities. Such bands were also of economic necessity, open to the patronage of the local gentry. Thus, the

involvement and by extension, influence of the middle classes was a clearly discernible element in the development of local ensembles.

The middle class squire-archy and aspirant capitalist manufacturers, mindful of the excesses and social consequences of the French Revolution of 1789 and fearful of the latent power of the growing industrial proletariat in England, regarded music as a force of good; a device by which the masses might be gentled and pacified. To this purpose they actively supported the formation of community bands and in so doing became the arbiters of musical taste subliminally defining a basic repertoire of selections from operas, marches, waltzes and polkas.

Simultaneous technical and commercial revolutions accompanied and influenced developing social trends. From the mid nineteenth century the process of mass production assisted the manufacture of cheaper instruments while the invention of the piston valve and its application to musical instruments made such instruments relatively easier to play and was therefore fundamental to the increase in the number of bands formed as the century progressed.

Such bands were frequently associated with local inns which in addition to affording the facility for practice in convivial surroundings also provided adequate space for the storage of instruments. The bands were supported and encouraged by brewers and publicans keen to promote entertainment and stimulate the sale of ale. Money for the purchase of instruments and music stands was commonly raised by public subscription and by loans from wealthy patrons who also often owned the premises which served as a bandroom. Thus, there is a distinct possibility that the beginnings of Knottingley Town Band were subject to such an arrangement and this is further reinforced by the known link with the Carter family and with St. Botolph's Church with which that family were so prominently associated throughout the nineteenth century.

Of the formative years of the Band there is little specific evidence and it is only following the establishment of the Pontefract Advertiser late in 1863 that snippets of news began to appear concerning the activities of the Band. A newspaper report of November 1874, for instance, states that Knottingley Brass Band played for dancing in Knottingley Town Hall until 11.00pm. More seditiously, perhaps, is a report the year following that the Band led George Knapton and his supporters from Knottingley railway station to the Town Hall following Knapton's release from prison where he had spent a month in detention for illegally voting in an election for the town guardians. Knapton was met at the station by an open conveyance and was triumphantly led through the streets by the Band. At the Town Hall, Knapton was presented with a purse containing £20 by Sidney Woolf Esq., earthenware manufacturer of Ferrybridge Pottery, one of the successful electoral candidates in whose interest Knapton had broken the law.

The month before, the Band had played at the opening match of Knottingley Town Cricket Club following its relocation to Banks Garth, the occasion being marked by a match between the married and single men of the town. The event was but the first in which the Band appeared at the Banks Garth cricket field and marked the beginning of a mutually supportive bond between the Band and the Club throughout subsequent decades.

As early as the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the Band was already engaged on a well established routine, elements of which are still discernible today. For example, in 1875 the Band paraded the streets of Knottingley on Christmas morning, playing carols, and annual event designed to provide festive cheer and simultaneously take advantage of the season of goodwill to replenish the coffers of the Band.

A further annual engagement was the 'send off' provided by the Band on the occasion of the annual Sunday School trip for the teachers and pupils of St. Botolph's Church. On occasion, the Band actually accompanied the trippers on their out of town excursions, as in August 1885 when a convoy of eight wagonettes travelled to Womersley park headed by the Band which played as they left Knottingley and as they entered Womersley, and then repeated the performance on the return journey.

In the winter of 1885-86 the Band appeared in a series of entertainments given in the National Schoolroom, promoted by the Vicar of St. Botolph's, Rev. F.E. Egerton. Again, in 1885, the Band made what was described as, "their annual church parade" on Whit Sunday morning and shortly after noon the following day accompanied the Sunday School pupils under the direction of Mr. Starr, walking in procession through the town and singing hymns at the residences of principal members of the St. Botolph's congregation. By 4.00pm, the rounds being completed, both Band and scholars sat down to "a well provided tea" in the schoolroom. The procession then reformed and marched to Grange Field, the Hill Top residence of Mrs Hannah Martha Carter, widow of the erstwhile brewery owner, where games took place as the Band played selections of music to "the great delight of all present."

Finally, after the singing of a favourite hymn and a round of cheers by the pupils for Mrs Carter, the Vicar, the Sunday School teachers (plus one for themselves), the Band struck up with the National Anthem to mark the end of a very busy day. Undaunted, the following year the Band again accompanied the St. Botolph's Sunday School trip, this time on a visit to Nostell Priory.

Regardless of any patronage which may have been bestowed by the Carter family or other benefactors, the Band has, from its earliest days down to the present time, been largely self-supporting, relying upon the skill and enthusiasm of its members to elicit the patronage of the local population. That support from this source has generally been forthcoming is largely due to the esteem in which the Band has been held by the public because of its readiness to support any occasion, civic or social within the town and district, particularly events held for charitable purposes. Nowhere is this more clearly evident than in the case of fundraising for the district medical charities which served the local population.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century the custom had developed of holding an annual parade with the Town Band leading representatives of the various friendly societies through the main thoroughfares of the town as collectors sought random contributions from bystanders in support of organisations such as Pontefract Dispensary, Leeds Infirmary and Askern Spa Medicinal Baths. Thus, in 1881, the Town Band led members of twenty lodges of the Oddfellows Friendly Society in a march round the town as a preliminary to a service held in the Ropewalk Wesleyan Chapel. Frequent heavy showers resulted in the temporary abandonment of the parade but following the service, the group reformed and visited the areas unattended earlier that day.

A variation of the fund raising activity of the Band is also evident from an earlier engagement at which, on Monday and Tuesday, 23-24 August 1880, the Knottingley Town Band played for dancing at Ferrybridge feast and gala which was held in support of the medical establishments.

The Oddfellows, Buffalos and kindred organisations within the town formed the Knottingley Charitable Institutions Committee which by 1884 had extended the number of charitable events held within the town throughout the year including a gala event to coincide with Feast Week activities on and around August Bank Holiday each year. The earliest recorded gala concert was held at Grange Field, adjacent to the residence of Mrs Hannah Martha Carter, in 1884. Within a few years the event had been transformed, becoming an annual Hospital Sunday parade and demonstration with which the Town Band was to be associated for over half a century. However, throughout the decade of the 1880s there appears to have been a hiatus concerning the Town Band's involvement with the annual parade and demonstration, the rival Bagley's Glassworks Band being regular participants in the event.

The 'Glasshouse' band was formed by the employees of Messrs Bagley Wild & Co., whose glass bottle factory had introduced the industry to Knottingley in May 1871. The precise date of the establishment of the Glassworks Band is not known but the indications are that it was formed in the early 1880s for a report in the Pontefract & Castleford Express, dated August 1883, states that:

*"The Brass Band of Bagley, Wild & Co., under conductor, Mr. John Shaw, paraded the town on Saturday and Monday and played well indeed considering the short time Mr. Jerry Johnson of Castleford, the teacher, has had them under his tuition."*

Although entitled a 'brass band' reference to it as a 'Brass and reed band' is found in a report of a concert performance which took place on Knottingley Flatts in June 1884, under "their able bandmaster, Mr John Shaw", when the efforts of the band were stated to be "highly appreciated", as they no doubt were when the band participated in a service at Christ Church, Knottingley, the same month.

The move to establish a glassworks band may have precipitated the reorganisation of the Town Band in 1882. Certainly, there exists at least one source which connects certain personalities with both organisations. Recalling days of yore in newspaper correspondence in 1977, Mrs Hodgson Walker referred to her father, John Hartley Shaw, as the former bandmaster of the Town Band at the same time when Sam and Jack Marshall were tutors. Other familial members of "the first Knottingley Brass Band" to be mentioned were the Hargraves, Drapers, Rowbottoms and the Pollards. Extant documentary evidence links individuals from the above named families with subsequent membership of the Town Band and it would appear, therefore, that for reasons which are unclear, a 'breakaway' occurred in 1882, with John Shaw and perhaps others, leaving the Town Band to form the band of Bagley, Wild & Co., thus necessitating the reorganisation of the Town Band and prompting the subsequent but erroneous impression that the Band was established at that date.

The existence of two bands within the town, each frequently referred to in the local press as 'Knottingley Brass Band', makes definition of their individual activities almost impossible during the ensuing decades. Indeed, the common nomenclature serves to suggest that the Town Band and the Works Band and their common link with John

Shaw, were one and the same. Such is not the case, however, for apart from the historical evidence that the Town Band was in existence some twenty years before the formation of the Works Band (indeed, a decade before the existence of the glassworks with which the latter was associated) there is clear proof that they were separate entities.

The advent of the Glassworks Band appears to have cast something of a shadow over the older ensemble and throughout the 1880s the 'Glassblowers' seem to have predominated in events within the town, particularly with regard to appearances at the Infirmary Sunday gatherings. In 1884, Bagley's Band led the parade through the town with Brotherton Band in the middle and Pontefract Borough Band bringing up the rear, the parade being followed by a concert of sacred music at Grange Field, Hill Top. Again, in 1886, the Glassworks Band, conducted by Mr. John Shaw, gave a concert at Howards Field which included selections of "new music" from 'The Bohemian Girl', 'Art & Nature', Weber's 'Mass' and the fantasias 'La Pariselle', 'La Val d'Amour' and 'Salutation'.

For a decade and a half from 1884, the Glassworks Band participated in the events of Dispensary Sunday, usually in conjunction with brass bands from neighbouring towns such as Pontefract, Castleford, Featherstone and Brotherton and in 1890 with the military band of the Lancashire & Yorkshire Regiment. In addition, in 1895, the Glassworks Band under the direction of Mr. I. Johnson, marched through the town to mark the coming of age of Mr. Ernest B. Bagley, son of William Bagley, one of the founding partners of the firm. The bandsmen were reported to be wearing new uniforms, giving them, "a very fine appearance."

The uniforms were again on display on Dispensary Sunday 1901, when the Band under John Shaw, marched to the cricket field at Banks Garth with the Brotherton Band, conducted by Mr. T. Hardy, and played selections during the annual demonstration.

The demonstration of 1891 was significant in that both the Knottingley bands appeared together. The usual procession was designed to coincide with the conclusion of a cricket match at the Banks Garth field and a lengthy concert programme had been arranged as evening entertainment. Alas, the rain which rendered inconclusive the match between Knottingley Town and Fairburn threatened throughout the speeches of the attendant dignitaries and came down so heavily shortly after the commencement of the concert that proceedings had to be abandoned after only two choruses and a couple of hymns had been sung.

The re-emergence of the Town Band at the demonstration marked the commencement of an era covering more than half a century during which the name of the Band was to become synonymous with the event so that by the time the establishment of the National Health Service in 1948 made fund raising obsolete, the Band had created an unparalleled attendance record.

Owing to the frequent lack of distinction between the two bands in newspaper reports concerning Infirmary Sundays during the 1890s it is uncertain which ensemble appeared on some occasions. Thus, although it was reported that the "Excellent Town Band performed" in 1894 when the event was undertaken in conjunction with a special cricket match arranged by the Town Cricket Club, it is most likely that the Glassworks

Band also appeared on other undefined occasions, the last precise reference being that of 1901.

The ultimate fate of the Glassworks Band is equally as obscure as its origin. In 1908 the Band was named as an entrant in the forthcoming National Brass Band Contest to be held at Crystal Palace, London, but for some unknown reason the Band did not attend the contest. Thereafter the record is silent.

Similarities of identity, size and repertoire between the Town Band and the Glassworks Band decreed that the latter were the principal rivals in terms of ability and prestige. There were, however, other ensembles within the town during the late Victorian period which although by their nature posing a less direct threat to the Town Band vied with it in seeking the physical and financial support of the public. It is noteworthy that music played such a significant part in the social and cultural life of the local populace and commendable that so small a community was able to sustain such a rich and varied musical ethos.

The bulk of the musical organisations, whether vocal or instrumental, were associated with the churches and chapels within the town and it is therefore unsurprising that moral attitudes informed both the social occasions, when music played a part, and also the programmes performed on such occasions. A strict regard for Sabbath keeping on the part of a substantial element of the local population was initially, a divisive feature of Infirmary Sunday with many refusing to support the cause on moral grounds because of the day on which the annual demonstration was held. When religious tokenism weakened to the point of acceptance of charitable demonstrations and public concerts held on the Sabbath, it was nevertheless deemed necessary to emphasise the 'sacred' nature and content of such events.

Similarly, ethical and moral considerations underlay the formation of some musical groups. As early as 1865, Knottingley Band of Hope had formed a drum and fife band which participated in local galas and street marches and demonstrations in support of the Temperance Movement.

Another local band of religious origin was the Red Ribbon or Salvation Army Band. The local corps had been established within the town by 1880 and by January 1883, had obtained a plot of land at Carr Lane upon which it was proposed to erect a citadel or barracks. The first Salvation Army band had been established by Charles Fry at Salisbury in August 1878 and by 1881 fourteen others were in existence in various English towns. In 1883, to great public complaint, hundreds of bands were formed by the Salvationists. The band of the Knottingley corps was apparently established at this time for in September 1883 it led a parade round the town culminating in a public address by the local leader, General Bairstow. In August the year following, an entertainment was given in the newly opened barracks with proceeds in aid of the Red Ribbon Band.

The newly established sect were obviously enterprising and obtained the support of a substantial element within the local populace for in 1884 it was revealed that the Red Ribbon Army had collected £200 in the previous twelve months to help offset the debt incurred in building their tabernacle, the Band doubtless playing a prominent part in the religious services and allied functions of the organisation.

