

THE BRITISH WIND BAND*

A Brief Survey of its Rise and Progress during Three Centuries

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A BRANCH of musical activity which has received scant attention at the hands of historians is the wind band. To give a detailed survey of the whole course of its development would require more space than is possible in this book, but an attempt will be made to cover most phases of its evolution in these islands during the past three centuries.

The British wind band of the present time is the result of three converging lines of development, viz: the Waits, the Royal Band or King's Musick, and the bands of the British Army. The first named, whose influence on wind band history was considerable, are adequately dealt with in the previous article but it is interesting to note that the word 'wait' is used in connection with the King's Musick of 1630, for the Lord Chamberlain's Records of May 6th of that year include the following entry:

"One company of the recorders, and howboies to wait one week, i.e., Jerome Lanier, Clement Lanier, Andrea Lanier, Robert Baker. The other company of cornets, flutes and hoboies¹ to wait the other

*See Plates Nos. 6-8.

¹The spelling is variously recorded as 'howboies, hoboies, hautboits, howbois', etc. in records of the time.

week, i.e., Jerome Lanier, Clement Lanier, Andrea Lanier, Robert Baker" (1)². As the names of the players in both groups are the same, it may be assumed that the recorder and flute were regarded as interchangeable. Other records indicate that these musicians were also proficient on additional wind instruments, besides playing stringed instruments when required.

Small wind bands had been in existence for at least two centuries and, by the seventeenth century, comprised four or more players on members of the shawm (or oboe) family, together with curtalls (bassoons), cornetts, flutes, recorders and sackbuts (trombones). (The spelling 'cornett' is used here to distinguish the instrument from the modern cornet). The grouping of instruments was more or less haphazard, though there does seem to have been some attempt to cover the usual choral range of the time. The Royal Band also had a group of trumpeters, but they were regarded as a separate entity, for it was not until the eighteenth century that the trumpet became a recognised member of the wind band proper.

THE FIRST ARMY BAND

Such, then, were the beginnings of the wind band, but in the year 1678 a step was taken which may be regarded as of great importance, for there occurred the first allocation to the Army of wind instruments (other than fifes or trumpets), and thus the first 'military' band was formed. The Lord Chamberlain's Records contain frequent entries relating to the appointment of 'hautbois' to the strength of the companies of Grenadiers then being established. The clothing issued to these instrumentalists was of an ornate kind, as is shown from the records of the Coldstream Guards, which allude to "provision furnished out of His Majesty's great wardrobe for a war against France" including "velvet coats trimmed with silver and silk buttons and loops . . . for ten hautboys and four drummers" (2). Their pay, too, was to be higher than that of the ordinary soldier, for the history of the Grenadier Guards mentions the authorisation by Charles II of "entertainment of twelve hautbois in the companies of the King's Regiment of Foot Guards in London, a fictitious name to be borne on the strength of each of the other companies of the regiment, with a view to granting these musicians higher pay" (3). (There is a tradition that the name 'Thomas Atkins' was first used as the fictitious name either at that time or later).

Despite the popularity of cornetts, recorders and sackbuts, they do not seem to have been introduced into these early army bands, whose constitution was similar to that of the 'Grand Hautbois' of the French

²The numbers in brackets allude to the references to be found at the end of the article.

court, and flutes also seem to have disappeared until the end of the century. Over fifty years later an order issued to the Honourable Artillery Company (1731) specified that their music was to consist of "one curtail, three hautboys, and no more" (4).

The Articles of Agreement (1762) of the Royal Artillery give precise information as to the constitution of the military band of that time. The second clause of these articles states: "The regiment's musick must consist of two trumpets, two French horns, two bassoons and four hautbois or clarinets" (5). The actual number of instruments, ten, conflicts with the number of players indicated in a previous clause, which limited the band to eight members. The addition of horns, trumpets and clarinets to the former bands of oboes and bassoons is particularly noteworthy, the clarinet being especially useful owing to its greater range as a melodic instrument and to its easier manipulation on parade as compared with the oboe. A march of the same year written for the 17th Regiment of Foot ('General Monckton's March') is scored for two oboes, two clarinets in C, two horns and bassoon, a similar combination, if a second bassoon were added, to the Prussian Army bands which, under the title of 'Harmonie Musik', had been stabilised by Frederick the Great and fixed as: two oboes, two clarinets, two horns and two bassoons. This combination was accepted by several composers as a suitable medium for chamber music for wind, e.g. Mozart's Serenade in E \flat and Serenade in C minor, J. C. Bach's four marches, C. P. E. Bach's six marches (though with only one bassoon), Haydn's Octet and Beethoven's Octet in E \flat and Rondino in E \flat .

