

# Instruments of the Cyfarthfa Band

## THE BAND

CYFARTHFA Castle, one mile to the north of Merthyr Tydfil in South Wales, was built in the 1820s. It was the home of the Crawshay family, owners of the nearby Cyfarthfa ironworks. When the thirty-two year old William Crawshay II commissioned the building of the house, it was regarded as a vast extravagance. It is in the Gothic style and constructed of limestone, with fifteen towers, seventy-two rooms, battlements and extensive gardens. In 1889 the Crawshays left Cyfarthfa. The building was unoccupied and dormant until 1909 when the family sold it to Merthyr Tydfil Corporation for £18,000, twelve thousand pounds less than it had cost to build it.<sup>1</sup> The grounds are now public pleasure gardens, the house is now used as a school, but several of the principal entertaining rooms are used as the Cyfarthfa Castle Museum.

The focus of the Museum is, naturally, the Crawshay family but the scope has broadened so that it now contains objects and ephemera that have been acquired during the twentieth century. It contains an impressive collection of musical instruments, mainly western and dominated by those which were used in the Cyfarthfa Band in the second half of the 19th century. Several instruments are easily identifiable as original band instruments by engravings on the bell, either 'W. T. Crawshay, Esq.' or 'CYFARTHFA BAND', or both. Others are less easily identifiable. Some instruments, for example, are of a period and type that suggests that they were used in the Band but they are not inscribed and cannot be identified in primary photographic sources for the Band.

Five photographic sources survive:

1. A photograph showing the Band performing at Tenby in the 1870s. This photograph yields little information about the instruments.
2. A photograph probably taken by Mr. Robert Crawshay between 1850 and 1860. This shows a band of twenty-one players; three keyed bugles, four cornets, two tenor horns, four trombones, one euphonium, one ophicleide, two valved basses, two unidentified brass instruments, side drum and bass drums.

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3. The Band standing in square formation in 1871. This is a detail from a much larger picture taken at the wedding of Henrietta Louise Crawshay to Capt. W. C. Ralston.

4. A formal photograph of the Band taken outside the house. Not dated but probably late 1890s. This shows a band of twenty-four players. As well as five cornets à pistons and three trombones, there are thirteen rotary-valved instruments, each with four valves. The two flugelhorn, and at least two of the cornets, are crooked into A<sup>b</sup> (or D<sup>b</sup>).

5. Pl. I. A formal photograph of the Band taken on the steps of the house, dated 1905. This may be the latest picture of the Band. It is almost certainly the last picture in which their long-serving conductor, George Livesey, appears. This shows a band of twenty players. As well as four cornets à pistons and three trombones, there are eleven rotary-valved instruments, each with four valves. The two flugelhorn, and at least three of the cornets, are crooked into A<sup>b</sup> (or D<sup>b</sup>).

The Cyfarthfa Band was one of the greatest of the nineteenth century and played as vital a role as any in the evolution of brass bands in Britain as a major virtuoso genre. Although by the 1890s brass bands in Britain were conforming to broadly similar lines of development, the origins of individual bands in the middle of the century do not fit neatly into a general pattern. Some rose from the embers of all-but-defunct village and church bands; some were formed by subscriptions, either on the volition of working people or, more rarely, by the encouragement of municipal authorities; others were the subject of the patronage of industrial entrepreneurs. The Cyfarthfa Band is an example of a different category. It was a private band, formed, controlled and sustained by Robert Thompson Crawshay, son of William Crawshay II. Although it earned its reputation in a more public arena, Crawshay never regarded it, or allowed it to be regarded, as anything other than his own personal property.

It is generally understood that the Band was founded in 1844.<sup>2</sup> In fact, it was founded earlier, probably in 1840. Robert Crawshay was a player himself, although it is not known what instrument he played or how competent he was. An invoice dated 21 March 1840 for '3 eight Key'd Bugles with tuning slides'<sup>3</sup> from Charles Pace suggests that he was already establishing the Band. The Cyfarthfa Papers deposited at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, do not contain letter books or serial documents for the 1840s and 1850s but later letter books and odd pieces of earlier correspondence suggest that Crawshay administered the Band himself through his personal secretary, William Jones. Some letters show correspondence with suppliers and manufacturers:

January 12, 1860  
H. Distin, Leicester Sq.