Initial goodwill was transformed into open hostility, however, when in 1885 General Bairstow published a pamphlet in which the poor, particularly the Catholic Irish, were referred to in less than flattering terms. As a result riotous scenes occurred in April when a local mob attacked a marching column of Salvationists as, led by the Band, they toured the streets of Knottingley to deliver the gospel message. One William Elerington (sic) drove his horse-drawn mail van through the marching column, an action which resulted in an appearance at the local magistrate's court the following month. A second, successive hostile demonstration occurred against the Red Ribbon Army when a Knottla mob burnt an effigy of General Bairstow on the Flatts after the local police, with considerable difficulty, had succeeded in keeping the two factions apart.

However, within a short space of time the breach had obviously closed for in August 1889 the 'Tabernacle' Band appeared at the Infirmary Sunday demonstration held at Vale Head Field, Hill Top, where in conjunction with one of the unidentified Knottingley bands they "played good selections."

The appearance is all the more surprising, perhaps, because of an initial decree which prohibited the Salvation Army bands from playing musical compositions other than those of religious nature, largely confining their activity to acts of worship. The Ban may also have participated again in 1895 for a somewhat vague report stated that 2,000 people attended the demonstration at Howards Field;

*"to the strains of Knottingley Band under the direction of Captain Kellyn and Sgt. Instructor Howland, accompanied by the Castleford Temperance and Featherstone Brass Bands."*

Given the rank of the bandmaster and his assistant it would suggest that the band from Knottingley was that of the Salvation Army corps rather than either of its secular contemporaries.

It was also in the late 1880s that Knottingley String Band was formed to accompany the town Choral Society. The String Band featured in many social events in the following two decades, including regular appearances at the Infirmary Sunday demonstrations. The earliest report is of;

*"a small efficient band led by Mr Chambers of Pontefract", which accompanied the choir, both groups being under the overall supervision of Mr Archer, who had founded the Choir the previous decade. Interestingly, there is no mention of any brass bands being involved in the proceedings in 1887 which paradoxically was a reversal of the situation three years earlier when it was reported that;*

*"This year the experiment was a tried of having only an instrumental concert with the Brass Bands of Pontefract Borough, Castleford Primitive Methodists and Knottingley taking part."*

The String Band continued to perform at the Infirmary Sunday demonstrations until well into the twentieth century. In 1903 it accompanied the massed voices in a rendering of Handel's 'Hallelujah Chorus' and the following year played a selection from 'Rousseau's Dream'. Indeed, as late as 1912 the string band of the Wesleyan Brotherhood, conducted by Mr. A. Kellet, accompanied the singers but this may have

been the final bow for although the voices of the Wesleyan Brotherhood were heard the following year they were accompanied by Knottingley Silver Prize Band and on the eve of the Great War the singers were merely accompanied by a pianist, Mrs Jean Arnold, of the Congregational Church.

If the appearance of the Knottingley Town Band in the events of Infirmary Sunday during the 1880s and early 1890s were rare, its voluntary contribution to local organisations and charities was nevertheless significant. Nor were such contributions confined to local institutions. In May 1896, the Band paraded the streets taking a collection en route for the dependants of the Micklefield Colliery disaster and followed up this effort by playing the same evening to a large assembly of the townspeople gathered on the Flatts. The following month the Band again paraded, marching from the concourse of Knottingley railway station through the thoroughfares of the town collecting money on behalf of the Society of Railway Servants' Orphanage, an event which was for many years an annual engagement. Again, in July 1896, the Band toured the outlying villages of Beal, Kellington, Whitley and Womersley, raising money on behalf of Pontefract Dispensary. Presumably the distance between the rural communities was undertaken by wagonette, yet even so, to parade through each village on this circular tour represents a considerable feat of endurance and dedication.

It was those very qualities which ensured the survival of the Town Band for amidst the rivalries and the vicissitudes of time it was the Town Band which proved to be the more durable of the secular ensembles.

By the turn of the twentieth century the Band's musical activity fell into four broad categories; public ceremonies, concert performances, dancing and contests. The participation of the Band in concerts and ceremonial events not only engendered its reputation for voluntary work to charities both local and regional, which was to be a hallmark throughout its entire existence, but played an important part in promoting cultural appreciation, for it was through such events that many local people obtained their first taste of 'serious' music. While music for dancing was disparaged by a church led puritanical element within local society in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, by the 1880s it was gaining wider acceptance as the 'brass dance bands' helped to break social taboos, paving the way in the case of the Town Band for the formation of the 'Orchestral Band' early in the new century. Of contests the evidence is sparse to the point of non-existence during the early period of the Band's history. The fact is somewhat surprising given that generally from 1845 a profusion of local, regional and national contests took place, resulting in the standardisation of repertory and instrumentation. If the Town Band was involved in such events there is no evidence of it until the early years of the twentieth century although the frequency with which the Band participated from that time suggests that contesting was a well established feature of its musical activity in earlier days.

### **THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY: 1901 - 1920**

At what date the 'Town Band' became known as 'Knottingley Silver Prize Band' is uncertain. As late as August 1902, in an action that echoed the occasion when the Band welcomed George Knapton in 1875, the ensemble welcomed Trooper W. Walker home from the Boer War. Walker, who had been serving with the Yorkshire Hussars, was carried in a wagonette through the town in a procession led by the Knottingley Brass Band. It is therefore apparent that the name of the Band was unchanged at that date.

The last known reference to the old title occurs in a newspaper report of a concert held at the Banks Garth cricket field in July 1903, but while the earliest extant formal documentation concerning the Band is a somewhat fragmentary collection of minutes covering the period from May 1904 to November 1912, this source offers no direct information concerning the change of title nor the circumstances which inspired the change. However, an inscription on the inside front cover of the book seemingly indicates its continuation from a previous volume, since lost, and bears the title 'Knottingley Silver Prize Band, 1904'.

The sparse evidence therefore suggests that the Band was renamed in the latter half of 1903, presumably in the wake of a prestigious contest victory of such significance that it was considered worthy of incorporation into the Band's title. Unfortunately, a thorough search of all known data has failed to reveal any information concerning such an event, suggesting that the changed title was, perhaps, merely aspirational. Such conjecture is far from fanciful for the advent of a new century appears to have prompted appraisal of the future course to be taken by the Band in which refurbishment of the public image of the ensemble was the immediate manifestation. To this end, in September 1902, the Band was reported to be in need of assistance and had appealed to Knottingley Urban District Council for financial aid. The reason for seeking financial help is uncertain. One source states new instruments were required while a second source states more specifically that the need was for new uniforms costing £50 in order that "with their new outfit the Band hope to make themselves a credit to the town."

The desire for change did not occur in isolation and should be viewed within the context of developing national trends within the sphere of brass band activity. By the close of the nineteenth century uniforms were becoming fashionable and were being increasingly adopted by bands. At that time there were more than half a dozen firms within the county of Yorkshire alone specialising in tailoring for bands. Not unnaturally, in view of the pride in the British Empire, conquered and maintained by armed power, band uniforms tended to copy military style, a fashion clearly evident in the earliest known photograph of Knottingley Band, dating from 1895.

Within a year or two of that date, the Huddersfield outfitter, John Beever, was offering band uniforms in two qualities of cloth, epauletted, cuffed, frogged, flashed and buttoned, at 18s or £1-10-0 each. Caps, ornamented in gold or silver in the style of the Brigade of Guards or of naval design, were 4s 6d and 6s 6d respectively. Great coats at 13s and shoes at 8s or 10s per pair were optional extras.

When Henry Iles promoted the first National Brass Band Contest at the Crystal Palace in 1900 all players in the 29 competing bands were required to wear uniforms. In accordance with the developing trend the adoption of uniforms by bands with ambition became less of a fashion statement and more a practical necessity. Therefore, quite apart from the obvious attempt to improve the public image of the Band and the desire not to be outshone by the Glassworks band, or from the belief that a smart appearance would bolster the self-esteem of the bandsmen and hopefully produce an added dimension to their performance, particularly in contests, the move by the Knottingley Band was promoted by awareness of developments in general.

Given the Band's consistent record of charitable work in past decades the request for

funding was no doubt considered to be justified. Knottingley Urban District Council, however, having become involved in a protracted and costly dispute concerning the town drainage scheme and facing the expense of refurbishing the Town Hall recently donated to the town by Mr. J.G. Lyon, and mindful of other projections of substantial expenditure, felt unable to assist the Band and the appeal was duly rejected, leaving the Band to 'earn' the requisite sum.

An indication of the way in which money was raised is seen in a resolution of May 1904, in which the Band Committee formulated a pro rata scale of charges for submission to the organisers of the forthcoming demonstration and sports at nearby Rawcliffe.

16 players	6 guineas
20 players	7 guineas
24 players	8 guineas.

It is also of passing interest to note the increase in the size of membership during the previous decade for the 1895 photograph of the Band reveals only 14 people including the bandmaster. Whilst the growth in the size of the Band was a positive factor increasing membership brought logistical problems, not least in the provision of instruments. The problem was circumvented where possible by making membership dependant upon the ownership of an instrument but conditional acceptance was rarely possible and evidence exists of the creation of an instrument fund subsidised by weekly contributions as early as 1905. An indication of the costs involved has been provided by Cooper who states that the average price for cornets at this time was between £1-10-0 and £3-3-0, while the best quality euphonium cost £4 and estimates that the cheapest rate for which a small band of about 18 players could be equipped was about £50.

A further means by which money was earned was through the provision of concerts, both indoor and al fresco. As early as the 1870s such concerts took place on an occasional basis and were to become more frequent during the early decades of the twentieth century. At soirees, which often continued until the early hours of the morning and on rare occasions all night long, music was provided by a small 'Orchestral Band' consisting of six members drawn from the full ensemble. On such occasions the surplus bandsmen, assisted by wives and other supporters, served refreshments and undertook additional duties.

The long established rapport between the Band and the town cricket club is seen in a resolution of the Band Committee dated June 1905, that,

*"The Band give [the] Cricketers a sacred concert in payment for use of the field",*

and on other occasions the profit from events held at the cricket field was shared with the club. Thus, in July 1904,

*"On Saturday evening last, Knottingley Brass Band paraded the town followed by cyclists in fancy dress [which was] followed by a gala in the cricket field with the proceeds shared between the Band and the Cricket Club."*

And again the following year when a cycle parade led through the town by the Band

was followed by a gala and sports at the cricket field at which costume and other prizes were awarded. The Band played selections at intervals between the races and a first aid demonstration by a team from the town's ambulance station, and concluded the evening by playing for dancing.

By 1903 a regular series of Sunday concerts was being held at the cricket field. A report of that year refers to the 'great success', of one such event, which drew an attendance of 1,500 people. Conducted by J.W. Stamp of Castleford, "a fine programme was gone through and its execution reflected credit on the band and its conductor."

Similarly, in 1904, the cricket field provided the venue for a further season of sacred concerts.

A concert given at Banks Garth one Sunday in June 1907, which drew "a good attendance and a good gate collection", provides a sample of the musical fare provided by the Band. The concert opened with the march 'Silver Trumpets' by Viviani and was followed by Rossini's 'Il Barbiere'. A cornet solo 'O Dry Those Tears' by Riego, was followed by a selection from Herold's 'Pre-aux Cleres'. Next came a duet 'Excelsior' by Balfe and the concert concluded with Rummer's 'John Of Gaunt', all "ably accompanied" by the conductor, Mr. S. Marshall.

By 1908, however, the seasonal concerts were being held in Howards Field where, under the baton of bandmaster Sammy Marshall, the opening programme was undertaken. The programme consisted of the march 'Nakorkus', and air, 'Variation', and arrangement from 'Veronica' and selections of music by Haydn and Sir Arthur Sullivan. The 'sacred' concerts took place at monthly intervals, a second one being held at the same venue in August that year.

The Band also undertook concert engagements further afield, such as that given to, "a large and appreciative audience", at Carleton near Snaith, in June 1913, to boost the fund to enable the Band to participate in the forthcoming regional and national band contests. Again, in late July 1914, the Band gave two performances at Hillam Hall, the grounds of which had been placed at public disposal by Mr. H.L. Lyon, to enable the Band to raise funds. The Lyon family had business associations with Knottingley and regularly engaged the Band to play on social occasions such as the annual outings provided for their workers. In September 1916, for instance, the Band, at the behest of Mr. C.G. Lyon, accompanied the employees of Messrs Stainsby & Lyon, together with their families, on an excursion to Whitley Lodge. The trip was undertaken by three barges which made their way sedately along the Aire & Calder Canal with the Band playing musical selections on each leg of the journey.

A series of indoor concerts took place annually during the winter season from 1906. The concerts, under the direction of bandmaster Sammy Marshall, were held in Knottingley Town Hall and were very popular. On the occasion of the inaugural concert of the second season held on the evening of Monday 7th October 1907, a capacity audience listened to a programme consisting of a selection from the opera 'Il Travatore' and music by Haydn. Samuel Marshall gave a "fine tenor horn rendering" of an item entitled 'Mea' and artistes of both sexes sang a considerable number of songs, serious and comic, including one by Master Percy Turpin who reprised the sacred number 'Angels Ever Bright and Fair' for which he had recently been awarded first prize at the Pontefract Music Festival. The end of a long programme did not,

however, conclude the evening's activity, for the Orchestral Band then played music for dancing until 3.00am., not withstanding that the next day was a normal working day for most of the participants.