In England, according to W. T. Parke (a famous oboe player of the time), the bands of the three regiments of Guards consisted of the same combination of eight instruments (6). Militia bands were also adding the clarinet, for we learn that in 1778 "half a dozen lads of the militia were sent up to London to be taught various instruments to form a military band. The German master Baumgarten put into their hands a new instrument called a 'clarionet' which, with its fiery tone, was better adapted to lead armies in the field of battle than the meek and feeble oboe" (7).

A march by Samuel Wesley* now in the British Museum (8) is scored for two oboes, two horns, two bassoons and serpent, and is believed to have been written for one of the Guards' bands in 1777. The omission of the clarinet will be noticed, the upper melodic line being given to oboes. On the other hand, two marches, written by Haydn for the Derbyshire Yeomanry (c. 1794), have no oboe parts but are scored for trumpet, two horns, two clarinets, two bassoons and serpent. The opening bars of one of these marches are:

*See Plates Nos. 6-8.

The image shows a page of musical notation for a march. It features seven staves, each representing a different instrument. From top to bottom, the staves are: Tromba I in E-flat, Corni in E-flat, Clarinet 1 in B-flat, Clarinet 2 in B-flat, Bassoon 1, Bassoon 2, and Serpent. The music is written in common time (C) with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The Serpent part is written in bass clef with a one-flat key signature. The notation includes various rhythmic values, slurs, and dynamics such as 'f' (forte) and 'etc.' (et cetera). A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a '3' above it in the Clarinet 1 part.

The opening bars of a March written by Haydn for the Band of the Derbyshire Yeomanry (c. 1794)

It will be observed that the marches of Wesley and Haydn include serpent parts. That this instrument was becoming a usual member of the wind band is also indicated by pictorial evidence shown by two engravings in the British Museum (9). One of these (c. 1790) depicts a Guards' band passing St. James' Palace with a player in the front rank carrying a serpent; the other, showing George III reviewing Volunteers in Hyde Park (1799), also has a serpent player.

AN INCREASE IN NUMBERS

An addition to the complement during the eighteenth century was the 'Turkish Music', generally consisting of negro players on various percussion instruments. Though valuable in their principal

task of marking a regular step, they produced so much noise that they completely outbalanced the volume of tone produced by the wind instruments, with the result that ultimately the latter had to be increased in number. Hoby, in his paper "Wind Bands and Their Music" (10), gives the instrumentation of the Band of the Grenadier Guards in 1794 as one flute, six clarinets, three bassoons, two horns, one trumpet, one serpent and drums. The omission of the oboe may be due to the possibility of the clarinet players being double handed, able to play either instrument as required. The return of the flute will be observed, but, on the other hand, the continued absence of the trombone is especially noticeable.

A few years later, however, the trombone returned as a permanent member of the wind band, a work by Henry Pick, dated 1805 and found in the King's Music Library (11), having parts for two flutes, four clarinets, two horns, two bassoons, serpent or trombone, bugle horn, trumpet and drum. The Royal Artillery Band of 1820 consisted of thirty-nine instruments, *viz*: two flutes, three oboes, eleven clarinets, three bassoons, two serpents, two horns, two trumpets, three keyed bugles, one ophicleide, two bass horns, three trombones and five percussion players (12). The most noteworthy additions to previous lists are the keyed bugle with its bass counterparts—the ophicleide and bass horn. With the growth in the number of upper reeds, the two last-named instruments improved the balance by strengthening the previously rather weak foundation of the band, and the keyed bugle provided a valuable addition to the (open) trumpets, in that the latter, of course, were unable to play notes other than those of the harmonic series.

A smaller band of about the same time was that of the Duke of Lancaster's Own Regiment, which, in 1828, consisted of one flute, one piccolo, one E \flat clarinet, eight B \flat clarinets, three bassoons, three horns, two trumpets, two serpents, one trombone and drums (13).