I send you today a box containing a Contra-Bass Instrument of your make which I will thank you to repair and return as soon as you possibly can.

Robert Crawshay  
pp. William Jones<sup>4</sup>

February 24, 1860  
Henry Distin, Leicester Sq., London

I had quite overlooked yours of the 13 January. I now send you Post Office order for 20/6 — vizt. 16/- for repairing the instrument and 4/6 for the carriage which you paid. I shall be obliged for a receipt.

Robert Crawshay  
pp. William Jones<sup>5</sup>

— others illustrate the jealousy with which he regarded the band:

September 25, 1860  
David Jones, Britten Ferry [*sic*]

I was very much surprised to hear that my Band was going to play at your concert and that such was announced in the large Bills posted about the town; I cannot imagine why such an announcement should have been made without first of all obtaining my permission. I have received your letter on the subject but I do not acknowledge the excuse sufficient for such a liberty and I should certainly object to the Band playing at Neath if it was not for your sake you having always paid the greatest attention to my message or enquiry sent by me to you. I accord you personally permission for the Band to attend the concert this night and trust to you sending them back this night as promised in your letter if they should be kept over tonight I must charge £20 to pay expenses.

Robert Crawshay<sup>6</sup>

Crawshay engaged the best players. It appears that he employed many fine players who were attracted by the offer of work at the foundry. Also, in addition to the musical director, he employed some professional players. The trombonist, G. C. Bawden, was also a competent cellist and violinist and conductor of the Cyfarthfa String Band. William England, the son of John England, was one of a dynasty of Yorkshire musicians who emigrated to Merthyr from Bradford. He played soprano with the Band but had a national reputation as an orchestral cornet player. The most celebrated player was the ophicleidist Samuel Hughes. Hughes was born in Staffordshire and probably came to Merthyr in 1858. A letter from Crawshay to a

Mr. Jonathan Grey, dated April 12, 1858, pertaining to an engagement for the Band at the Bath and West of England Show, states:

'Expect I shall by that time have procured the aid of the *famous* 'Ophecleid' player 'Hughes' so he will be a great addition on that occasion'.<sup>7</sup>

Other ophecleide players in the Band were highly respected. In the 1850s the solo ophecleide was a Mr. Coleman, who emigrated to America. John Walker, a Yorkshireman who had previously been engaged in travelling shows, succeeded Hughes as principal ophecleide, but by 1860 he was playing euphonium. He certainly possessed one which he won in the 1860 Crystal Palace competition.<sup>8</sup>

Sam Hughes must have been highly paid by Crawshay. It is doubtful, though, if the rest of the Band were paid as much or even paid at all. It is more likely that the players were given jobs in the foundry and reasonable conditions for living.<sup>9</sup> The conductor, George Livesey, was paid £1 per month in arrears with occasional additional payments of £1.5.0.<sup>10</sup> He and other players were also paid expenses. But the situation regarding the purchase and repair of instruments is considerably less clear. There are occasional payments to manufacturers and suppliers throughout the period, some for 'Drumsheads', and on August 30, 1865:

'To F. Besson for Bombardon

198 Euston Road, New Road, London

£9.12.0<sup>11</sup>

Several players seem to be paying off debts to Crawshay for instruments. We can assume that Crawshay paid for the instruments by what was, in effect, a loan to players who then had to repay him by payments of 5 shillings a month.<sup>12</sup>

The letter from R. T. Crawshay to John Grey of April 12, 1858,<sup>13</sup> states that 'The number of my band is 20'. This is more or less in accord with the instrumentation given in the manuscript band books.<sup>14</sup> There are over a hundred part books representing a very substantial part of the repertory. The books are in six sets with the following instrumentations:

#### *B Series*

CORNET PRIMO [in A $\flat$ , later parts in B $\flat$ ]