A public notice of March 1914, advertises

*A GRAND CONCERT  
of Sacred, Instrumental and Vocal Selections, promoted by the  
KNOTTINGLEY SILVER PRIZE BAND  
will be held in the  
TOWN HALL, KNOTTINGLEY,  
on SUNDAY NEXT, March 29<sup>th</sup>  
MR TOM ROBERTS, the Yorkshire tenor,  
MADAM E. HARRISON, Soprano  
Admission: 9d, 6d, 3d.*

In scanning the list of Sunday engagements undertaken by the Band it is interesting to note that in deference to public sensitivity concerning Sabbath entertainment all events bear the appellation 'sacred'. While the changing nature of public attitude is discernable with regard to strict observance of the Sabbath throughout the decades spanning the turn of the twentieth century, the transformation was but gradual before 1914. Even when the events of the Great War of 1914-18 produced disillusionment and the erosion of faith which accelerated the transformation of socio-religious observation, there remained a lingering element of the former attitude which continued to decree what was regarded as suitable or unsuitable forms of public entertainment for Sunday and which was only vanquished in the wake of the Second World War.

Solomnity was not always the order of the day, however, for the Band was engaged in many scenes of gaiety and in one instance at least circumstances rendered the pre-planned gaiety singularly inappropriate. A public notice in late July 1914, informed the local population of a gala event to be held at the Banks Garth cricket field on the 4th August with music by the Silver Prize band, the proceeds being shared by the Band and the cricket club. It is not known whether the declaration of war on the proposed date resulted in the cancellation of the gala, probably not, for the public perception was that the war would be short and glorious and in that expectation the social life of the township continued as normal with the feast and allied events such as the Dispensary Sunday demonstration taking place as usual.

Examination of extant documentation reveals that by the turn of the twentieth century the Band possessed a well ordered administrative structure, comprising six officers and a general committee of seven members, all being playing members and all nominated by the rank and file members of the Band.

In 1903 the 'figurehead' President of the Band was John Harker, a director of Messrs. Stainsby & Lyon, who in April that year had become Chairman of Knottingley Urban District Council. The officers of the Band that year were:

Chairman: W Bailey Jnr  
Vice Chairman: G. Johnson  
Secretary: H. Hannar

Assistant Secretary: S. Marshall Jnr.  
Treasurer: R. Marshall

The Committee men were; B. Braim, Alf Richardson, E. Baxter, J. Downing, J. Draper, G, Rowbottom and A. Richardson.

The Bandmaster was Samuel Marshall, designated 'Junior' to distinguish him from his same name father who was also unofficially involved with the affairs of the Band. In addition to the above personnel were two bandsmen nominated as auditors, J. Dey and R. Trueman.

The earliest existing code of rules, dated 30th May 1904, confirms the title of the ensemble as 'Knottingley Prize Band' although by the time of the appearance of a public notice in the local press a few weeks later the title had been adapted to include the adjective 'Silver', and the Band was to retain this title for three-quarters of a century until it was amended in 1979. Comparison of a further code of rules featured inside the front cover of the Band Minute Book of 1978 reveals that with the exception of minor amendments to two or three clauses, the basic rules are the same as those of 1904. As the 1978 codification states that the rules are "adapted from the original [of] 1880" it is clear that for most of the preceding century an almost unchanged codex had provided the basis of the administration of the Band. Perhaps even more surprising given the rampant inflation in the decades after 1945, is the fact that the membership entrance fee of 2s 6d with contributions of 2d per week, remained unchanged until 1982 when a somewhat belated acceptance of decimalisation resulted in its amendment to 50p.

The third clause in the 1904 code of rules decrees that "any person wishing to join this Band to be brought before the whole Band", the words "whole band" being a pencilled insertion replacing the word "committee". The amendment reveals a incipient 'power struggle' at that period, an indication reinforced by a resolution passed the following month that;

*"Band business [be] by the whole Band rather than the Committee",*

which was, however, rejected by 8 votes to 5. Nevertheless, the closeness of the vote and the framing of the resolution designed to counter one of only a month earlier which stated that,

*"The Committee makes all the Rules to the satisfaction of the Band"*

would seem to indicate a rank and file assertion of primitive democracy. Given this seemingly apparent struggle for administrative supremacy it is surprising that the rules have remained largely intact since 1880.

A clause stipulating common ownership of "instruments, music, music stands, uniforms and all property" is particularly interesting in the light of a subsequent application to join the Band. A Committee meeting in June 1904, agreed, subject to the approval of the whole Band that;

*"D. Bailey be a member providing he brings his own instrument to the practice."*

The Committee was empowered to expel members for misconduct, arrears or non-attendance and such members, or others leaving the Band voluntarily, were required “to return all property in a condition satisfactory to the Committee and if damaged, made good.”

Although it was decreed that “All rules be strictly enforced” there was a wide disparity between theory and practice on a number of points. Arrears of contributions has perhaps been the most persistently unobserved rule throughout the Band’s entire existence, yet instances of expulsion are singularly absent from the record, perhaps because the musical contribution of members exceeded the value of a fiscal nature making a loss through expulsion more costly than financial loss? A regular practice adopted by the Committee at various periods has been to post reminders of arrears of contributions in the bandroom, the earliest recorded example being in June 1904, which also incorporated the notice that non-attendance of 8 out of 12 band practices in any month would result in a fine of 3d for each offence.

A degree of leniency in respect of arrears was doubtless influenced by the economic hardship and unemployment which was so prevalent in working class society during the first four decades of the twentieth century. Thus we find recorded that one member was;

*“...to be excused his subs but if he does not attend practices, to pay subs for weeks he is absent”, and again, “contributions by our of work members to be 1d but if a member works 4 days in a week, to be 2d.”*

The withdrawal of members whether on a temporary or permanent basis frequently caused much expenditure in time and labour on the part of the Secretary who after writing several letters to ascertain the future intentions of absentee members, or in an effort to secure the return of Band property, often had to make one or more visits to members homes to confront them personally.

Incidence of misconduct was fortunately rare with instances of bad behaviour often arising in the heat of the moment and usually concluded by the tendering and acceptance of an apology. Such was the case in May 1904, when a member was given a specific date by which an explanation of recent conduct had to be made to the full membership. The ultimatum being observed the recalcitrant member’s apology was unanimously accepted.

To obviate petty disputes, the bandmaster was decreed the arbiter of all situations occurring whether in engagements, practices or on parade and in recognition of this responsibility was paid an extra half share of all dividends accruing from financial surpluses paid to band members following clearance of all routine expenditure.

The Committee was appointed on an annual basis with resignations being subject to immediate replacement. Any unspecified rules were to be determined by the Committee and no business concerning the Band was to be undertaken without the sanction of the Committee although in the event of the offer of an engagement arising at short notice the Secretary and Bandmaster were empowered to deal with the matter themselves.

The mainstay of the Band was the rule that it be “*not broken up as long as six members are opposed to its dissolution.*”

The first identified bandroom was the upper floor of a limestone-built property located down a yard on the south side of Aire Street. The property was a warehouse owned by Willie Wray, a local greengrocer and fishmonger. Wray kept goods in the basement area so the regular presence of the Band members and the bandroom caretaker in the upper room ensured an additional degree of security for the goods. The first known caretaker was R. Marshall. Marshall was the sole keyholder and it was stipulated that no one was to have access to the bandroom without his approval.

Early documentation provides fleeting glimpses of routine expenditure which although only of a minor nature appears to have strained the finances of the Band. R. Marshall received 10 shillings per year for undertaking the duties of the caretaker of the bandroom and he and J. Wild received two shillings for the preparatory measure of placing music in the bandbooks. A further item of expenditure was the 5 shillings per year paid to the Secretary who in 1905 was given the additional responsibility of drawing up and presenting the annual accounts. A more substantial expense was the cost of heating the bandroom during the winter season, with the Secretary being sanctioned to order ½ ton of coke and ¼ ton of coal for the purpose. To supplement income collecting boxes were placed in local public houses but it is clear that the Band's finances were precarious in the early years of the twentieth century as revealed by a resolution of February 1905 that the,

*“Secretary and Caretaker [are] to work gratis....”*

Furthermore, such was the need for new instruments that the Annual General Meeting of 1905 decreed that members subscriptions of 2d per week be supplemented by a compulsory levy of 1d to be earmarked as the ‘cornet fund’. Further evidence of the financial plight of the Band is manifest in payment to Benjamin Braim, a local businessman and Band member who chaired the 1905 A.G.M., of £3 plus interest as part payment for an outstanding debt. It is also noticeable that in an effort to generate extra income at this time the Committee resolved to sub-let the bandroom to the local String Band for practices each Wednesday night at a charge of 1s 3d and in the light of the recent addition of ‘Silver’ to the title of the Band it is of passing interest to note that the resolution to sub-let the premises states that “the Brass Band [is] to supply coal for their use.”

Mindful of the financial difficulties of the Band early last century, the decision to engage a guest conductor is more than a little surprising. One can only assume that the acquisition of ‘Prize’ status fostered the ambition of the Band. To what extent the expansion of membership arose from the Band's growing reputation or was a manifestation of new found ambition is problematical but records for 1905 show an increase of five new members and only one withdrawal.

Perhaps the engagement of a professional conductor was regarded as a necessary prerequisite for future competitive success and to this end a motion;

*“That we engage J.W. Stamp to come on Sunday 7th May 1905”,*

was unanimously agreed. Stamp was the regular conductor of the Castleford Subscription Band with whom he had undertaken contest appearances and continental tours acquiring a wide experience and high reputation in the process. Indeed, Stamp was no stranger to Knottingley Band for as early as July 1903 a 'sacred' concert during which he had conducted the band was heralded as a "great success" on which occasion, "a fine programme was gone through and its execution reflected credit on the band and its conductor."

The circumstances which had prompted his initial engagement are not recorded but it is not too fanciful, perhaps, to imagine that as a result of that concert the desire arose to renew acquaintance with Stamp and that in consequence the invitation to visit in May 1905 was to provide an opportunity for him to assess the contesting potential of the Band and the terms of engagement. The occasion appears to have proved satisfactory to all parties for Stamp was engaged to conduct the Band later that month and also on four other occasions between June and September that year.

Stamp may have detected areas of weakness in the Band's performance for shortly after his engagement as guest conductor it is recorded that,

"Cornet and soprano players be engaged for the South Kirkby contest, 8th July 1905."

The decision was in accordance with standard procedure at that period for widely observed regulations permitted the appearance of 'guest players' on occasion, providing such players were registered with only one band. Thus, although from 1902 players taking part in the National Championship were required to fulfil a minimum membership qualification of three months, when the Silver Band appeared at the Crystal Palace in 1911, its ranks included a professional player from Sowerby Bridge and one 'borrowed' from the Castleford Subscription Band. On other occasions players from Brotherton Band are known to have made 'guest' appearances with the Prize Band.

Commensurate with the part-time engagement of J.W. Stamp is an increase in the Band's appearance at various contests. In 1905 the Band appeared in the contest at South Kirkby on the 8th July and at Selby a fortnight later. The following month Woodkirk provided the venue when the Band was placed third out of nine competing bands. In September, the Band made an appearance at a contest at Cudworth. While these contests were local and minor ones they provided valuable experience for the Band and provided a springboard for eventual participation in national contests only a few years later.

There are indications of a contest being planned at Knottingley in Spring, 1905, but for unspecified reasons the plan did not come to fruition for a further twelve months. In April 1906, however, a contest was promoted by Mr. Hawley Harris, the proprietor of the Railway Hotel, Hill Top, Knottingley. The contest took place in a field adjacent to the inn where a total of 13 bands competed for prizes to the value of £16-0-0 in front of a large number of spectators. Bands taking part included the Silver Prize Band, Brotherton, Whitwood Colliery and the soon to be nationally known, Brighouse & Rastrick Band. The winning band in the test section was Gawthorpe Victoria which won £8 and a certificate. Scape Goat Hill came second, receiving £4 prize money, and

Birdsall Old Band was third, winning £2, while the fourth place and a prize of £1 was won by Carlton Band. In a separate march section, Scape Goat Hill was awarded first place by the contest adjudicator, Mr. B.D. Jackson, and Birdsall Old Band was the runner-up, gaining a further 10 shillings prize money.

It is interesting to note the frequency with which local contests were held and the degree of support by both bands and public such contests engendered. In addition to venues mentioned above, contests were recorded at Altofts, Batley and Hemsworth in the early years of the twentieth century. At a contest held at Altofts in 1903, Castleford Subscription Band under the baton of J.W. Stamp, came second in the test section and took first prize in the march, providing an insight as to why the Silver Prize Band sought to obtain Stamp's services as their guest conductor. The experience and skill of the bandmaster was crucial to a band's performance as shown at a contest held at Featherstone in which the adjudicator ascribed the poor result by one band to the failure of the conductor to let them "warm up" before the performance. Nor were early contests without hazard and hostility. At a contest in Castleford in the late nineteenth century, Batley Old Band's instruments were sabotaged (a favourite ploy was to place a piece of chewed toffee in the valve of an instrument, which would then harden and impair the function of the instrument and detract from the band's performance).

The new found zeal of the Prize band for contesting stood in sharp contrast with the situation a year earlier when a resolution in May 1904;

"That the Band go to Stanningley Brass Band Contest, May 21st, each member to pay 1 shilling each", (sic)

was carried by the casting vote of the Committee Chairman only to be rescinded a week later, though whether from reluctance to compete or consideration of expense is unstated.

The psychological effect of sartorial appearance on the self esteem of the players and by extension, on the prestige of the Band, has been mentioned previously, particularly with reference to contests and engagements beyond its home base. By 1907 the bandsmen were once again in need of new uniforms but the Band's finances were insufficient to meet the cost involved. The decision was therefore taken;

"That Mr. S. Marshall Senior be asked for the loan of money to purchase a new uniform for each member of the Band."

Samuel Marshall Senior, a shopkeeper and businessman of Marsh End, Knottingley, had a long association as a supporter of the Band while his two sons were senior members of the Band; Samuel Junior being the bandmaster. The 21 members of the Band who voted in favour of seeking the loan from Marshall Senior agreed;

"That a written agreement signing all band property, instruments, uniforms, music and etc., (sic) be given to Mr. S. Marshall as security for money lent"

thus mortgaging the future of the Band pending settlement of the debt and making Marshall the virtual owner of the Band.