It is interesting at this stage to consider the instrumentation of some of the civilian bands of the period, modelled, as they were, on the smaller military combinations. Stalybridge Old Band, in 1814, had four flutes, four clarinets, two bassoons, one trumpet, two horns, one bugle horn, one serpent, one bass horn and percussion (14). In 1818 Besses o' th' Barn Band, originally a string band, was reconstituted as Clegg's Reed Band. The bandmaster played a clarinet and there were two other clarinets, a piccolo (or flute), a keyed bugle, a trumpet, a trombone, two bass horns and a drummer (15). Ten years later Bramley Old Band had four clarinets, one bugle, two trumpets, two horns, one serpent, two trombones and drums (16). It will be noticed that the oboe does not appear in any of these groups. These bands later became all-brass in their instrumentation.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE VALVE

Just about this time the cornet (or cornopean) was brought to this country, and its facility as a melodic instrument caused its immediate adoption by wind bands, one of its most marked influences being its contribution to the formation of the large number of amateur brass bands then springing up.

It is not possible to state with real accuracy the exact date of the formation of the first amateur band consisting entirely of brass instruments. Blaina, Monmouthshire, is said to have started such a band in 1832, but other records say 1823; Daniel Hardman, one of the Waits of York, formed a brass band in 1833, consisting of twenty-four players on cornets, horns, trumpets, trombones and ophicleide (17); and in 1835 Herr Ernst Klussman, a horn player in the private band of George IV, and later bandmaster of the Ninth Lancers, is said to have formed one (18). Definite confirmation is not to hand, but the decade 1830-40 may be taken as the approximate period of the beginning of this branch of wind band activity.

Besides contributing so largely to the formation of brass bands, the invention of the valve system had an equally important effect upon army bands. The woodwind section had become more or less stabilised early in the century, but the horns and trumpets were still 'open' in type; nor was there sufficient strength in the bass section. Despite the previous addition of ophicleides and bass horns, the bass group still lacked the volume of tone necessary to support the reeds and brass in the upper part of the band. The advent of valved horns, valved trumpets and cornets, together with the later addition of valved basses, had the effect of converting army bands to something approaching the complete entity of the present day.

Changes in the instrumentation of the Grenadier Guards' Band over a period of about a quarter of a century are indicated by a record kept from 1848 to 1872. In the first year of the record there were two flutes and a piccolo, two oboes, three E \flat clarinets and eight B \flat clarinets, three bassoons, four horns, one B \flat trumpet and two F trumpets, one bass trumpet, one althorn, two tenor trombones and one bass trombone, two ophicleides, one bass, and drums. In 1849 the ophicleide was withdrawn, and in the same year there was the first mention of a cornet in this band. It was apparently issued to a bandsman named George Miller, later to become the first of a famous family of bandmasters. (The armed services have had several such families, notably the Godfreys, the Winterbottoms, the O'Donnells and the Strettons).

Subsequent additions (as named in the record) were bass tuba (1850), euphonium (1851), flugelhorn—entered as 'bugle' (1853),

valve trombone (1853), 'sax tuba' (1853) and saxophone (1858), though the last-named was soon withdrawn.

The final entry in 1872 gives a list of the band taken on tour in Canada under Dan Godfrey. The total of fifty-seven players was made up of four flutes, four E \flat clarinets, twelve B \flat clarinets, one oboe, five bassoons, five horns, seven cornets, two trumpets, two althorns, two euphoniums, three trombones, six basses and four percussion. The presence of only one oboe is probably explained by the fact that much parade work formed part of the tour, the oboe being unsuitable for such duties; there is little doubt that for programme work one of the other woodwind players 'doubled' on oboe.

It is also noticeable that the list does not include alto (or tenor) clarinets and bass clarinets, which were then being used in many bands, and the saxophone was also suffering a temporary retirement, as was the case in the Royal Artillery Band of the same period. Apart from these modifications, the list is characteristic of the military band of the time. On very rare occasions a contra-bassoon was added, but, generally speaking, the instrumentation became stabilised as: flutes, oboes, E \flat and B \flat clarinets, alto (or tenor) and bass clarinets—later to be replaced by saxophones—bassoons, horns, cornets, trumpets, althorns (usually styled 'baritones'), euphoniums, basses and drums.