SECOND CORN[O]P[EAN] [in A $\flat$ ]

BUGLE PRIMO [in D $\flat$ , sometimes B $\flat$ ]

SECOND BUGLE [in B $\flat$ ]

THIRD BUGLE [in A $\flat$ ]

REPIANO BUGLE [in D $\flat$ ]

SAX HORN PRIMO [in D $\flat$ , sometimes E $\flat$ ]

SAX HORN SECOND [in D $\flat$ , sometimes E $\flat$ ]

ALTO TROMBONE

1ST TENOR

TROMBONE

BASS TROMBONE

FIRST OPHECLEID

SECOND TENOR

TROMBONE

SOLO OPHECLEID

BOMBARDON

DRUMS

*G Series*

CORNET PRIMO IN A $\flat$   
CORNET SECOND IN A $\flat$   
BUGLE PRIMO IN D $\flat$   
REPIANO BUGLE IN D $\flat$   
BUGLE SECOND IN B $\flat$   
SAXHORN PRIMO IN E $\flat$   
BARITONE IN B $\flat$   
VALVE TROMBONE  
VALVE TROMBONE  
FIRST TROMBONE  
SECOND TROMBONE  
THIRD TROMBONE  
FOURTH TROMBONE  
FIRST OPHECLEID  
SECOND OPHECLEID  
BOMBARDON  
BASSI  
F: BASS  
DRUM

*I Series*

FIRST CORNET  
D $\flat$  CORNET  
B $\flat$  BUGLE  
D $\flat$  BUGLE  
SECOND CORNET [in A $\flat$ ]  
FIRST SAXHORN [in E $\flat$ ]  
2ND SAXHORN [in E $\flat$ ]  
BARITONE [in A $\flat$ ]  
BARITONE [in B $\flat$ ]  
EUPHONION [*sic*]  
OPHECLEIDE  
FIRST TROMBONE  
2ND TROMBONE  
3RD TROMBONE  
4TH TROMBONE  
E $\flat$  BASS  
SOLO BARITONE  
F BASS  
DRUM

*H Series*

CORNET PRIMO IN A $\flat$   
CORNET 2ND IN A $\flat$   
CORNET 3RD IN A $\flat$   
D $\flat$  BUGLE PRIMO  
B $\flat$  BUGLE  
[D] $\flat$  BUGLE REPIANO  
SAXHORN 1<sup>mo</sup> [in E $\flat$ ]  
SAXHORN 2 [in E $\flat$ ]  
TROMBONE 1  
2ND TROMBONE  
3RD TROMBONE  
4TH TROMBONE  
BARITONE  
EUPHONION [*sic*]  
1ST OPHECLEID  
2ND OPHECLEID  
BASSI  
B $\flat$  BASS  
DRUM

*J Series*

SOPRANO CORNET [in D $\flat$ ]  
SECOND CORNET [in A $\flat$ ]  
THIRD CORNET [in A $\flat$ ]  
D $\flat$  BUGLE  
B $\flat$  BUGLE  
1ST HORN IN E $\flat$   
2ND HORN IN E $\flat$   
FIRST TROMBONE  
SECOND TROMBONE  
THIRD TROMBONE  
FOURTH TROMBONE  
BARITONE  
OPHECLEIDE [*sic*]  
SOLO EUPHONION [*sic*]  
EUPHONION [*sic*]  
BOMBARDON  
BOMBARDON B $\flat$   
BOMBARDON E $\flat$   
DRUMS

*L Series*

D <sub>b</sub> SOPRANO CORNET	1ST EUPHONIUM
D <sub>b</sub> SOPRANO CORNET 2	2ND EUPHONIUM
1ST CORNET [in A <sub>b</sub> ]	BASS EUPHONIUM
2ND CORNET [in A <sub>b</sub> ]	BARITONE
REPIANO CORNET [in A <sub>b</sub> ]	E <sub>b</sub> BASS
B <sub>b</sub> FLUGELHORN	F BASS
1ST E <sub>b</sub> TENOR	BB <sub>b</sub> BASS
2ND E <sub>b</sub> TENOR	DRUMS
1ST TROMBONE	

The Cyfarthfa Band finally became defunct just before the First World War. The instruments were taken over briefly by the Merthyr and District Band which achieved none of the success of its illustrious predecessor.