The uniforms, consisting of tunic, trousers and cap, cost £1-6-0 each and in order to defray the cost the existing uniforms were made available for purchase by the

bandsmen at one shilling per item. The size of the loan (probably about £50) and the details concerning repayment are unrecorded but it would appear that the smart appearance of the bandsmen was matched by their musical expertise for in July 1907, the Band was triumphant in a contest at Hemsworth, beating six rival bands to gain first prize with a rendition of 'Gems of Haydn' for which the adjudicator, Mr. Luke Corfield of Birmingham, awarded them 89 marks.

News of the Band's success preceded them and upon their return to Knottingley the members of the Prize Band found a large crowd waiting to welcome them and greet them with a splendid ovation in response to which the Band "played spirited music in acknowledgement of the welcome afforded."

In addition to gaining the first prize certificate, individual medals had been awarded to Ernest Beaumont for the best cornet performance and to fellow bandsman, W. Thorpe, for his trombone solo. It is interesting to note that the conductor at the contest was J.W. Stamp.

The success of the Band ensured a full house when the second season of indoor concerts was held in the Town Hall on Monday 7th October 1907. The proceedings opened with a speech by the Band President, Cr. J. Harker, who said that the Band had earned its title of 'Prize Band'. The triumph was achieved by hiring the services of a professional conductor but this, together with new uniforms, had made a great demand upon the funds of the Band. The objective of the concert was to raise money to meet the cost of new instruments. Harker then produced a balance sheet and in asking for public support, stated that if numbers were maintained, the Band would do even better in the future. It was intended at an early date to hold a local contest with prizes with an overall value of £10-£14. Then followed the concert, containing a wide variety of instrumental and vocal items and a conjuring act and concluding with a dance lasting until the early hours, the whole ensuring "...a good boost to Band funds."

Later that month, the bandsmen and their partners were rewarded for their recent success by their President who entertained them to tea at the White Swan Inn, Hill Top. The Band Secretary, Mr. W.A. Dunford, reported a profit of £3-12-0 from the recent concert and dance and this announcement was then followed by a jovial evening of music and song including a notable piccolo solo by Mr. Cruickshanks. During the proceedings a large, framed photograph of the Band was presented to Cr. Harker on behalf of the members by Mr. R.F. Trueman. Responding, Cr. Harker urged the Band to persevere with their efforts and said he hoped all local employers would allow the bandsmen to take time off work in order to attend concerts. Mr. John Hampshire on behalf of Mr. Joe Wrigley, the licensee of the Waggon & Horses Inn, Aire Street, offered to give £5 towards new instruments if nine other citizens could be persuaded to do so. The President therefore suggested the formation of a committee of townspeople in order to further this objective. The evening closed with thanks to Mr. & Mrs Pearson, the landlord and his lady, for providing such excellent fare.

The prestige accruing to the Band in consequence of its success in 1907 ensured that the following year was an even busier one. The now well established Boxing Day dance presaged a full season of such engagements and with the Spring, Bandmaster Marshall took the Band to a concert at Thorne where a collection was allowed to be used for the renovation of instruments. The customary summer season of outdoor concerts held in Howards Field, commenced in June, being followed the next month by a hectic week

of parades. On the evening of Monday 13th July, the Band marched from Hill Top via Ferrybridge Lane and the Holes, to the Flatts where a demonstration took place in support of the governments proposed legislation regarding the licensing laws. The following evening the Band, in support of the same cause, paraded through Low Green and along Weeland Road and Chapel Street to the Flatts and thence to the Wesleyan Hall where a public meeting was held. On Wednesday the Band marched from Aire Street, along Cow Lane and Racca Green, back to the Flatts and once again to Wesley Hall in the Ropewalk. The Licensing Bill, introduced by Lloyd George on behalf of the Liberal Government, proposed to reduce by one third the 100,000 beer retailing licenses nationally. The measure ultimately failed due to lack of public support, nullifying the strenuous efforts of the Band.

A similarly 'compressed' series of events was undertaken the following month when the Band visited Featherstone to play at a local Saturday afternoon sports event which was followed by an evening concert with proceeds in aid of the Featherstone Convalescent Fund. The following Thursday, the Band played at the Ackworth Show and the following week travelled to Stubbs for the village sports. On all the above occasions the Band was conducted by Sammy Marshall.

It is interesting to note that in an age before mechanised vehicles had become a commonplace sight on local roads, the Band travelled to their various engagements by means of a horse-drawn waggonette. The provision of transport was often conditional to acceptance of an engagement. Thus, in May 1904, the Committee resolved that the Band would join in the Life Boat Demonstration at Pontefract on the 25th June "on condition they send a waggonette to fetch and return the Band."

The 'foreign' excursions were not the only charitable efforts undertaken by the Band. Early in August 1908, the Band led the usual annual procession through the town in aid of the Railway Servants Orphanage Fund. For their annual effort in aid of this charity for which "a nice sum was always collected" the Band received a token fee of £1. In October the same processional route was followed as a preliminary to the tea, concert and dance given by the Oddfellows' Friendly Society, the Orchestral Band playing music at intervals throughout the proceedings which were attended by 180 guests. In addition to attendance at the Hospital Sunday parade and demonstration which was a regular annual engagement each August, the Band also provided the music for the annual concert and dance held under the auspices of the Knottingley Dispensary Committee. In mid August a large audience attended a Town Hall concert given in aid of the Band funds, the Rev. C.E. Everitt presiding over the proceedings in the absence of the Band President, John Harker, the effort to raise funds being dictated by the acceptance of the Band's application to participate in the forthcoming National Contest to be held in London.

Initially, the report concerning the entry of the Band in the forthcoming contest was somewhat confusing. It was stated that Knottingley Prize Band would be one of the entrants for the 9th annual National Brass Band Contest. The report, however, concerned Bagley's Glassworks Band. The confusion had doubtless been caused by the fact that the works band had earlier been successful participants in a prize contest thereby in effect, creating a second 'Prize Band' within the town. The announcement proved to be equally applicable to the Town Band, however, for by mid September both bands were named as contestants, each according to the local press, "likely to give an account of themselves on their maiden effort."

The prospective participation of the Knottingley bandsmen, together with those of the Castleford Town Band, engendered so much interest that the Great Northern Railway Co., advertised cheap day excursions to London for the occasion.

In the event only the Silver Prize Band appears to have travelled, there being no mention of the 'Glassblowers' band in subsequent newspaper reports. Disappointingly, the performance of the Band in the test piece, 'Old Favourites', conducted by J.W. Stamp, was not judged to be of sufficiently high standard to ensure a placement for the Band. However, the Band made its presence known in the Capital when, the following day, led by the omnipresent Sammy Marshall, it marched from Liverpool Street Station to Hyde Park in support of a demonstration against the Licensing Bill. The action of the Band in opposing a measure which it had strenuously supported only a few weeks earlier seems more than a little puzzling and one may only conjecture that the series of parades on successive evenings in July were engagements which the Band accepted out of necessity to secure income rather than natural support for the cause. Given the known bond which existed between the Band and many local innkeepers it seems most probable that the apparent spontaneity of the London march was more indicative of the feeling amongst the bandsmen.

The Band was more successful in the National Championships of 1911 which again took place at the Crystal Palace. Of 183 entrants overall, the Silver Prize Band competed against 28 of them in its particular section and obtained 4th place, the only Yorkshire band to gain any distinction that year. The Band played under the baton of J.W. Stamp but much of its success was due to hard, regular practice under its regular bandmaster. Reporting the event, an organ of the local press stated of the Band;

"They and Mr Stamp their professional conductor, and Mr S Marshall, the home conductor, deserve heartiest congratulations for their splendid exhibition."

At a more modest level the Band gained a degree of success in August when in a contest at Normanton involving eight bands, the adjudicator, Mr. Brear of Bradford, placed it 4th in its section.

The year was even more busy than usual for the band for apart from the regular annual engagements the Band was required to take on additional commitments. One of the first acts of a local committee formed to plan festivities to mark the coronation of George V was to engage the Band to lead the procession through the town. In addition, the Band broke new ground in August, leading a procession from Pontefract town centre to the Castle, which was the venue for the Borough's Dispensary Sunday fete. The year's activities rounded off with the Orchestral Band providing the music at the Town Hall Boxing Day dance, held that year under the aegis of the Knottingley Football Club. The events of 1911 were not all ones of unalloyed pleasure, however, for the early part of the year was marked by sorrowful occasions in both a national and local context.

The opening of the Prince of Wales Colliery, Pontefract, in 1860, resulted in the development of the adjacent coal measures in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and brought the mining industry to the very doorstep of Knottingley, providing work for an element residing within the township. While the town could not be categorised as a mining community, the strong bond which already existed between

the miners and the glassworkers as a result of the socio-political alliance established in the district by Alfred Greenwood in 1880, was reinforced by the rise of socialism and a burgeoning sense of common identity amongst the labouring classes. It is therefore unsurprising that when, in early January 1911, a colliery disaster occurred at Bolton On Dearn, situated on the South Yorkshire coalfield, the community at Knottingley was at the forefront of action to raise money for the relief of the bereaved dependants.

A grand variety concert was quickly arranged to be held in the Town Hall in which the foremost talent within the town and surrounding district volunteered to take part. The musical mainstay was the Silver Prize Band, assisted by the English Concertina Band from Castleford. The concert, held on the evening of Saturday 21st January, drew a full house, largely through the efforts of the Band which toured the streets of Knottingley and Ferrybridge during the hours preceding the concert, playing and collecting as it went along, an effort which not only realised £2-3-0 but increased public awareness of the event. The concert provided three hours of entertainment for the admission price of either 1 shilling or 6 pence. The only disconcerting note to the events of the evening was a somewhat sanctimonious introductory speech by Colonel Shaw, C.C., J.P., who accompanied by Colonel Mitchell of Wath, while praising the “noble effort”, stated that such accidents as that which had occurred would be avoided if miners took more notice of their deputies, and then compounded his insensitivity by leaving the hall early in order to fulfil his “military duties”. The concert, launched in response to;

“The appeal of an energetic and sympathetic committee of a [unidentified] workmens’ club”, was organised by Mr. W.H. William, the Club Secretary, assisted by Mr. J. W. Hughes, the club in question most probably being the Hill Top W.M. Club.

A sorrowful occasion of a more localised nature occurred in April 1911, with the death of the Band’s long-serving President, Mr. John Harker. The Band was represented at the funeral by Mr. A. Westerman and Mr. J. Clegg.

In 1912 the Band returned to Crystal Palace for the National Championships held on the 28th September and were again successful, winning the consolation Cup. In February 1913 it was reported that tradesmen in Knottingley were displaying in their shop windows certificates, a set of caps and the bandmaster’s cross belt won at the National Championships the previous Autumn. The set of caps had been donated by Messrs. Mallet, Porter & Dowd, outfitters, and nicely complemented the new uniforms which the bandsmen had worn at the contest. The purchase of the new uniforms had been agreed at a 16 man meeting in January 1912, and confirmed in March when the newly elected Band President, Mr. R.F. Trueman, had offered to provide the money for the purchase of the outfits. The design of the uniform was based upon that of the famous Black Dyke Mills Band but with aluminium shaded facings. As before, costs were partially defrayed by the sale of the old uniforms to Band members.

Again, a celebratory concert was planned at which it was hoped the ‘Champion Journal Cup’ would be formally presented to the Bandmaster by the serving M.P., Mr. Handel Booth. It was also decided to invite local manufacturers, E.L. Poulson, E.L. Robinson and William Bagley, to the event to be held on the 1st November 1912, the last named being chosen to be chairman of the meeting by 11 votes to 4.

A concert committee of Band members was formed to arrange a programme of

entertainment. The 'star turn', Mr. Beanland, offered the use of piano, pianist and also 'Light Girls' for a charge of £1, which Mr. Trueman, the Band President, offered to pay from his own pocket. The subsequent soiree was a "great success, the place being full."

Takings, which were at a record level, came from the following sources:

Door: £7-6-0

Programmes: 11s 11d

Tickets: £17-1-6

Total: £24-19-5

Expenses: £9-14-0

Profit: £15-5-5

of which sum Mr. Trueman was handed £15 towards the £40 he had paid for the new uniforms.

In July 1913, the Band gained 4th prize in a contest held at the Selby Gala which provided a degree of confidence for the task ahead when in September the application of the Band to enter the National Championships for the third successive year was accepted. It was reported that the band was rehearsing on a daily basis in the hope of bringing home an even bigger trophy than that obtained the previous year, but alas, "the best laid plans...."

As the shadow of world war fell across the land in 1914 contesting was placed in abeyance so that the Band's appearance in 1913 spelt the end of an era of its participation for many years.

As if to underline the approaching end of an era of growth and development in its affairs, the Band also lost two stalwart supporters within less than a twelvemonth. In Autumn 1912, the members stood in silent respect to mark the loss of Samuel Marshall Senior, and in May 1913, the death occurred of the erstwhile member and current President, R.P. Trueman.