Such a 'fixing' of the constitution of British bands had become necessary by the publication of printed music with a standard list of parts, the first military band 'journal', as it was called, appearing in 1845.

In 1857 a scheme to provide proper training for bandmasters resulted in the formation of a Military Music Class at Kneller Hall. This class, later to become the Royal Military School of Music, with its successive Directors of Music—Carl Mandel, Charles Cousins, Lieutenant Samuel Griffiths, Colonel Arthur Stretton, Colonel H. E. Adkins and Major Meredith Roberts—has been the training ground of hundreds of bandmasters (known as 'students' while at the School) and thousands of bandsmen (known as 'pupils'). The Royal Naval School of Music was later established to provide similar facilities for the Senior Service.

The last quarter of the nineteenth century produced little change in the constitution of the military band, apart from some variation in the relative proportions of each family of instruments, but its repertoire was enriched by very many splendid arrangements of standard works originally written for orchestra, organ, pianoforte or choral forces, a large number of these being skilfully 'cued' so as to sound effective even on small bands.

THE GROWTH OF THE BRASS BAND MOVEMENT

We left the history of the amateur band movement at the time of the beginning of all-brass combinations. Besses o' th' Barn Band became entirely converted to brass in 1853, and consisted of four cornets, two horns, one tenor trombone, one bass trombone and one ophicleide (19). Stalybridge Band seven years later had twenty-three members, viz: eight cornets, four horns, two baritones, three trombones, two ophicleides, two basses and two drums. Contesting had by now become very popular, and the same year (1860) is of importance as being that of the first Crystal Palace Contest, nearly fifty bands being present, with Black Dyke Band as winners. There was also a massed band concert, the total force of 1389 players being made up as follows: 144 soprano cornets in E \flat , 394 B \flat cornets, 83 solo tenor horns, 71 first tenor horns, 51 second tenor horns, 100 baritones, 80 euphoniums, 149 trombones, 133 ophicleides, 157 basses and 27 drums. The division of horns into solo, first and second is in accordance with present practice, and ultimately the cornets became divided into solo, repiano (this spelling is used in the brass band), second and third.

By the end of the century the rules of contesting had fixed the numbers of players as twenty-four without drums, the usual constitution being one soprano cornet, four solo cornets, one repiano cornet, two second cornets, one third cornet, one flugel, three horns (solo, first and second), first and second baritones (one player to each part), two euphoniums, two tenor trombones, one bass trombone, two E \flat basses and two BB \flat basses. (Some contests at present allow twenty-five players). Most brass band music is issued with parts for this combination, the only exception being that of the Salvation Army, who write for solo, first and second cornets only, together with, at times, double notes for first trombone, indicating that more than one player may be envisaged as playing from the part. Otherwise their scores follow the usual practice.

Every town and nearly every village has at some time had its brass band, and little difficulty was experienced in keeping the balance of instruments, for the fact that the fingering of all valve instruments is identical and that every member of such a band, except the bass trombone, 'reads' in the treble clef, facilitates transfer from one instrument to another.

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

But the repertoire of the brass band was a somewhat restricted one, and it was not until the twentieth century that a real improvement took place. This was due partly to the large number of excellent transcriptions and partly to the appearance of many large-scale original

compositions for the brass medium. The latter development was due largely to the enthusiasm of Mr John Henry Iles, the organiser of the National Brass Band Festival. With a view to raising the standard of brass band music, he commissioned Percy Fletcher to write the first of a series of test pieces expressly composed for contesting purposes. This was in 1913, and since then all test pieces for the principal contests have been specially written. The following list includes many names familiar in other branches of composition, together with several who are writers for the brass band only: Eric Ball, Granville Bantock, Hubert Bath, Arthur Bliss, Donald Bridger, Philip Catelinet, Kenneth Cook, Edward Elgar, Henry Geehl, Dean Goffin, Josef Holbrooke, Gustav Holst, Herbert Howells, John Ireland, Cyril Jenkins, Maurice Johnstone, Thomas Keighley, Maldwyn Price, Haydn Morris, Denis Wright, Frank Wright and Kenneth Wright. Included in this list are some whose work was produced in the form of a short score and subsequently completed as a full score by an expert arranger; but whatever the extent of their actual labours, the influence of many of these composers on brass bands and their music has been considerable.