THE INSTRUMENTS

The instruments at Cyfarthfa Castle<sup>16</sup> include the most extensive set known to the authors of instruments surviving from a single 19th century band. Those which were definitely part of the Cyfarthfa Band are:

- B18 Cornet in B<sub>b</sub> (Dan Godfrey, *circa* 1893): brass, three piston valves, double waterkey. Probably made in France for the British market.
- B6 Baritone (Leopold Uhlmann, Vienna) four rotary valves: *circa* 1870, brass with German silver mounts.
- B4 Bass trombone in G (Dan Godfrey, *circa* 1893): brass, plated stockings; also inscribed 'MADE IN PARIS'. This is probably the bass trombone to be seen in the photographs of the late 1890s and of 1905.
- B1 Ophicleide in C (Courtois, 1867-71) Hughes model.  
See monograph by Weston<sup>17</sup> for a detailed description of this magnificent instrument. Associated with B2, Ophicleide mouthpiece: rim overhangs cup slightly; there is a pronounced groove inside the cup. Pl. II (a).
- B5 Euphonium (Franz Bock, Vienna) four valves, *circa* 1868. The mouthpipe leads directly into the valves so that a large proportion of the bore is conical.
- B9 Bombardon in E<sub>b</sub> (Leopold Uhlmann) four valves: brass with German silver mounts.
- B7 Bombardon in E<sub>b</sub> (Leopold Uhlmann) four valves: *circa* 1860.
- B10 BB<sub>b</sub> bass (Leopold Uhlmann) four valves: *circa* 1860.

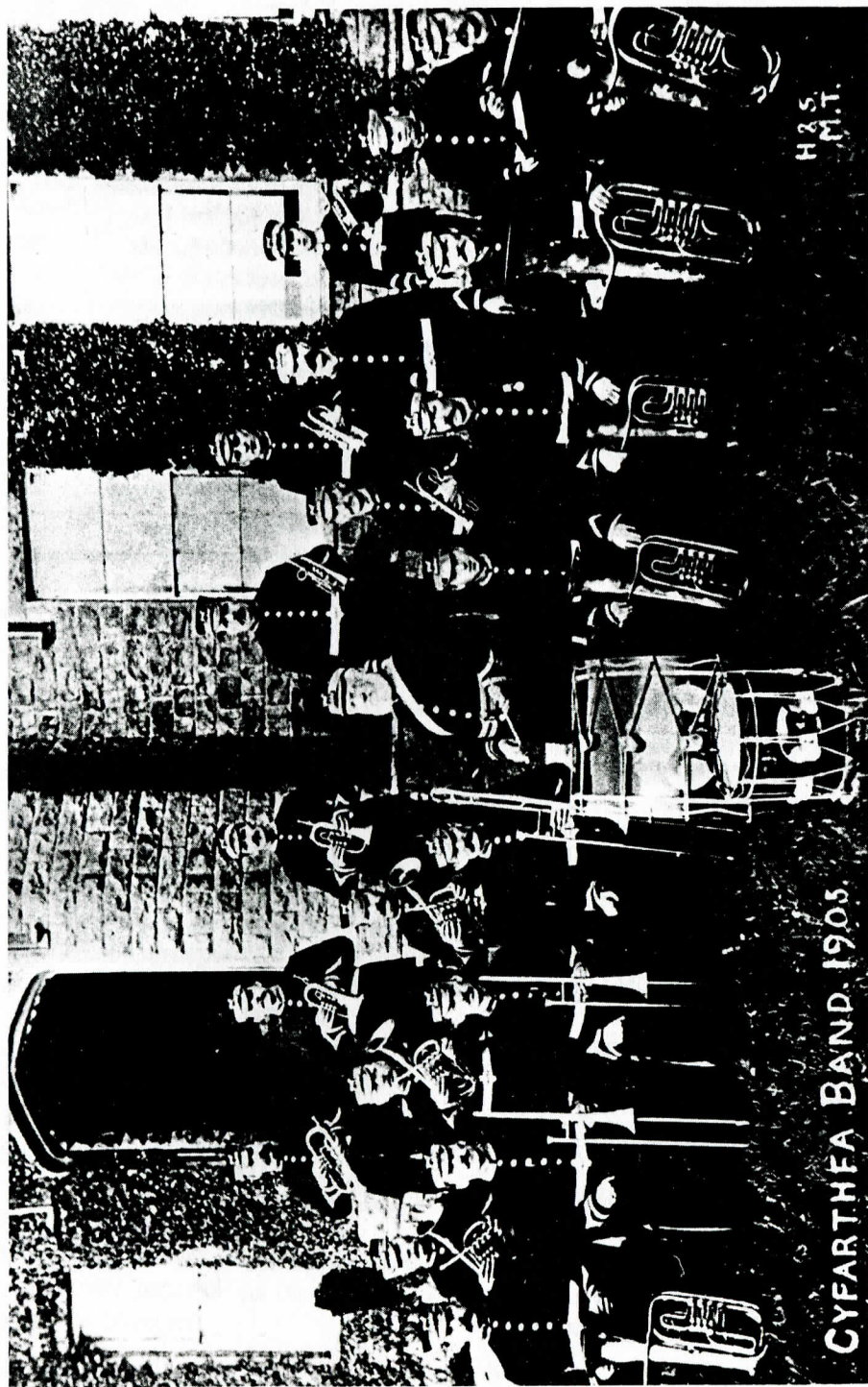
- B11 BB $\flat$  bass (Courtois, Paris, 1871): brass, three valves with short wide diameter pistons similar to Berliner Pumpen.
- M221 Side drum (anon.): an unusual instrument, depth 24mm, with a steel head. Pl. II (b).
- B33 Side drum (Dan Godfrey): standard rope-tension side drum with brass shell, dating from the 1890s.
- B34 Bass drum (Hawkes & Son): standard instrument from the last years of the band.