Again, the Band was represented by members at the funeral of Trueman and it is therefore obvious that the practice of the Band being in full attendance in order to 'play to rest' former members and associates had not been introduced at that date. Something approaching such an observation had occurred as early as 1905 when prior to a memorial service held by the local lodges of the Oddfellows and Foresters friendly societies, members assembled at the Bay Horse Inn, Hill Top, and headed by the Silver Prize Band, walked in solemn procession to the Tabernacle Free Church where an appropriate sermon was preached by the Rev. J.P. Rieveley in memory of Isaac Heald. In common with so many aspects of Band history the commencement of the playing of the full Band at funerals is unrecorded but none can deny either the magnitude of the tribute nor the poignancy of its effect. The writer has tender recollection of the Band's rendition of 'Abide With Me' being played at the graveside of Frank Spencer, uncle of the writer and long-standing member of the Band. The hymn was played with such delicate tenderness that it not only brought tears to the eyes of the assembled mourners but even now, at a distance of more than 40 years, remembrance of the occasion still pricks the eyes and clutches at the throat.

The increased incidence and subsequently enforced cessation in no way diminished participation of 'banding', each year having its regular quota of concerts, parades, demonstrations and sundry public events. The attendance of the Band usually ensured the success of any event but there were occasional failures. One somewhat dubious event was an all night dance held to boost Band funds in January 1909 when the dance music was played by the Orchestral Band under Sammy Marshall. The event, attended by 60 people, was declared "a great success" but in the light of the relatively sparse attendance, the success must have been somewhat limited. It is interesting to note, however, that the report of the event states that,

"The Band have (sic) taken part in several big contests and have good prospects for the future."

Not all such events were undertaken for the benefit of the Band. A concert organised by the Knottingley Infirmary Committee in 1907, followed by a dance with music by the Orchestral Band, was reported to be "very good, but poorly attended."

On occasion the weather was responsible for the lack of success. In 1912 for instance when following a march through the streets by the Band and its counterparts from Brotherton to attract awareness of the public, a concert on behalf of the Ferrybridge Dispensary Committee was spoilt by rain. In this case, however, the situation was redeemed in the long term when in 1916 the two bands attended a demonstration held in a field near the Parish (Mission) Room (in which Ferrybridge Church now stands following the transfer from its original site in the 1950s) and helped to raise the sum of £30-4-0.

The outbreak of war in 1914 must have resulted in some diminution of Band membership through voluntary and subsequently enforced conscription. Unfortunately, no record of the period exists in the annals of the Band. It is clear, however, that whatever erosion of membership may have occurred, a sufficient nucleus remained to enable the band to function. Consequently, the activity of the Band was extended to provide support for the war effort. Within a month of the outbreak of hostilities it was reported that the Band had marched through Knottingley playing patriotic selections and had raised £2-1-4 on behalf of the local relief fund. Again, in 1916, a charity parade through the streets of Knottingley and Ferrybridge collected £4-10-0 on behalf of the British Farmers' Red Cross Fund and a week later a "very good gathering" at a concert at Hillam raised £9-10-0 on behalf of the same organisation. Almost on the eve of the Armistice the committee, charged with providing comforts for the local servicemen, held a dance in the Town Hall, the aim of which was to enable a Christmas gift to be despatched to each of the town's fighting men. Music was provided by the Orchestral Band under S. Marshall and the event succeeded in raising £10. It is sad to relate however, that fundraising for the cause was restricted when other social events had to be cancelled due to danger from the influenza pandemic. The purpose of the dance appears to have usurped the customary one of providing a Xmas treat for the town's old folks, for in December 1913, the Band had played at a concert in the Town Hall for that purpose, contributing significantly to the success of the evening. Similarly, throughout the ensuing war period the Band continued to work within and around the town for the benefit of the town's Infirmary Committee. That such efforts were appreciated by the townsfolk in general is

exemplified by the occasion in May 1913 when the management of the Palace Cinema presented;

“a fine entertainment by a large and enthusiastic audience” for the benefit of the Silver Prize Band, ensuring that “Band funds were considerably increased by this lift.”

### **THE MID TWENTIETH CENTURY: 1921 - 1945**

The onset and duration of the Great War had created a hiatus in contesting so it is unsurprising that in the immediate aftermath of the war, the activity of the Silver Prize Band was largely confined to attendance at local events.

Towards the conclusion of hostilities the inhabitants of Knottingley mirroring the national trend, had turned their attention to the erection of a fitting memorial to commemorate the men of the town who had died as a result of the conflict, and to the organisation of fund raising events in order to finance the proposed memorial. In keeping with its time honoured tradition of service to the local community, the Band was involved on various occasions when money raising events took place, particularly the Orchestral Band which frequently provided music for dances and the more elaborate masked balls.

The parade which preceded the ceremony of unveiling and dedication of the memorial on the 21st September 1921, was led by the Band which also provided the music for the hymns sung in the ensuing service. Similarly, when the memorial at Ferrybridge was unveiled on the 9th October 1921, the Band undertook the same service. Nor is it surprising that as the Armistice Day observance of the immediate post war years became stylised, eventually adopting the formalised structure of Remembrance Day, the Band became involved on an annual basis, thus inaugurating a voluntary service to the local community which continues to the present time and echoes the attendance at the town's Infirmary Sunday demonstrations for more than half a century. Thus, a resolution by the Band Committee dated June 1905, that “the Band parade and play for Dispensary Sunday, free gratis”, typifies the attitude of the bandsmen towards an event which was already well established in the Band's social calendar by that date.

A glimpse of the transitional nature of Remembrance Day is afforded by reports of the participation of the Band in such ceremonies. By the mid 'twenties the format had developed by which the Band, together with that of the Salvation Army, assembled on the Flatts and marched to the Town Hall where the parade was joined by civic dignitaries before proceeding to nearby St. Botolph's Church, or other centrally situated place of worship, where both bands accompanied the hymns featured in the remembrance service. Within a few years the war memorial had replaced the church as the venue for the civic and interdenominational service but always with the Band in attendance.

An almost parallel development with the desire to honour the fallen was the desire to provide a recreational area and playing field for the aged citizens and the children of Knottingley. Following a protracted communal effort in which the Band again played a part, the Greenhouse fields were obtained and laid out for public use.

In July 1933, after an unsuccessful application of earlier date the Band was allowed to hold the first of a series of Sunday concerts in the newly laid out park. The concerts,

which were divided into afternoon and evening sessions, drew large attendances and as the price of admission was by silver collection at the park entrances, the proceeds for the Band funds, the events proved satisfactory to all concerned. The popularity of the concerts not only prompted a regular series during subsequent summer seasons but gave rise to consideration regarding the provision of seating for the audience and by mid 1936, an abortive proposal to erect a commemorative bandstand.

When, in 1927, the reconstituted Knottingley Infirmary Sunday Committee in a bid to widen the scope of fundraising, inaugurated the Gala Day & Sports which marked the beginning of the town Carnival, the Band lent its active support, leading the procession and playing during the event, marking the start of its attendance at every Carnival for more than sixty years.

Throughout the six years of conflict which marked the Second World War the Band was active on the 'home front'. The annual War Savings Week held each year to boost loans to the government to supplement the cost of the war always featured a civic church parade led by the Band. In 1944, the local council, under the aegis of the Government's 'Holiday's at Home' propaganda, promoted a gala week involving a wide range of entertainments for the benefit of the local community in which the Band played a prominent part.

Writing in 1977 of the participation of the Band in such events, the late John Hargrave, Deputy Editor of the Pontefract & Castleford Express, asked:

"Why did we all brace up, step a little sharper, hold our heads a little higher, when we heard the swing of 'King Cotton', 'The Stars & Stripes', 'Under the Double Eagle', 'Colonel Bogey' and all the rest, as the musical host advanced with measured tread? Even us bairns on the fringes of the crowds felt as if the whole concourse of the town was going in glory up dem golden stairs."

Seeking to explain the singular popularity of the Band, Hargrave concluded that it;

"...was an age when people took what came as it came...that I am sure is one of the secrets of the affection shown for Knottingley's Band...They were identified with the few pleasures people had, the fete days, the processions, the sports, the home-made, community brand entertainment in the days before our food, our music, our culture, our very heritage, came in cans."

During the first half of the twentieth century, dancing became an increasingly popular pastime. The Prize Band regarded the activity as a useful resource of income, particularly in the period between the two great wars. By the mid 1920s the participation of the Band reached its apogee, characterised by a whirl of activity in 1926 when a series of concerts and dances took place in the Town Hall throughout the winter season. Described as "a great success" the dances drew large attendances and by the late summer, the series had been resumed. The dances had "lovely music, including all the latest songs" and refreshments at modest prices, provided and served by the wives of the bandsmen. The dances usually commenced at 7.45pm and lasted

until midnight with the Orchestral Band producing “delightful music, including all the latest dance music [for the] large and appreciative audience.”

The inter-war period, however, brought a degree of hardship for the brass band movement in general as the depression and high unemployment of the twenties and thirties affected spending capacity and reduced audiences for concerts and musical entertainments, reducing band income and adding to the burden of administrative costs. For the Prize band the popularity and success of the seasonal dances ensured their reprise during the bulk of the inter-war period and provided a modicum of income on a fairly frequent basis. Something of the financial benefit obtained via dances in the early post war period is shown by a report of an event held on the evening of Friday 24th September 1923, when more than 150 people attended to dance to music provided by “Mr S. Marshall’s efficient orchestra.”

Admission was by ticket, each costing 1s 3d. The sale of refreshments provided by friends and relations of the bandsmen supplemented the admission price and produced a profit of £10, a not insubstantial amount at a time when the average labouring wage was less than a fifth of the sum.

Adding to the growing financial adversity from the 1920s, however, was a developing cultural shift as technological progress spawned the gramophone, radio and cinema and adversely affected attendances at concerts and dances. Broadcasting in particular, reinforced American-inspired cultural influences, resulting in the introduction of specialist dance bands which produced a smoother, more sophisticated sound which was beyond the capabilities of the Orchestral Band. Consequently, by the mid 1930s the dance appearances of the Orchestral Band were passé.

The need to combat the adverse socio-economic trends had one positive effect on banding by widening the band repertoire so that traditional marches, hymns and operatic overtures were supplemented by tunes from musical comedies and light popular music, lending a liberalising element to the genre. The developing trend is clearly evident in the items quoted above concerning the up to date dance programme of the Orchestral Band.

Regardless of changing style the bandsmen could rely on a large degree of support within the local community for as, “members of Knottingley Silver Prize Band, ever willing to assist a good cause”, they drew a generous response to their own appeals for funds. For it was reported “Knottingley folk are still proud of their Prize Band” thus ensuring “a crowded attendance” for a dance in aid of Band funds, the financial outcome being “eminently satisfactory.”

Similarly, dances in aid of Band funds were quite well patronised well into the thirties at a time when dances given by other organisations drew only moderate attendances, even when on occasion the Orchestral Band was engaged for the event.

Yet notwithstanding the ‘loyalty’ audience, by the mid thirties reports of Band dances no longer feature in the local press, suggesting that the Orchestral Band had been superseded by a number of local ensembles inspired by the ‘big band’ culture.

If the financial lifeblood of the Band was the support obtained from concerts, dances

and social engagements, artistic merit and status was gained through the medium of the band contest.

Early localised contests allowed comparison of musical ability with neighbouring bands, the competitive element stimulating improvement of performance as a spur to higher attainment. The development of the railway network during the second half of the nineteenth century expanded the contest arena and engendered the establishment of the Manchester based British Open Championships, introduced in 1853 as an event to be held annually each September. By 1860 contests were held at the re-sited Crystal Palace, Sydenham, and it was there in 1900 that Henry Iles prompted the first National Brass Band Championship. The development of these prestigious contests resulted in the introduction of regulations designed to standardise repertory and instrumentation. Thus, own choice selections as contest pieces were replaced by a standardised test piece in 1871 and by the 1920s many eminent classical music composers were writing specialised test pieces. By 1868 the system of registration had commenced with the names of intending participants having to be submitted one month in advance of an imminent contest and this was followed in 1893 by restriction of any player to a single band. Formal registration of membership as a band member three months in advance of a contest was introduced in 1902 and compilation of a national register of bandsmen in 1946. The maximum number of players had doubled from 12 in 1845 to 24 by the end of the nineteenth century and other notable innovations during the twentieth century were the compulsory wearing of uniform (1900) and all bands to play seated (1924).

Perhaps the most important element of contest practice was the introduction of graded seminars to permit like competing with like. A two section contest was first introduced at the Scottish National Championship in 1895 and the 29 entries for the National Championship in 1900 were sub-divided into three sections, and in 1902 five sections were established. The introduction of this format produced a more inclusive system overall than that appertaining at the Belle Vue (Manchester) contests from 1886 in which bands which had won the title during the four previous September contests were excluded from the elimination contest in July, the winners of which gained entry to the finals in September. While some modification of this system was introduced from 1900 to enable the participation of less skilled bands, the overall effect remained the promotion of a 'super league' of top bands and the exclusion of smaller. Less accomplished ones.

An outcome of the 'Holidays At Home' movement in 1943 was the introduction of the Yorkshire Brass Band Championships. When, in 1945, the Daily Herald sponsored the National Championship, the Yorkshire Championship provided the nucleus of a redrawn system. Under the Herald's patronage a series of regional heats provided the basis for progression to the final contest. Many 'traditionalists' deplored the new system but commercial considerations arising from circulation battles with rival newspapers ensured its retention and the system is by and large, that utilised at the present time.

The well attended Town Hall dance referred to above was held with the purpose of obtaining funds to enable the Band to participate in the National Championship held at Crystal Palace on the 29th September 1923. The venture was the first one by the Band since before the war. Unfortunately, the Band was unable to repeat its earlier success but in June 1926, a first time application was made to take part in the

nationally based elimination contest at Belle Vue, Manchester, and the Band was one of the 20 selected to take part. The local paper, noting the honour bestowed on the Band was full of high expectation, reminding readers that it was;

“Now 15 years since the Band made Knottingley history by winning the Challenge Cup at Crystal Palace, London”,

and although recording the fact that the Band had twice competed unsuccessfully since 1911, was clearly hopeful of a triumphant outcome on this first appearance at the Manchester venue.