Apart from the expansion and improvement of their repertoire, brass bands have changed but little. From time to time alterations in their instrumentation have been advocated, the inclusion of French horns, trumpets and saxophones having been suggested, together with an additional soprano cornet or extra flugels, more than one of the last-named having been an integral part of brass bands of the latter part of the previous century. But the contesting instrumentation given above holds good. Most brass bands still use the old 'high' pitch, though military bands, in order to come into line with all other musical combinations, adopted 'low' pitch in 1929. It is a matter of regret that brass bands have not yet seen their way clear to take the same step, for the benefits to be gained would be sufficient compensation for the expense incurred.

There are various organisations associated with the brass band movement, including: National Brass Band Club, National Association of Brass Band Conductors, National League of Bands' Associations and Bandsmen's College of Music. Mr Harry Mortimer is Bands' Supervisor of the British Broadcasting Corporation.

The present century has seen a few changes in the constitution of military bands. The use of saxophones has become general, usually replacing alto and bass clarinets, except in very large bands; trumpets in F (and E \flat) have given place to trumpets in B \flat ; the Boehm flute in C has replaced the D \flat flute; and the baritone (althorn) has almost entirely disappeared, its place having been taken by the tenor saxophone. Several scores no longer include parts for

2nd flute, 2nd E \flat clarinet, 2nd oboe or, in some cases, 2nd bassoon, the tendency being to arrange the works so that besides suiting the instrumentation of large bands, they will also sound effective on the 'engagement' band of twenty-five players.

A small number of original works have been issued for military band—large-scale works, as distinct from the marches, parade music, and similar components of a band's library. One of the first composers was Percy Fletcher, who, besides being successful with the all-brass medium, won the first prize in a competition for original military band compositions sponsored in 1919 by the Worshipful Company of Musicians. Other composers include Gustav Holst, Vaughan Williams, Gordon Jacob, Walton O'Donnell, Josef Holbrooke, F. W. de Massi-Hardmann, Gilbert Vinter, and Haydn Wood, together with important contributions in concerto form by Denis Wright (Concerto for cornet), Norman Demuth (Concerto for saxophone) and others. It has been the usual custom to issue three-lined scores as conductors' copies for use by military bands, but within recent years a few works have been provided with full scores. (Brass bands have always been able to obtain full scores for all works likely to be used for contesting.)

It will be seen, therefore, that the greatest step forward in the evolution of the wind band took place during the nineteenth century in that it became a real musical entity with its more or less standardised instrumentation and its own published repertoire.

This all too brief survey of wind band history during three centuries may fittingly close with two tables showing the constitution of some representative British bands at the time of writing. Table A—BRASS BANDS—gives the instruments employed in two large bands of the Salvation Army, together with the normal civilian brass band of twenty-five players. Table B—MILITARY BANDS—provides an interesting comparison with the eight-piece band for which Haydn wrote his marches.

NOTES—TABLE A

(a) Music published for bands of the Salvation Army does not include parts for 3rd cornets.

(b) Drums are used in addition in each case.

NOTE—TABLE B

(a) Including string basses where used.

16. *March & Minuete* 1777

PLATE 6, published for the first time

British Museum

A MARCH BY SAMUEL WESLEY (1777)

First page

Samuel Wesley : born 24th February 1766 in Bristol
died 11th October 1837 in London

Table A—BRASS BANDS

Instrument	Coventry City Salvation Army Band	Staff Band of the Salvation Army	Normal Band of 25 Players
Soprano Cornet	1	1	1
Solo B \flat Cornet	4	4	4
Rep.(or 1st)B \flat Cornet	3	2	1
2nd B \flat Cornet	2	2	2
3rd B \flat Cornet	—(a)	—(a)	2
Flugel Horn	2	1	1
Solo E \flat Horn	2	2	1
1st E \flat Horn	2	2	1
2nd E \flat Horn	2	1	1
1st Baritone	2	2	1
2nd Baritone	2	1	1
Euphonium	3	1	2
Tenor Trombone	6	4	2
Bass Trombone	1	1	1
E \flat Bases	4	3	2
BB \flat Bases	3	2	2
TOTAL (b)	39	29	25