The following are not directly attributable to the Cyfarthfa Band, but are likely to have been associated with the Band:

- M129 Bugle in C (anon.) single coil: copper with brass garland ferrule and cord rings. Probably *circa* 1830.
- M431 Keyed bugle in E $\flat$  (Charles Pace) 7 keys: *circa* 1860.
- B15 Keyed bugle in C (Charles Pace) 8 keys: quite possibly one of the instruments ordered by Robert Crawshay from Pace in 1840. It has a rack-and-pinion tuning shank at the mouthpipe.
- M708 Flugel horn in B $\flat$  (Johann Riedl, Pressburg; imported by Henry Distin) four rotary valves: this is very probably identical with one of the instruments to be seen in the band photographs of the late 1890s and of 1905. The instrument dates from *circa* 1855, but is not in the early photograph of the Band.
- B16 Cornet in A $\flat$  (Besson, London, *circa* 1880): brass, mouthpipe leads into 1st valve, main tuning slide comes between 3rd valve and bellpipe; probably associated with B17, cornet mouthpiece (Besson).
- M.68 Natural trumpet in F (anon.): two turns, with a tuning slide drawing towards the player. It appears to have been provided with more than one tuning slide for different pitches: the surviving tuning slide is inscribed 'F'.
- B3 Tenor trombone in C (anon.): this is one of very few surviving early 19th century trombones in C, widely used in British bands; this has slide stockings but no waterkey or tuning slide; the slide arms are widely spaced. Pl. II (c).
- B19 Serpent in C (anon.) 4 keys.
- B8 Bombardon in E $\flat$  (anon.) 4 valves: similar to B7 above, but with no inscriptions. Pl. II (d).