That year, the Band also competed at the Crystal Palace, being one of 25 contesting for Cassell's Saturday Journal Shield. Quite apart from the cost of travel in a period of financial constraint, the Band's attendance at the National Championships reveals the strain imposed by hurried travelling. The Band arrived at London at 5.30am Saturday, having entrained at Knottingley Station at 11.00pm the previous night. After a light breakfast there followed a rehearsal under Bandmaster Marshall, followed by a few hours sight-seeing. The Band arrived at Crystal Palace at 10.00am and performed the test piece in the Australian Pavilion. Despite giving a good performance the bandsmen were disappointed not to be placed in the first three contestants. Leaving London at midnight the Band arrived back at Knottingley at 5.00am Sunday, very fatigued after such a strenuous effort. The effort bespeaks the enthusiasm of the bandsmen as their endurance which was considered to be well worthwhile for the prestige gained which was reflected in the pride which linked the Band and the local community.

The process was repeated in 1932, the Band leaving Knottingley at 1.30am Saturday, competing that afternoon and travelling home the following day. Again, a series of dances held the previous month provided the funds to permit the Band to compete at the Crystal Palace in October. The Band and 30 others challenged for the Junior Shield but once again, despite “a creditable and expressive rendering” of the test piece, the Band was unplaced.

Following the destruction of the Crystal Palace by fire in 1936, the National Championships were held at the Alexander Palace before the outbreak of the Second World War led to their suspension for the duration. The Open Contest at Belle Vue continued despite the restraints imposed by wartime conditions. There is, however, no record of the Knottingley Band participating during the period immediately before and during the war.

Under the sponsorship of the Daily Herald in the immediate post war era the country was divided into eight regional qualifying areas, each regional contest having four sections with the first and second placed bands in each section progressing to the National finals. The Silver Prize Band was a regular participant, competing with the North-East area in qualifying contests held at either Huddersfield or Bradford.

## **THE POST WAR PERIOD 1945 - 1960**

During almost a century and a half of existence Knottingley Band has experienced many vicissitudes but when faced with problems the Band has overcome them largely by the efforts of its members. As the late Band Secretary, Bill Hodgson, once stated, “We have never been so short of money because we have gone to the people to earn it.”

The statement, while essentially true, particularly with regard to the effort made by the Band to earn money, tends to minimise the fact that while the Band may never have lacked cash entirely, there have been times when funds were in short supply, hence the need to earn money. Such a period appears to have been experienced in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War.

The years between 1945 and 1953 were potentially ones of prosperity as full employment combined with the gratuity payments made to discharged service personnel created a flood of surplus money in the pockets of a public seeking entertainment and pleasure as an antidote to the restrictions and impositions of the war economy. Ironically, post war austerity with its shortages of fuel and materials and the necessity for continued rationing constrained the production of luxury goods and services and restricted the outlets for individual expenditure. In such circumstances it might be thought that former pleasures, including band concerts and dances would have attracted considerable patronage. The mood of the public, however, was characterised by the desire for change. The simple pleasures which had served former generations were now largely regarded as somewhat old fashioned and passé and while in the absence of anything more innovative they drew a measure of support it was not of the former magnitude. To compound the problem the winter of 1946-47 was one of the most severe on record. Fuel shortages affected both gas and electricity supplies. To prevent themselves freezing within the confines of their own homes many able-bodied people spent the bulk of each day 'cinder picking' on the ash tips located in local disused limestone quarries and in the vicinity of Ferrybridge Power Station which were the deposit sites of waste from the furnaces of local coal burning industries. A thriving commerce developed between some who purchased sacks of cinders from those who regarded 'cinder picking' as a secondary occupation undertaken to obtain beer and 'fag' money. To digress: in the midst of such activity petty-minded officialdom backed by the forces of law and order asserted itself, fervent in pursuit of trespassers even as the old and frail and young and vulnerable lacked a modicum of essential warmth. Many were the tales of luck and ingenuity concerning the outwitting of the forces of authority which regaled a generally sympathetic public. Not all outcomes were lucky ones, however, for on numerous occasions, having spent many finger-numbing hours sieving dross to acquire a sack of cinders, an unfortunate picker was accosted by officials who confiscated the hard won booty.

The above digression serves to illustrate the point that sitting in a cold, dimly lit public hall listening to (or even playing) music was not in vogue in the period when snow fell in January and in many locations was still on the ground in April. Unsurprisingly such conditions adversely affected the principal means whereby the Silver Prize band normally obtained public support. Even when the belated appearance of spring heralded a superbly contrasting and favourable summer season, Band engagements, civic functions apart, appear to have been limited in number thereby restricting the means for supplementing the limited funds of the Band.

Even more fundamental than the disruptive influences of economic austerity, changing fashion and meteorological conditions was the involuntary change to the administrative structure of the Band in the early post war period. For four decades from 1907, the affairs of the Band whilst nominally under the supervisory aegis of the Band Committee had been administered de facto by a 'benevolent dictatorship' of the bandmaster, Samuel Marshall. The death of Marshall in 1949 was therefore a

watershed in the governance of the Band, a manifestation of which was the recommencement of formal minutes arising from the deliberations of the Committee, after a hiatus of more than quarter of a century.

Following Marshall's demise Joe Pollard was unanimously selected as the new bandmaster, holding the post until 1954 when poor health compelled his resignation. Simultaneous to the appointment of Pollard steps were taken to form a management committee. Nominated and elected by the votes of attendant members at a general meeting convened in February 1949, an eight man Committee was selected from 19 nominees, together with four officers, being the Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. The Chairmanship was conferred upon Tom Tindall who obtained 8 votes compared to 7 for Frank Spencer and 4 for Joe Pollard, Spencer as the runner-up being declared Vice President. The newly elected Secretary was G.W. Hodgson who was to retain the post in unbroken sequence until October 1985. The office of Treasurer was held by T. Clayton and the Committeemen were F. Spencer, S. Rowbottom, R. Heys, E. Ellis, T. Pollard, F. Rowbottom, R. Sarvant and A. Wilde, the latter being selected by a show of hands following a tie with B. Pollard in the votes cast.

The initial task of the committee, with the unanimous approval of the rank and file members, was to arrange a meeting with Marshall executrices and negotiate a settlement concerning Band Funds and repossession of sundry items of equipment surrendered in 1907 as security for the money loaned to the Band by the Marshall family. A delegation of five senior members was deputed to meet the Misses Marshall to seek the transfer of money held on behalf of the Band, together with bills and during correspondence concerning the affairs of the Band. It is indicative of the degree of control exercised by the late bandmaster that the committee appear to have had little idea of the amount of funds held in the name of the Band. It was initially decided to seek the sum of £250 but upon reflection the amount was later advanced to £400.

The negotiations appear to have been of brief duration and resulted in a satisfactory outcome for by late February the delegates were complemented by the Committee upon the settlement obtained.

The original code of rules dating from 1880 was retained as a temporary measure pending the formation of an amended version which was to be displayed in the bandroom for perusal by the membership prior to its adoption. In addition the Treasurer was instructed to make enquiries at the Yorkshire Penny Bank with a view to opening a bank account in respect of which trustees were to be appointed. Committee meetings were scheduled to be held on the first Monday of each month but this date was subsequently changed to the second Monday in order to more easily accommodate members who were shift workers.

The necessary reorganisation of the administrative structure of the Band resulted in a more democratic ambience which was the precursor of further change. At the Annual General Meeting of 1949 a new practice was introduced which allowed non-playing personnel, hitherto not regarded as band members to attend and participate in general meetings. However, the officers and committeemen were all senior members of the Band and although some matters were referred to the whole membership these were of a generalised nature and subject to the discretion of the Committee which formulated policy. The virtual autonomy of the Committee is seen in the occasional delegation of power to the Secretary to undertake business on behalf of the Band in

matters affecting the entire membership. The widening of the membership base and accompanying participation in general affairs was nevertheless subject to some qualification. In 1951 voting was formally restricted to all persons 16 years of age or over and while in theory membership of the Band Committee was open to non-playing members it was exclusively composed of senior bandsmen, presumably on the premise that they best appreciated the requirements of the Band and furnished the greatest degree of experience and collective wisdom to fulfil those requirements. To this end a resolution was framed in 1951 excluding all but bandsmen from serving as officers of the Band but was rejected by 8 votes to 5.

The following year new ground was broken when at the suggestion of Brian Pollard, the election of the Committee was conducted by means of a paper ballot in order to cater for members who were unable to attend the A.G.M. It is interesting to note a strong correlation in the result of the election conducted under the new system and that which previously appertained, with five of the committeemen elected in 1951 retaining their places in the balloted election of 1952. The outcome is all the more surprising perhaps as an element of the retiring Committee appears to have been neglectful in attendance, prompting a resolution at the 1952 A.G.M. that

“Any Committeemen absent without good cause for 3 consecutive meetings to be relieved of his duties.”

The resolution appears to have had little impact for a Committee meeting later that year was abandoned when only four members were present although the fact that the meeting was held in the holiday season of August may be a contributory factor to the sparse attendance on that occasion.

The contribution made to the welfare of the Band by the wives, mothers and others associated with the bandsmen had always been a feature of Band activity and one made all the more valuable for being largely taken for granted. Whether raising funds or pressing shirts and uniforms, providing and serving refreshments at Band functions or contributing to the morale and physical welfare, the ‘woman’s touch’ was, and remains, an indispensable asset for if, as has been asserted, the character of a band is a reflection of that of its members, the quality of its character is sustained by the contribution of the womenfolk. Recognition of this fact was acknowledged in part by the decision in 1949 to allow ‘friends’ of the Band to attend general meetings. Further acknowledgement of the service rendered by the womenfolk and the desirability of harnessing the potential such service afforded is seen in the Committee’s decision the following year to formalise the arrangement through the establishment of a Ladies Committee. In furtherance of this objective a meeting was convened in the bandroom in February 1951, ostensibly in connection with the organisation of a fund-raising dance. Notwithstanding the apparently satisfactory outcome of the venture further action appears to have been deferred for it was not until the middle of the following year that a formal resolution that

“the ladies be got together to form their own Committee to organise raffles etc.,”

was adopted by the Band Committee. If the resolution appears less than visionary it at least had the merit of providing the Ladies with a formal, semi-autonomous role in the organisation and the resultant establishment of the Ladies Committee was to prove its worth through the provision of substantial support of a practical nature in subsequent

decades. It is interesting to note en passant, the retention of a degree of the male chauvinism which had informed the proposed function of the Ladies Committee in 1952 for some five years later it was decided by the Band Committee that the annual dinner at the Golden Lion, Ferrybridge, should be a 'men only' event.

In no area was the effect of war time conditions more evident than in the physical appearance of the Band in the years immediately following the conflict. In an effort to rectify the situation the bandmaster, Joe Pollard, suggested the establishment of an instrument and uniform fund. In order to accrue funds quickly it was decided by the Committee that a moiety of all fees obtained from engagements should be placed in the fund. However, the suggestion appears to have met with a lukewarm response from the rank and file members resulting in a compromise whereby the proceeds from engagements were to be disbursed amongst the players to the nearest shilling per capita and the residue transferred to the instrument and uniform fund. It was also decided to embark on a series of tours of the neighbourhood in order to obtain small public donations and whilst application for the necessary police permits was pending a general meeting was called to draw up a schedule to enable regular public collections to be undertaken. The accumulation of money by such means was obviously a slow process and the financial problems of the Band were compounded by the fact that for several years following the end of the war rationing of foodstuffs and materials remained a feature of everyday life which meant that the proposed purchase of uniforms had to be accompanied by a requisite number of clothing coupons. Given the practical difficulties it is perhaps unsurprising that as late as the spring of 1950 the subject of new uniforms was still under consideration and that even at that time it was felt to be necessary to leave it for further consideration.

An article by John Hargreaves which appeared in the local newspaper at that period eloquently summarised the situation;

“The Knottingley Silver Prize band uniforms are 20 years old and look it but the Band can't afford new ones which cost £400... and what has the Band got apart from an insufficient sum raised by its own efforts and the donations of a few friends? Musical skill which is considerable; a spirit of independence which is incorrigible; a Micawberish faith in providence and an almost pathetic eagerness to bring credit to the town... Honour with the knees out – there is the Band's biggest asset – its public spirit.”

By November 1950 the Band Secretary had made enquiries of the Yorkshire Copper Works' Band concerning the subject of uniforms and members of the Prize Band had been asked to bring in their existent uniforms for inspection. Following discussion a style specimen was sent to Beevers Ltd., Featherstone, early in the New Year, together with instructions concerning the same. The move was followed up by a visit to the factory by a Band representative in order to ascertain details concerning quality and price. The visit appears to have been non-productive, however, for in April 1951 a decision was taken by the Committee to place an order with the Uniquip company.

The extent to which the article by John Hargreaves had engendered a sympathetic response on the part of the public is conjectural but it seems likely that the outcome was favourable for in May 1951 it was reported that many donations had been received and that before the end of the summer new uniforms, wine in hue with contrasting

pipng, would be obtained. Recalling the euphoria two decades earlier when the last 'kitting-out' took place, Hargreaves humorously wrote;

"Some remember 20 years ago when the silver braid was new how the Band beat 7 bells out of Colonel Bogey and blew hard enough to shatter every window in Chapel Street – Majestic – the judges at Leicester thought so and gave them first prize for deportment."

A degree of ambivalence and (in a couple of cases) unreliability amongst some members of the Band concerning the procurement of a new uniform resulted in the Committee deciding that;

"Members who have proved themselves enthusiastic be measure immediately with the rest upon whom the Band could (sic) not depend be deferred till such time as they prove themselves worthy and that the period elapsing before they are eventually fixed up with uniform be accepted as a suspensionary (sic) punishment."

