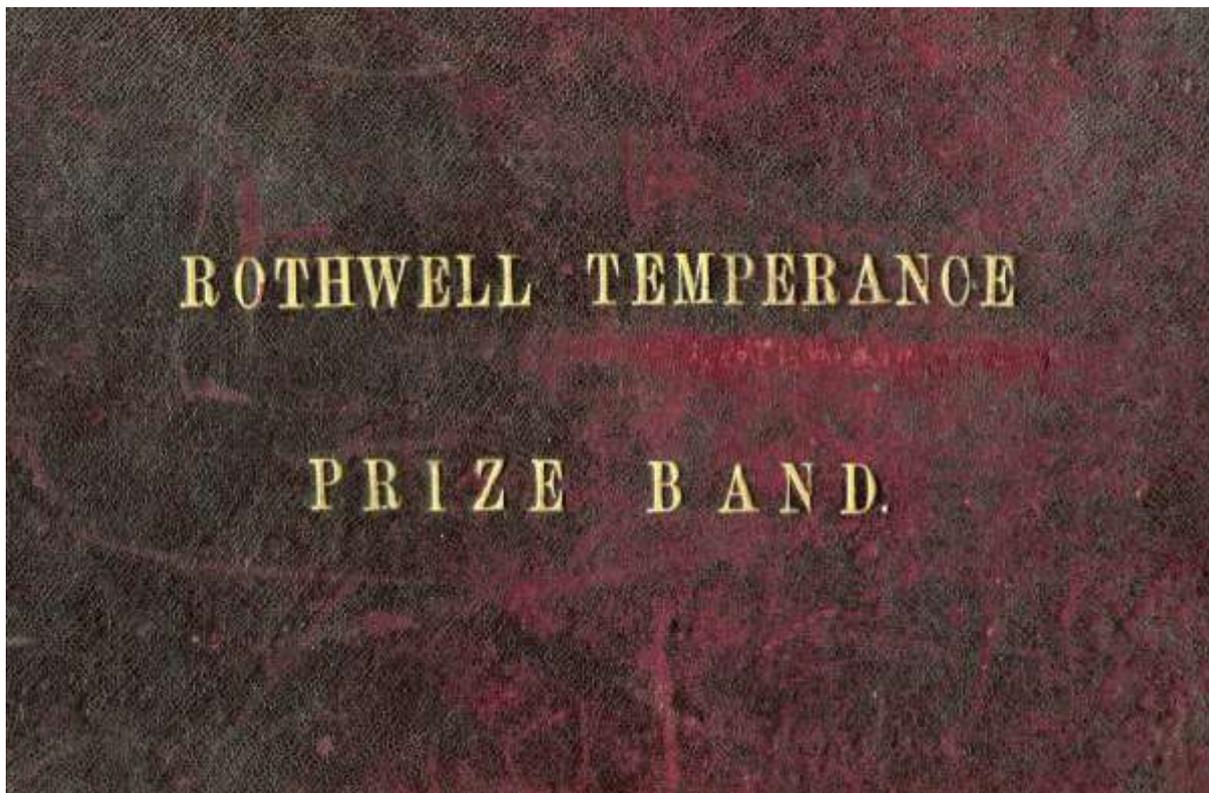


Rothwell & Rossini – an exploration of a manuscript score

Gavin Holman – June 2019



This is a score book of the original Rothwell Temperance Band. This band was formed in 1881 with bandmaster Israel Blackburn, and it enjoyed considerable success over the years before merging with Yorkshire Imperial Band in 1999 and losing its identity. The Rothwell 'B' Band (which was founded in 1985) took on the name of its parent band, keeping it alive.

The book consists of a complete manuscript score of *Rossini's Works* (as arranged by Alexander Owen in 1882, featuring music from *William Tell* and *Semiramide*) and the last six pages of an unknown work.

In the days before cheap printing, many conductors would write out the scores from the band parts (or get someone else to do it for them!). Indeed, many would also have been accomplished arrangers themselves in the earlier days before the "brass band journals" arrived on the scene to produce printed works for the growing brass band movement.

Without comparison to other manuscripts it is not possible to determine in whose hand the music is written, or when it was produced with any certainty.



Alexander Owen

The band competed with *Rossini's Works* at least four times (from July 1888 onwards) and no doubt played it many times in concert – it, together with similar operatic and classical arrangements were the staple diet of 19th century band performances. The band's resident conductor at this time was Thomas Blackburn, and in 1886 they had also engaged the services of G.F. Birkinshaw, principal cornet with Black Dyke Mills Band, as their professional conductor and occasional guest soloist. Alexander Owen had previously been engaged with the band for a brief time in a similar role, at a fee of 3 guineas per visit, but this arrangement did not last long.

Any of these three, Blackburn, Birkinshaw or Owen, could have been the scribe who penned the Rossini score, though it is more likely to have been the resident conductor, and probably around 1886.



G.F. Birkinshaw



William Heap

The four known occasions the band competed with *Rossini's Works* were:

- 19th Jul 1888 - Selby Contest (3rd place, conductor G.F. Birkinshaw)
- 30th Mar 1891 - Topley Contest (8th place, conductor G.F. Birkinshaw)
- 8th May 1897 - Skelmanthorpe Contest (1st place, conductor William Heap)
- 3rd Jul 1897 - Lincoln Contest (5th place, conductor William Heap)

The first two pages of the *Rossini's Works* manuscript score are shown below, followed by the first page of the “unknown” work's ending. The notation is unlike what we are used today, with our standardised note graphics and printing. Following the score while listening to a performance (*Besses o' th' Barn*, conducted by Roy Newsome in 1991) is quite easy at first glance, but trying to identify individual notes/rests is almost impossible. I suspect it is a bit like Shakespearean performances – you have to get your ear/eye attuned before it starts to make sense!