Table B—MILITARY BANDS

Instrument	Band of the Royal Engineers	Band of the Life Guards	Band of the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst	Band of the Ford Motor Works
Flute	3	2	2	1
Oboe	2	2	2	1
E \flat Clarinet	2	2	1	1
Solo B \flat Clarinet	5	4	3	3
1st B \flat Clarinet	4	2	2	2
2nd B \flat Clarinet	4	3	2	2
3rd B \flat Clarinet	4	3	3	2
Alto Saxophone	2	1	2	1
Tenor Saxophone	2	1	1	1
Bassoon	2	2	1	2
French Horn	6	4	2	4
1st B \flat Cornet	7	4	5	4
2nd B \flat Cornet	3	3	3	2
B \flat Trumpet	—	2	—	—
Euphonium	3	2	1	1
Tenor Trombone	5	2	3	2
Bass Trombone	2	1	1	1
Bases (a)	5	4	3	4
Percussion	4	3	1	2
TOTAL	65	47	38	36

REFERENCES

1. Lord Chamberlain's Records, vol. 738, f. 189.
2. *The Origin and Services of the Coldstream Guards*, by D. McKinnon (London, 1833), vol. 2, p. 277.
3. *The Origin and History of the Grenadier Guards*, by F. W. Hamilton (London, 1874), vol. 1, p. 267.
4. *History of the Honourable Artillery Company*, by G. A. Raikes (London, 1878), vol. 1, p. 270.
5. *Memoirs of the Royal Artillery Band*, by H. G. Farmer (London, 1904), p. 37.
6. *Musical Memoirs*, by W. T. Parke (London, 1830), vol. 2, p. 241.
7. *Music and Friends*, by W. Gardiner (London, 1838-53), vol. 3, p. 7.
8. British Museum, Add. Ms. 35007, ff. 237-8.
9. British Museum, Engravings Department.
10. Proceedings of the Musical Association, 1928-29.
11. British Museum, Catalogue of Music in the King's Music Library, vol. 2, p. 261.
12. *The Rise of Military Music*, by H. G. Farmer (London, 1912), p. 98.
13. Article (unsigned) in *The Military Musician* (October, 1937).
14. *A Record of A Hundred Years of Stalybridge Old Band* (Stalybridge, 1914), p. 12.
15. *History of Besses O' Th' Barn Band*, by J. N. Hampson (Northampton, 1893), p. 9.
16. *The Brass Band Movement*, by J. F. Russell and J. H. Elliott (London, 1936), p. 42.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
18. *Talks with Bandmen*, by A. Rose (London, 1895), p. 104.
19. *History of Besses O' Th' Barn Band*, by J. N. Hampson (Northampton, 1893), p. 15.

Reference may also be made to *The Royal Artillery Concerts, 1810-1911*, by Henry George Farmer (Hinrichsen Edition, No. 530), which gives an interesting account of the R.A. Orchestra during a period of a hundred years.

Other books which will be found of value are :

MILITARY BAND

- The Military Band*, by H. E. Adkins (Boosey and Hawkes).
The Military Band, by George Miller (Novello).
Military Music, by H. G. Farmer (Max Parrish).
Zavertal and the Royal Artillery Band, by H. G. Farmer (Hinrichsen).
Handel's Kettledrums and Other Papers on Military Music, by H. G. Farmer (Hinrichsen).
Military Band Instrumentation, by C. Hoby (O.U.P.).

BRASS BAND

- The Brass Band*, by Harold C. Hind (Boosey and Hawkes).
The Brass Band Conductor, by Denis Wright (Joshua Duckworth).
Scoring for Brass Band, by Denis Wright (Joshua Duckworth).
Oh, Listen to the Band, edited by Kenneth Cook (Hinrichsen).
The Bandman's Everything Within, compiled by Kenneth Cook (Hinrichsen).
The Brass Band, by Harold C. Hind, in *Practical Music for All* (Hinrichsen).

SALVATION ARMY

- Salvation Army Music and Song*, by A. R. Wiggins, in *Musical Year Book, Vol. II/III* (Hinrichsen).