Also in the Cyfarthfa Castle collection are the following, probably none of them associated with the Band, but they are listed here for completeness:

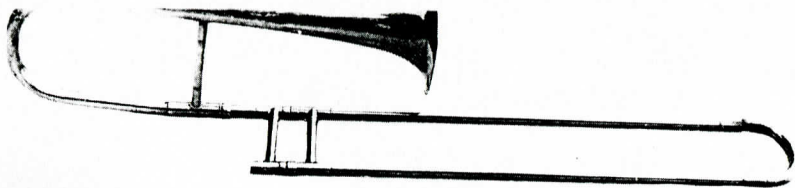
- M380 D Flute in C (Goulding & D'Almaine) 6 keys, compass to C.



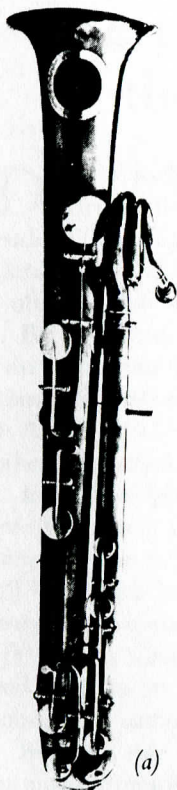
CYFARTHA BAND. 1905.

H.S.  
M.T.

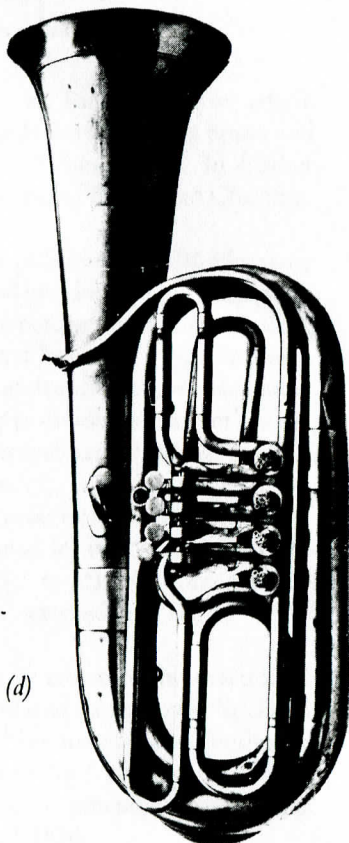
PLATE I Cyfarthfa Band in 1905.



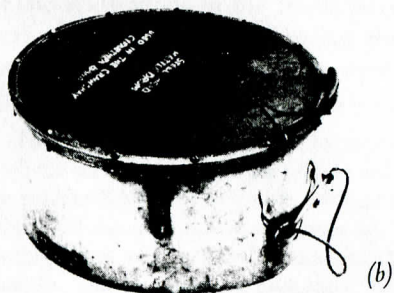
(c)



(a)



(d)



(b)

PLATE II

- (a) Ophicleide in C (Courtois). (b) Side drum (anonymous).  
(c) Tenor trombone in C (anonymous). (d) Bombardon in E $\flat$  (anonymous).

Photos: W. Waygood.

- B20 E $\flat$  Flute in D $\flat$  (Hawkes & Son) 8 keys.
- B21 Clarinet in B $\flat$  (D'Almaine & Co.) boxwood, ivory mounts, 6 brass keys.
- 449 Bassoon (Gerock) 6 keys; with reed by Snelling (?).
- M779 Slide trumpet in F (Charles Pace): brass with silver mounts, with angled bit and three crooks; elastic return mechanism. Associated with B14, Trumpet mouthpiece (anon.): brass with silverplated rim.
- M432 Keyed trumpet (anon.) 3 keys: brass with flat round keyheads, bottom key open-standing, twice coiled. Associated with B31, Trumpet mouthpiece (Charles Pace): brass with silverplated rim, and a discontinuity in the cup profile.
- B13 Tenor cor in F (Hawkes & Son) 3 valves, *circa* 1920.
- B12 BB $\flat$  bass (Hawkes & Son) 3 valves: the 'Emperor' model, *circa* 1925, possibly associated with B32, BB $\flat$  mouthpiece (Hawkes & Son).

There are also several cornet and bugle mouthpieces of recent acquisition.