However, following an assurance by the recalcitrant members regarding their future intent it was also agreed to allow them to be measured for new uniforms.

In a proposed break with past practice it was decided to seek a price from a rag mill as a means of disposing of the old uniforms as a single lot. However, an element of the membership sought to have the decision overthrown and it was ultimately decided that each bandsman should retain his old uniform gratis. Whether from pride or mere utility is unclear but wearing the new outfit proved so popular that the Committee took the unprecedented step of posting a notice in the bandroom stating that the new uniforms should only be worn in the service of the Band.

The recruitment of young people in the Band posed problems concerning uniforms for within a short space of time it was reported that two adolescent bandsmen had outgrown their uniforms and were having to make do with spare items pro tem. A further sartorial problem arose from a unique aspect of the Band's history when in late 1951, a 14-year-old Miss Sheila Norfolk became the first female member of the Band being selected to fill the post of second horn player. In achieving this distinction Sheila joined her father Harry and brother John, who were already full members of the Band but in so doing prompted consideration as to what constituted suitable apparel for lady members. The uncertainty occasioned some delay pending a decision regarding appropriate style. The problem was solved by adoption of the tunic which was to be worn with white blouse and black skirt and tights or black trousers. Adaptability as the handmaiden of economy was the general order for sartorial elegance as shown by a Committee resolution that as soon as the financial position allowed, uniforms, including that of the bandmaster, be submitted to a Leeds based tailoring firm for alteration.

Provision of uniforms was only one part of the financial equation seeking solution by the Committee.

"There still remains the matter of the instruments..." stated the local paper when reporting the purchase of the new uniforms for as the scribe wrote;

“The instruments don’t look too bad, and they wear better than the uniforms”, and “although two of them had made ‘a lot of noise’ before the Band got them, a new set of instruments would cost £2,500.”

Improvisation was the order of the day and as a short term measure more second-hand instruments were obtained. A trombone and a euphonium, formerly belonging to the late bandmaster, were purchased at a cost of £11. A cornet was obtained from a band member for £5 while another member was asked to have his own cornet repaired to enable someone else to ‘inherit’ the instrument belonging to the Band which he currently used. The request gave rise to consideration of providing financial assistance toward the cost of repairs in order to encourage players to use their own instruments. On two separate occasions the subject was discussed but with the Band finances being so precarious that members were asked to pay their own fares to a contest at Thurnsco, the matter was judged to be impractical and therefore;

“left until Band finances allow [further] consideration.”

Such was the civic pride of the Band, however, that when a decision was taken to renovate and reduce the size of the bass drum, “a goodly sum” was paid from the Band's slender resources for the Knottingley coat of arms to be emblazoned on the restored instrument.

In the absence of money for the purchase of new instruments the repair of existing ones was essential and but even this was a drain on sparse funds and when in the spring of 1950 it was decided to have a baritone trombone repaired it was decided to try a new repairer at Askern to save on the cost involved. the change may also have been prompted by a degree of dissatisfaction with a well established firm which had arisen when a E flat valve sent for repair the previous year had failed to meet the expected standard, leaving the Committee to conclude that it had, “never been right since repaired.”

Late in 1951 a decision was taken to send for a representative of the long established firm of instrument makers, Kitchens, in order to assess the condition and cost of repair to several instruments. As a result, it was decided to make an inventory of Band owned instruments with a view to selling off any surplus items

Subsequently a deal was struck with Kitchens in which a number of old instruments were taken in part exchange for new ones. About the same time a B – B flat bass which had been lent on approval to Outwood Salvation Army Corps was purchased by them. Similarly, in 1956, a Besson B – B flat instrument on loan to Knottingley Corps was purchased by an anonymous donor. The obvious deficiencies prompted action by the Committee when in mid 1955 it became clearly apparent that replacement instruments were required to enable the Band to compete in the National Championship finals to be held the following October. Replicating the situation which had appertained half a century earlier, the Band took a bold step in defiance of prevailing economic circumstances and placed an order for two A valve E flat / B – B flat basses, promising cash for prompt delivery, although in a sop to financial prudence the proposed acquisition of music stands was left for later consideration. The following year Boosey & Hawkes were asked to supply a Besson horn and a euphonium on approval. A price of £80 quoted in respect of the eventual purchase of these instruments indicates that they were reconditioned items. In expansive mood, it was decided that a new Besson

tenor horn and a flugel horn should be purchased from R.S. Kitchen Ltd., as soon as finances allowed, the latter instrument to be purchased as soon as the former was paid for. Again, in September 1957, a tenor trombone and a B flat cornet were purchased, the cost being offset in part by the sale of old, unwanted instruments. In passing it is interesting to note something of the demand made of instruments for having rendered a lifetime of service they were on occasion, sent for overhaul and replating, thereby ensuring a further lease of life before being eventually discarded. Even at the end of service life a return on instruments was sought via part exchange or resale. Thus, in response to a query concerning the disposal of a redundant euphonium, a token price of £2 was considered to be fair until on the intercession of Brian Pollard, it was suggested that it be given away, being considered as virtually useless. It is also interesting to note that when an E flat bass and a soprano were offered to Bradford Top Band some months later it was considered worthwhile to fund the cost of having the former cleaned even though each instrument was sold for £5.

The austerity which characterised the advent of the 1950s had given way to burgeoning prosperity towards the end of the decade, facilitating the purchase of replacement instruments. In addition, in 1958, the Band purchased two dozen new music stands, plus an additional one for use by the bandmaster. The music stands which cost £36-17-0 could have been purchased at less price but it was thought to be expedient to buy better quality ones, a decision which indicates the improvement in the financial status of the Band by that time.

The purchase of a number of new and good quality reconditioned instruments and accessories obviously increased the overall value of the Band property which carried clear implications for the cost of replacement in the event of theft or damage. It was therefore decided to insure the same and in March 1958 this was done at a premium cost of 7s 6d per £100 estimated value.

In addition to reliance on public donations, the residue from concert fees, other social engagements and sundry other contributions, additional efforts were made to supplement the uniform and instrument fund. As early as June 1949, the innovative bandmaster, Joe Pollard had suggested a sweepstake based upon the famous St. Ledger horse race. Pollard's proposal prompted consideration of launching a weekly sweepstake based on the sale of tickets to the public as an alternative to the existent system of diverting one share of all Band dividends to the fund. In the event, failure to obtain sufficient support for the proposal resulted in no decision being taken and the subject was left in abeyance. The ploy was utilised occasionally, however, as in 1951 when a Grand National Sweepstake, calculated on the sale of 3,000 tickets at 5 shillings each, offered prizes of £5, £2-10-0 and £1. Similarly, in June 1955, the Northumberland Plate provided the basis for a further sweepstake with 2,500 tickets sold at 3d each or 5 for one shilling, with prizes of £5, £3, and £2 and as an incentive, £1 for the person selling a winning ticket. The financial success of these ventures resulted in the adoption of Pollard's suggestion of a weekly sweepstake and in 1956 Band members were asked to make soundings amongst families and friends and elicit the degree of support for a weekly 6d ticket with a £35 prize. As a result, a 'Jockey Double' was launched in June 1956 replacing the periodic 'special efforts'. The scheme was adapted to football some months later and the reversion to horse racing at the conclusion of each football season ensured the sale of tickets all year round. In similar fashion the festive season was marked from 1951 by the introduction of a 'Xmas Cheer' raffle for which the Band members canvassed to obtain the prizes offered, and on

occasion provided the same themselves, in order to maximise the profit gained. The 'Xmas Cheer' was, of course, supplemental to the traditional progress round the town in aid of Band funds but was quite successful so that in 1956 a raffle on a grand scale was proposed when a cycle, provided at cost by the local cycle dealer, Mr. Charles Tate, was the principal prize, tickets retailing at 5 per shilling.

Meantime, a public appeal was launched. Aimed primarily at the town workforce, the appeal had a target of £2,000. In November 1953 letters were despatched to all local firms and businesses and the appeal was formally opened in the second week of January 1954. The attempt to promote individual identification between members of the public and Band had commenced early in 1950 when Mr. Harry Gregg, senior partner of Gregg & Co., glass bottle manufacturers of Knottingley, was invited to become President of the Band. At that time it was also decided that all subscribers to Band funds should be listed as Vice Presidents, presumably in the hope that such status would encourage further donors. In furtherance of this aim a list of donors was compiled and an approach made to the townspeople and employees of local firms for assistance. Unfortunately, there is no record of the success or otherwise of such appeals.

Notwithstanding the financial difficulties experienced by the Band during the decade following the end of the war the custom of voluntary service continued and when the Band made its appearance at the last ever Infirmary Sunday demonstration in August 1947, the occasion not only marked the end of over half a century of consecutive attendance but of free service, for before 1951 the Band had never made any charge for participating in any civic or ceremonial public occasion in Knottingley. The custom was to continue throughout the post war period as each year the Band, at the behest of the local council and the district branch of the British Legion, paid practical homage at the Remembrance Sunday service.

The Band also volunteered to attend a concert given with the aim of raising a sum of money which would enable the names of those who had died in the late war to be added to the town's war memorial. The gesture was reciprocated at a later date when the Band was granted free use of the Town Hall for an entertainment in aid of Band funds. It is perhaps a sign of the increased bureaucracy spawned in the exigency of war conditions and fostered by the growing centralisation which characterised post war government that it was necessary for the Band Secretary to write and seek exemption from entertainment tax in order to enable the Band to participate in the planned concert without incurring a financial penalty.

Admission to the said concert which was held in early 1950, was by programme of which 300 were printed in anticipation of the event, seats in all parts of the hall being priced at one shilling and sixpence. It is a measure of the esteem in which the Band was held that all the supporting artistes gave their services free of charge in order to maximise the profit obtained by the Band.

It is instructive to note in the context of cost incurred for printing posters, programmes and tickets for Band functions the necessity to monitor expenditure in order to obtain the best value for money. Thus, a subsequent increase in the charge made for such items resulted in the transfer of the Band's business to a Pontefract based printer, a move clearly dictated by financial expediency. Financial hardship did not, however, override humanitarian considerations and when at that time a fund was launched for

the families of the victims of the Crosswell Colliery disaster the Band promptly sent a donation. However, on a more self-indulgent note, it is of interest that the sum of £40 was withdrawn from the Band's bank account to be shared equally between the players at Christmas 1949 and again the following year.

Following the demise of Infirmary Sunday the Band soon became involved in other commitments of a pseudo civic nature. The reintroduction of the town carnival in 1959 marked the commencement of an annual event with which the Band was associated for more than thirty years. Similarly, for many years following its introduction in 1951, the Band 'played off' the annual excursion of the town's senior citizens organised by the Knottingley & Ferrybridge Old People's Entertainment Committee. At the time of the inaugural excursion in July 1951, the Band led a 'procession' of 14 coaches bound for Knaresborough from its assembly point on the Flatts to the Town Hall playing its rendition of 'Boys of the Old Brigade'. In 1953, in return for the concessional inclusion of a 'superannuated' member of the Band and his wife among the 800 pensioners bound for Bridlington, the Band, resplendent in full uniform, led 18 coaches from the Flatts to Skew Bridge. Such voluntary gestures by the Band were often accomplished at some personal cost to members who often took time off from work in order to fulfil the engagements. The cost to individual members resulted in the decision of the Band Committee in 1959 to seek compensatory payment for players who lost earnings through absence from work, although the decision was later rescinded in favour of a basic fee of £2. To reduce time and minimise expense the Band ceased to 'parade' on such occasions and after 1958 the Band played from a stationary position at the top end of the Flatts until the timed departure of the buses.

A similar policy of minimal charge also applied to other events in which local organisations were involved, particularly those involving young people of the township. Thus the decision to assist the local Road Safety Committee by playing at a childrens' concert in 1953 was made on the basis of an agreement that the Band would share in any profit arising from the event. As wage rates increased in response to the effect of increasingly inflationary prices during the 1950s it became necessary to charge the £2 concessional fee for the participation of the Band in local events which had previously been free of charge. The annual parade of Knottingley Boy Scouts was one such event which nevertheless compares very favourably with the £12 tendered as the fee for the Band's attendance at the Pontefract Girl Guides parade at Pontefract racecourse in June 1953. Similarly, from 1962 the charge was applied in respect of attendance at the Knottingley Carnival.

In view of the liberality of the Band Committee in matters concerning events of a civic nature, it is perhaps surprising that substantial fees were sought for two events of national importance which took place in the early 1950s. The involvement of the Band in the Festival of Britain in 1951 was left in the hands of the Secretary who negotiated with the appropriate K.U.D.C. committee an undisclosed fee for the participation of the Band in the parade and the musical selections which marked the ensuing gala. (83) For its services on Coronation Day in June 1953, again held under the aegis of the local council, the Secretary was instructed to inform the Coronation Committee that,

"a fee of £30 is the lowest acceptable to the Band."

Nevertheless, the engagement was secured and on Coronation Day the Band led a procession featuring inter alia, a gaily painted double-deck bus and fire engine through

the town in pouring rain, thus earning the somewhat exorbitant fee in the most difficult and uncomfortable way.

Reassessment of fees charged for its services arose of necessity from the financial hardship the Band experienced in the immediate post war years and it is greatly to the credit of the members that their strong sense of civic duty combined with an empathy arising from the mutual experience with older local organisations of difficulties faced at that time, to modify fees and even waive them, as deemed appropriate.

