

THE CORPS OF ARMY MUSIC (CAMUS) AND THE BANDS OF THE REGULAR ARMY 2020

by Clive Elderton

The British Army has long been famous for the high quality of its military bands both on parade and in concert, but the number of bands has been drastically reduced in line with wider reductions in the strength of the Army. As a consequence of the 1993 Defence Review, Options for Change, it was decided that the number of British Army bands would be reduced from 69 to 30. Subsequently on the 1st September 1994 the Corps of Army Music was formed in order to deliver musical support to the Army and the wider Defence community. All British Army Directors of Music and all army musicians from the various Corps and Regiments of the Army were then transferred to this new Corps. The headquarters of the Corps to give direction and professional advice on Army music matters and to develop the ethos of Army musicians was established and co-located with The Royal Military School of Music at Kneller Hall. Kneller Hall had been acquired by the War Office in 1857 as a base for Army Bandsmen and, in recognition of the magnificent contribution it had made to Army music, it was re-titled The Royal Military School of Music by Queen Victoria in 1887. Sadly in the latest round of Defence estate rationalisation it has been announced that the site will close this year.

In 2006, the Future Army Structures Review (FAS) announced that the number of bands in the Regular Army would once again be reduced. This time from 30 to 23 by amalgamations of four Royal Armoured Corps Bands to form The Light Cavalry Band and The Heavy Cavalry and Cambrai Band; and by amalgamations of eight Infantry Bands to form The Regimental Band of the Royal Regiment of Scotland, The Minden Band of The Queen's Division, The Band of The King's Division and The Band of the Prince of Wales's Division. In addition, the Band of the Royal Irish Regiment was disbanded.

This reduction was followed by a further restructuring, published in August 2013 as The Future of Army Music 2020 (FAM 2020). This outlined a reorganisation of CAMUS with a further restructuring of the remaining 23 bands to be implemented over the following four years. The Light Cavalry Band and The Heavy Cavalry & Cambrai Band were subject to a further amalgamation to form the Band of the Royal Armoured Corps. Also, the string sections of the symphonic wind bands were withdrawn into a single String Orchestra. The remaining 22 bands were:

- One 64 piece symphonic wind band supplying marching and traditional music:
 - The Band of The Household Cavalry (formerly the Life Guards and Blues & Royals).
- Six 46 piece symphonic wind bands supplying marching and traditional music:
 - Band of the Grenadier Guards.
 - Band of the Coldstream Guards.
 - Band of the Scots Guards.
 - Band of the Irish Guards.
 - Band of the Welsh Guards.
 - The Band of The Royal Regiment of Scotland.
- Two 35 piece wind bands supplying marching and traditional music:
 - The Band and Bugles of The Rifles.
 - The Band of the Brigade of Gurkhas.

- Six 35 piece multi capability bands supplying marching and contemporary music:
 - The Band of the Royal Armoured Corps.
 - The Royal Artillery Band.
 - The Band of the Corps of Royal Engineers.
 - The Band of the Queen's Division.
 - The Band of the Parachute Regiment.
 - The Band and Corps of Drums of The Royal Logistic Corps.
- Three 32 piece brass bands supplying marching and traditional music:
 - The Band of The Royal Corps of Signals.
 - The Band of The King's Division.
 - The Band of the Prince of Wales's Division.
- One 24 piece string orchestra:
 - The Countess of Wessex String Orchestra.
- Three 15 piece Specialist contemporary music bands:
 - The Band of the Corps of Royal Mechanical and Electrical Engineers.
 - The Band of the Adjutant General's Corps.
 - The Band of the Army Air Corps.

In 2019 there were further adjustments made to the lay down of Army bands in order to enable smaller bands to train and perform together for more significant Army events. Meanwhile all musicians may now be posted and moved from band to band across CAMUS in order to develop their musical careers and professional development. An important innovative development has been to co-locate eleven of the smaller bands in three major garrisons and Sandhurst to enable them to practice together and form larger units when desired. This has significantly increased the flexibility of CAMUS to perform at a huge breadth of events in much the same way that traditional military bands have been performing for many years. The 22 bands are now located as follows:

Windsor	The Band of The Household Cavalry.
Central London	The Bands of The Foot Guards.
Edinburgh	The Band of The Royal Regiment of Scotland.
Cardiff	The Band of the Prince of Wales.
Worthy Down	The Band and Bugles of The Rifles.
Folkstone	The Band of the Brigade of Gurkhas.
Woolwich	The Countess of Wessex's String Orchestra.
Catterick	The Bands of the Royal Armoured Corps, The King's Division and The Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.
Colchester	The Bands of The Parachute Regiment, The Army Air Corps and The Queen's Division.
Sandhurst	The Bands of the Royal Logistic Corps and The Royal Corps of Signals.
Tidworth	The Bands of The Royal Artillery, The Corps of Royal Engineers and The Adjutant General's Corps.

The co-location in the Garrisons of Catterick, Colchester, Tidworth and at The Royal Military Academy Sandhurst brings together one or two multi-capability bands, with a brass and/or a specialist band, in each location to give maximum flexibility for a variety of performance engagements.