From the evidence of the surviving instruments and music part books, together with archival material, it can be seen that the Cyfarthfa Band started around 1840, like many other brass bands at that time, with an instrumentation of keyed bugles, cornepeans, trombones, ophicleide, drums and possibly trumpets. Towards 1860, valved basses and saxhorns were added. Interestingly, from around 1870 the band was using mainly Viennese rotary valved instruments, though an ophicleide was purchased also to Hughes's specification. English makers seem to have been studiously avoided: we know of no other first-rate brass band adopting this policy. Although the basses were pitched conventionally in E $\flat$  and B $\flat$  and the trombones in B $\flat$  (earlier C) and G, the practice of crooking cornets and flugel horns in A $\flat$  (and D $\flat$ ) seems to have survived here longer. The influence of a long-serving bandmaster, George Livesey, with a large repertoire of music specially arranged for the band was probably responsible for this.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to express their gratitude to Mr. Nicholas Mansfield, Curator of the Cyfarthfa Castle Museum, Merthyr Tydfil, and his colleagues for the kindness and co-operation which they received during the preparation of this article.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The main secondary source for the history of the Crawshays and Cyfarthfa is Margaret Stewart Taylor, *The Crawshays of Cyfarthfa Castle*, London, 1967.

<sup>2</sup> D. Morgans, *Music and Musicians of Merthyr and District*, Merthyr, 1922, p. 127, gives 1844 as the date of the foundation of the band. Many subsequent writers have taken this date as accurate.

<sup>3</sup> This invoice is preserved at the National Library of Wales (NLW), Cyfarthfa Papers, Box XIV.

<sup>4</sup> NLW Cyfarthfa Papers, Vol. 5, no. 551.

<sup>5</sup> NLW Cyfarthfa Papers, Vol. 5, no. 595.

<sup>6</sup> NLW Cyfarthfa Papers, Vol. 5, no. 701.

<sup>7</sup> NLW Cyfarthfa Papers, Vol. 5, no. 268.

<sup>8</sup> General information on the personnel of the Band is given in Morgans (Note 2).

<sup>9</sup> The financial structure of the Band is obscure. The personal letter books for the period 1840–1850 are lost, but it is likely, in any case, that R. T. Crawshay was disguising most payments for musicians and instruments in different accounts. It is odd, for instance, that W. T. Crawshay's name should be engraved on the bells of instruments. He had little connection with the Band, living as he did in Caversham Hall near Reading, but he did own the iron works and, formally, everything associated with it.

<sup>10</sup> NLW Cyfarthfa Papers, Vol. 16, *passim*.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* p. 36.

<sup>12</sup> For example, *ibid.*, p. 85 (1867).

<sup>13</sup> *Op. cit.*

<sup>14</sup> Trevor Herbert, *A Catalogue of the Bandbooks of Cyfarthfa Band*, compiled 1987, unpublished. A substantial article, 'The Repertory of a 19th century British Provincial Wind Band', based on this catalogue is under preparation.

<sup>15</sup> The description 'B Series', 'G Series', and so on, refers to the markings on the front of each set of books. Presumably there was an A, C, D, E, and so on, series, but these are now lost. All books are kept at the Cyfarthfa Museum. The names of instruments given in this list are those given on the front of each book, although it is worth pointing out that in several instances amendments in various hands make it clear that there were adjustments to the instrumentation, the most obvious example of this being where ophicleide parts become euphonium parts. Also, while pitches have been ascribed to some parts, it should be noted that these should be regarded in very general terms. For example, A<sub>b</sub> cornet parts are very often written out in B<sub>b</sub> in the later parts of a book. D<sub>b</sub> saxhorn parts contain parts written in E<sub>b</sub>, sometimes on loose-leaf inserts.

<sup>16</sup> Arnold Myers and Trevor Herbert, *Catalogue of the European Musical Instruments at Cyfarthfa Castle*. Unpublished; compiled 1987.

<sup>17</sup> Stephen Weston, *Samuel Hughes, Ophicleidist*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments, 1986.