Coronation Year leavened the economic gloom and provided a boost to the national psyche, creating a new-sprung air of optimism as the long period of austerity was banished by the burgeoning hope of an era of prosperity. The national trend was reflected in the affairs of the Band. If the nation had a new symbolic head so had the Band in the form of Mr. H.U.W. Gregg, who agreed to assume the mantle of his late father and become President of the Band. The new wave of public prosperity was also reflected in the increased number of engagements undertaken by the Band from the mid 1950s. The interim period had been marked by a series of fundraising concerts vital for the continued existence of the Band. In an evocation of an earlier age Knottingley Town Cricket Club had allowed the use of its Banks Garth ground for a Band concert held on 12th August 1951. A series of fundraising concerts to be undertaken jointly with other local groups or prestigious bands was a feature of that period.

In 1953 a concert was arranged featuring the top flight Hammonds Band in an effort to boost the Silver Prize Band funds and an abortive effort was made to obtain the services of Markham Main Colliery Band in the same year. Again, in 1955, a concert of massed bands to be held in Knottingley Town Hall was considered but failed to reach maturity. However, from 1952 civic prosperity was sufficiently restored to enable the local council to engage the Silver Prize Band for a series of four summer concerts held in the Knottingley and Ferrybridge playing fields. The series was repeated the following year at a fee of £40 and some idea of the rising inflationary trend is shown by the fact that when concerts were resumed in 1954 the fee had increased to £50 with an additional £10 being paid for an extra concert at Whitsuntide.

The fees tendered by the Band for engagements during the 1950s were somewhat random, depending on the nature of the event concerned and the distance of the venues involved. By 1956 for example, a series of Sunday concerts commanded the following fees:

Pontefract & Castleford: £30  
Wakefield: £35  
Leeds: £40

and these charges remained unchanged to the end of the decade. Similarly, Loscoe Carnival, 1952 and 1953, and Methley Carnival in 1953 and 1954 were charged at £20 respectively although the fee for the latter event in 1951 was £17-10-0. Other engagements during the decade were likewise charged in accordance with the time spent fulfilling the required duties and the expense involved in travelling to the event. An outdoor Labour day celebration at Goole in 1951 brought a fee of £15 while a church fete at Ferrybridge was undertaken for £8-10-0 and an indoor concert at Westgate Common Club, Wakefield, as late as 1959 was undertaken for only £7. Such

engagements were punctuated with concerts at local hospitals and social institutions for which, in the best traditions of service to the community, no fee was sought.

To place the purchasing power of fees in a comparative context it should be noted that in 1953 a pound sterling would have bought 16 pints of beer compared to half a pint in 2003, or 15 portions of fish and chips and 39 large loaves of bread compared to half a portion and two loaves half a century later.

Throughout the early years of the 1950s the Ladies Committee was involved quite frequently in organising dances to secure funds for the Band. Knottingley Town Hall was the regular venue with two such events during 1951. Again, in 1955 some 20 posters were commissioned to advertise the event, the price of admission being 2s 6d and the success of the vent resulted in its replication the following year. It is interesting to note that the music for dancing was provided by the locally based Dominoes Dance Band, a far cry from the less sophisticated pre war era when the 'Orchestral' component of the Prize Band provided the dance music.

By the mid 1950s the effect of television programmes which had gained a wider audience with the introduction of the commercial channels in 1955, had fostered the desire for home entertainment which was complemented by the introduction by Davenports of the 'beer at home' delivery service. In addition, an increasing element of the public became vehicle owners at this period and were able to travel far afield in search of new, more novel forms of entertainment and pleasure. By the end of the decade traditional forms of entertainment such as sport, cinema, public houses, concerts and dances had lost much of their earlier appeal. The tow latter forms of entertainment were consequently rendered less useful as a source of funding for the Band and although a dance was held in the Town Hall under the auspices of the Band as late as February 1958, thereafter such occasions were merely a memory.

It is sad to note a degree of indiscipline was prevalent within the ranks of the Band during the immediate post war period. A reaction to the constraints of wartime and the psychological effect of regime change combined with a change in the attitude of the public in general towards deference to authority based upon wealth and its concomitant social status, may lie at the root of the situation. In an effort to remedy the malaise the Committee decreed in 1949 that the Bandmaster should address the members and stress the need for more satisfactory rehearsals, a sine qua non for successful contests to which the Band aspired. The unauthorised swapping of instruments was a further aspect of indiscipline requiring prohibition if consistency of performance was to be achieved but much more serious was the evident disrespect of some members resulting in a proposal by the Vice Chairman

"That anyone insulting or guilty of insubordination toward the Bandmaster be dealt with by the Committee."

At a Committee meeting held in October 1949 a decision was taken to call a general meeting as soon as possible on "business of vital importance." The subject of the meeting is unspecified and no minutes appear to have been taken but it is not improbable that the meeting was related to rank and file attitude and conduct. Indeed, despite attempts at corrective action, problems with two members in particular persisted for the best part of a decade. Undependability allied to a refusal to observe rules led to threats of disciplinary action culminating in expulsion followed by

reinstatement only for the offending parties to err again before the “spasmodic availability” and “past somewhat troublesome record” resulted in a ‘round robin’ being signed by the entire membership, dispensing with the services of one of the recalcitrant only for one dismissed party to be admitted at a later date.

It is clear that the tolerance shown to such members was not due to moral weakness on the part of the Committee but from reliance upon their musical ability at a time when rebuilding was taking place but was far from complete. For this reason disciplinary action was frequently postponed until after a particular event. A degree of indiscipline as shown in turning up late for rehearsals has been a perpetual problem within the Band but during the 1950s non-attendance for protracted periods was a problem to the extent that the Secretary was occasionally called upon to ascertain whether absentee bandsmen had any future intention of attending at all. As late as 1959 the concern of the Committee resulted in the decision to keep a register and deal with anyone who missed 25% of rehearsals in any six month period.

Indications of the long term effect of wartime disruption is clearly evident in the degree of improvisation during the decade from 1945 with ‘bleeding’ of inexperienced players, recruitment of new members and negotiations for the appearance of guest players as an interim measure. Thus it is recorded that:

“A.W. to play the drum at Cliffe and receive a full share” [of the fee], and “P.M. to be given one month’s trial and then be a full member if successful”, and that “E.E. be asked to join the Band as a ‘pumper-up.’”

Meanwhile, the Secretary was to “interview C.B. with a view to him playing B-B flat at the Leicester concert”, and with regard to a forthcoming event, negotiate for “a trombone player to be engaged on terms to be arranged.”

As late as 1951 it was necessary for the Band to seek assistance in order to fulfil engagements, particularly in the case of the Festival of Britain gala event and in one case the Secretary wrote to the commanding officer of the bandsman who was undergoing National Service to seek leave for the player to appear with the Band at a forthcoming contest.

A ‘Youth Policy’ was seen as a necessity for long-term growth and stability, the more so as several long serving members were contemplating retirement from the Band on grounds of age. Frank Spencer, Tom Tingle, Billy Rowbottom and C. Jackson all resigned during the ‘Fifties and early ‘Sixties. Fortunately, admittances kept pace with departures and by the mid 1960s when Tom Pollard and Roland Hey retired the Band had a complement of 24 members, the youngest of whom was only ten years of age.

One area of recruitment of young people was through an approach to the headmaster of the local secondary school, Mr. S. Roebuck, to see his assistance regarding the provision of potential learners. The Committee also decided to establish a beginner’s class and in anticipation of this measure agreed to purchase six B-flat cornets suitable for use by junior bandsmen. the scale of the project was obviously far too demanding to be left solely in the hands of the bandmaster, no matter how efficient or willing to bear the burden. competent members were therefore enlisted from within the ranks of the Band to assist in teaching learners and featuring instruments other than the cornet

and Terry Clayton and E Ashley volunteered to teach and played a significant part in the promotion of 'young blood' within the Band.

A further aspect of functional reform commencing in the post war period was the attempt to rebuild the Band music library. Owing to the lack of adequate supervision members had adopted a very casual attitude to items belonging to the Band library and in June 1949 it was decreed by the Committee that, "all music taken from the Bandroom [is] to be signed for."

A donation by Joe and Brian Pollard enabled the purchase of several new scores at that time ) but the need to appoint a librarian with personal responsibility for cataloguing and maintaining and ordering new scores does not appear to have been considered, perhaps because of the reluctance of anyone to volunteer for the duty. It was therefore not until 1965 that Raymond Hodgson, son of the then Secretary, and one of the younger bandsmen, became the librarian. It was resolved that, "all members [are] to seek out and return all Band music so that an assessment of the library can be made."

The desire for a comprehensive 'tidying-up' is manifest from the early 1950s and applied to the public appearance of the Band as well as to the internal aspects of discipline as shown by a resolution concerning the image of the Band when on parade, with the injunction that the; "Bandmaster [is] to pay special attention to the step adopted when the Band sets off on the march, to ensure the proper formation is maintained."

The problems and privations experienced by the Band in the aftermath of the war did not prevent it contesting. On the 18th May 1946 the band was awarded 3rd prize in the Open Championships at Bell Vue, Manchester, in which 28 bands representing the northern counties took part. Despite being depleted by war service the test piece 'Hereward' was rendered by an ensemble in which all but two members had been taught by Sammy Marshall. Owing to an administrative error a rival band was named in 3rd place and Knottingley Band was left on tenterhooks until an official correction was made.

The Band was less successful in the North Eastern Championships held in the Belgrave Hall, Leeds, on Saturday 6th May 1950. Competing in the Fourth Section the Band drew the 25th playing order out of 21 contesting bands which meant a six hour wait before being called upon to play. The Band, with 170 marks out of 200 was well down the list, the winner being the City of York Band with 190 marks. In an echo of former days, Mr. A.H. Whitehead of Sturton, Leeds, had been engaged as guest conductor for the occasion.

In the contest held at the same venue the following year the band was again unplaced, gaining 173 points out of 200, but the contest proved valuable experience for several young players for whom the occasion provided and initiation in competitive playing.

For the Daily Herald sponsored contests in 1952 the Band was reinforced by the appearance of at least one guest player. In addition, Band practice was extended to cover two evenings per week. The Band took part in several contests each year, at Osset, at Halifax and at Huddersfield on the 14th March 1953, conducted on each occasion by Mr. Whitehead. Several of the above events were under the aegis of the West Riding Brass Band Society of which Knottingley Band was a long established

member. Others were organised by the Halifax Brass Band Society. The events were very much a learning experience for the members of the Silver Prize Band as shown by the post contest evaluation following the Osset contest in October 1953 which was described as being “enjoyable and successful.”

The Daily Herald contest at Huddersfield on the 13th March 1954 also appears to have been successful and in its wake A.H. Whitehead was presented with an inscribed watch-metronome. That year the Band again entered the Belle Vue contest in May. Leaving Knottingley by coach at 8.30am, the Band held a pre-contest practice, sharing a rehearsal room with the Featherstone Band. The contest culminated with a firework display enjoyed by the bandsmen and supporters before the return trip.

The year 1954 was an exceptionally successful one and by August the Band had already won six trophies. The degree of success had resulted in an approach being made to the Harrogate Brass Band Association to stage a contest in Knottingley Town Hall and on Saturday 25th September 1954 the event took place under the adjudication of Mr. J. Broadbent of Huddersfield. The contest comprised two sections with the hosts competing with six other bands in the first section. Five bands featured in the second section. The draw for playing took place at 2.30pm with Knottingley Band being drawn fifth in their section. The contest got underway at 3.00pm. Each section had its own awards. First position in the first section secured the Highley Cup with the Hawkes Cup and the Hawley Cup being awarded to the second and third placed bands. In the second section the three trophies were the Green Shield, York Cup and Smith's Cup. In addition, each section had a first and second award for the bands which were successful in the rendition of a march.

The winning band in the first section, playing the test piece ‘Moments of Wagner’, was Altofts Colliery Band, conducted by C. Wilkinson. Knottingley, under Whitehead, took second place and Kippax Old Band came third. Second section winner, playing ‘Beautiful Britain’ was the Morley Legion Band with Leeds City Band second. Arrangements were made by the Knottingley Band secretary for the ensembles to be photographed on the occasion of the ‘home’ contest with the six currently held trophies prominently displayed.

By spring 1955 the idea of a massed band concert was being mooted but the plan never reached fruition and November of that year saw the Band busily rehearsing for a West Riding Society contest to be held at Halifax on the 17th of the month. The Band was again under the baton of A.H. Whitehead and in the pre contest preparation the Band again shared the use (and cost) of a rehearsal room with their Featherstone rivals.

Once again the Band was successful in the regional heats and by May 1955 was rehearsing the test piece ‘Merry Monarch’ in preparation for the National Championship finals in London. In order to maximise their chances and simultaneously minimise the expense, the Band withdrew from its intended participation in a contest organised under the joint auspices of the Halifax-Harrogate Associations and to defray the cost of the forthcoming London finals approached the N.A.D.S. & S. and Conservative Clubs with a view to holding concerts at these venues. Meanwhile, a promise by Mr. E.J. Arnold, Managing Director, John Harker Ltd., the local shipbuilding company, to give a donation to the Band, led to an approach to other local firms for similar donations to buy a number of new instruments to be used in the forthcoming London contest.

In mid March 1956 the Ban commenced “serious work regarding the daily Herald contest piece” and arrangements were already underway for the Band to stay at the Royal Hotel for the National finals in London later that year. However, following an adverse financial statement in May a decision was taken to pull out of the contest. Loath to forego the chance to compete at National level, the Band again approached the secretaries of three local clubs to arrange fundraising concerts and undertook additional activities to obtain funds, including an increase in members’ subscriptions to 6d per week. It was also agreed that any fee less than £5 should be placed in Bands funds rather than being assigned for sharing by members. As a result participation in the National finals was assured.