Following these is an article describing the Rothwell Temperance Band in 1910.

Further information about the band's history can be found in Robert Carrington (ed.) – *The Centenary Chronicle of Rothwell Temperance Band 1881-1981, a tribute to those who have gone before* – the Band, 1981



Page 1 of Rossini's Works

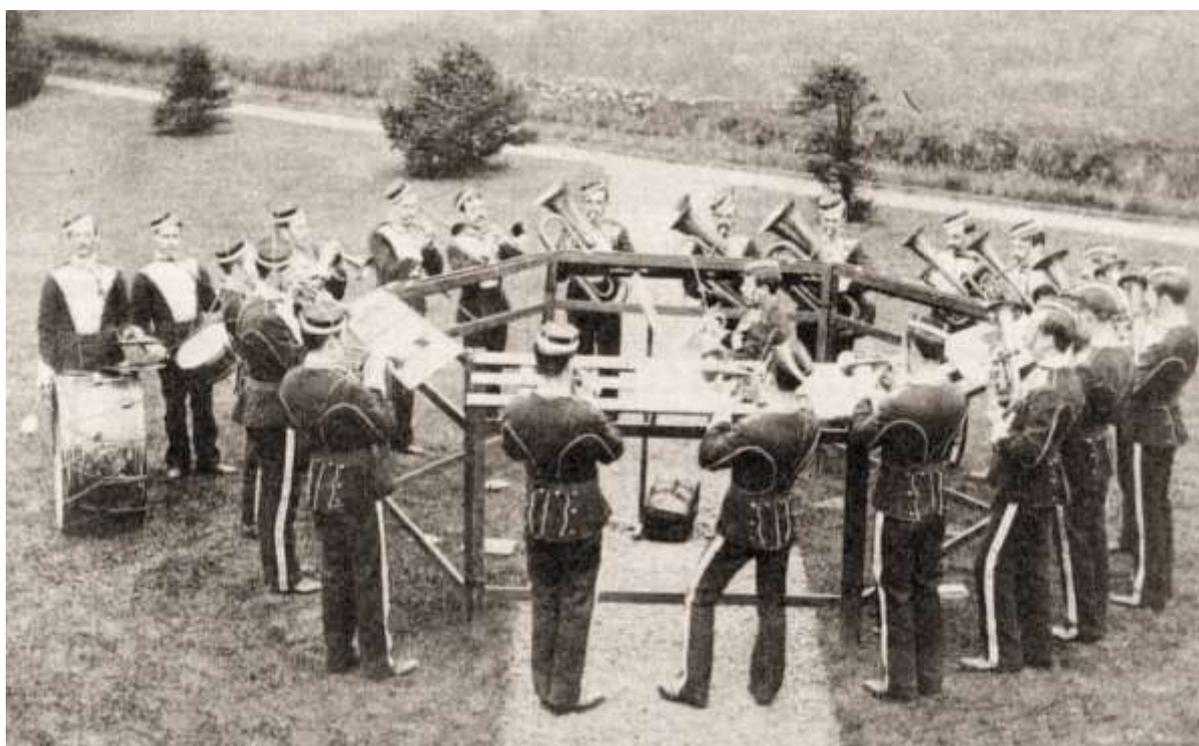


Page 2 of Rossini's Works



the

unknown piece of music



Rothwell Temperance Band c. 1885



Rothwell Temperance Band 1903

From: **Profiles of ten temperance bands (1910)**

by C.H. Chandler, in *“The British Workman and Home Companion for 1910”*

Rothwell Temperance

The village of Rothwell, on the outskirts of Leeds, is (as becomes so noted a centre of musical life) the home of a flourishing Temperance Band. In the summer of 1880, eight members of the Rothwell Old Brass Band signed the pledge, and, leaving the parent body, founded a Temperance combination which was eventually brought up to full strength. The players used to rehearse in a blacksmith's shop, but this was soon converted into a first rate Temperance Hall – a building of which the men are justly proud.

The first engagement which fell to the lot of the Band was at a Band of Hope demonstration at Hunslet. This was in 1881, and every year since the engagement has been renewed. The Band, too, have been to Mossley for about 20 years, playing for the Wesleyan Sunday School demonstration.

Some years ago our musical Templars were engaged at a Lodge dinner. When the players sat down to their repast and the sweet pudding came in covered with rum sauce, the waiters were highly surprised to find player after player declining it. The Band visited the same place next year, but when the sweet pudding made its appearance this time it was minus the rum sauce. It is perhaps needless to add that every member of the Band has to be a member also of the Rothwell Temperance Society. The Band do a great deal of charitable work, especially for the Leeds General Infirmary.



The first contest attended was at Dewsbury, and a first prize, value £5, was secured. Soon afterwards new Besson instruments were obtained, and since then the Band has been unusually successful on the contest field. The total number of prizes won is as follows: - One cup, 45 medals, 33 Firsts, 23 Seconds, and 37 others, as well as numerous musical instruments. The Band has competed against some of the finest musical organisations in the country. Most of the men are colliers; and they are strictly amateur players. Mr. Chas. Blackburn is the bandmaster, and a very capable one he is. He comes from a musical stock. Mr. A. Holden is the able conductor.