



The Bradwell Bugle

Newsletter of the Bradwell Silver Band



January 2025

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From the Editor

Hi Everyone!

A Very Happy New Year to you all and welcome to the January edition of the Band's monthly newsletter. I hope you all managed to have a good Christmas and that 2025 will bring you and those you love everything you wish for.

December as always was a busy time for the Band and in this issue you will read reports on all of the Christmas engagements undertaken by the Band. In addition to the four indoor concerts performed to almost capacity audiences, the street playing attracted a lot of attention with videos and many lovely comments made on social media.

After the hectic Christmas season the Band is now currently enjoying a short break from playing with a resumption of rehearsals for the senior band on Tuesday 7th January and the Development Group on Thursday 9th January.

I thank Chas, Brian and Karen for their contributions this month and as always I put out my request for more articles or photographs to be considered for inclusion in future editions of The Bugle, especially for the next couple of months when there will be no engagements to report on.

Sarah-Jayne

Date for The Area Contest 2025

The London & Southern Counties Regional Championships is to be held at the Stevenage Arts & Leisure Centre on the weekend of the 15th & 16th March 2025.

Saturday 15th March will see the Fourth Section followed by the First Section at the Gordon Craig Theatre.

Sunday 16th March will feature Bradwell Silver Band in the Third Section followed by the Championship Section at the Gordon Craig Theatre. On the same day the Second Section will take place in the Main Concert Hall.

The test piece for Third Section is Jacob de Haan's "Arkansas". This concert work is based on a well-known folk tune from Arkansas. In the course of this varied work the folk song appears in its complete form and in fragments, in major and in minor, as a ballad in a lyrical orchestration, as a blues, accompanied by a jazzy rhythm and at the end again in its pure form. In the process, all instrumental groups of the brass band get their chance to shine!

Message From The M.D.

Can I thank every band member for their excellent playing and commitment over the Christmas period. You have brought a great deal of Christmas cheer to many many people.

It was also great to see that the concert promotion brought many new people to our St James concert. To have 27 players carolling at Bradville and 30 players covering the 2 slots at Stony Stratford is quite unbelievable. I'm also aware many of you have helped other bands/music groups during December adding to this busy period.

There are of course individuals who deserve a special mention so big thanks to Sam & Gareth for organising all our engagements, I know first hand that some organisers are not the easiest to deal with.

To Robin for making sure all the required kit was at every engagement as needed, we are so lucky Robin is willing to pull the trailer not sure how we would cope without.

To our collectors who have seen amazing amounts of money put in their buckets allowing us to plan exciting projects in 2025 and beyond.

To Karen who has the task of counting and banking all the cash and must be on first name terms with the staff at our local branch.

To Keith for conducting the band when I'm not there and for also producing a wonderful performance with the development band at St James.

Finally to each player who should all be very pleased of their efforts and have once again showed how important the band is to the local community.

Thanks

Brian



Engagement Reports

Wednesday 4th December Concert With Harmonize Shenley Brook End

The first engagement of the 2024 Christmas season for the Bradwell Silver Band was a joint concert with Harmonize, the choir of Two Mile School. This annual collaboration with the school goes back over twenty years and has been held at various venues around Milton Keynes. This year there had been problems with the original choice of locations cancelling the booking at late notice which caused some uncertainty while a suitable alternative was sought. It was with some relief they were able to secure the use of the theatre at Denbigh School in Shenley Brook End.

Under the leadership of Em Marshall Head of Music and Performing Arts, there were 124 children named in the programme who took to the stage with the Band seated behind.

The evening began with the Band, under the leadership of Musical Director Brian Keech, accompanying the choir in "Merry Christmas Everybody". This ever popular festive song was first released by the British rock band "Slade" in 1973 and went on to be that year's UK Christmas number one.

The choir under their dynamic Musical Director Emily Marshall performed the first of their featured items with "Sparkle & Shine". This lively song is from Nativity! The Musical. The 2009 film tells the story of a Coventry based primary school, St Bernadette's, where the teacher mount a musical version of the nativity with the students, promising it will be adapted into a Hollywood movie.

*"Sparkle and shine, Planets gather round
Sparkle and shine, Let's all make a dazzling sound
Here's something you won't believe, It's the first time ever Christmas Eve
I've got my light within me and it's coming out for you."*

For the Band's first featured slot we played "Ding Dong Christmas" which is the traditional Carol arranged in the style of The Floral Dance.

The Harmonize Senior Squad made up with Year 6 students sang "Love Shone Down", a lovely song about the angel's announcement of the birth of Jesus. This included some singing in harmony which was very well performed.

At last year's concert the Band had played "Last Christmas" a song first made popular in 1984 by the English pop duo Wham. During the playing of this many of the choir spontaneously sang along and they decided to make it part of tonight's programme as the two groups combined.

The Band then gave their debut public performance of the song "Driving Home For Christmas". It was written by the British singer/songwriter Chris Rea and inspired by his own experience of the long drive from London to his home in Middlesbrough and getting stuck in heavy traffic as snow was falling.

The choir sang a modern arrangement of the traditional "Sussex Carol" which is also known by its first line "On Christmas Night all Christians Sing" before coming back together with the Band for the technically challenging "It Feels Like Christmas". This song featured in the Muppet Christmas Carol which was a 1992 film based on Charles Dickens's A Christmas Carol. In the film it is sung by the Ghost of Christmas Present to Scrooge (played by Michael Caine) and the words of the song give examples of the different sounds, smells, sensations, and emotions which embody the joys of Christmas. The difficulty of this song is in number of key changes but these were all dealt with very confidently.

The audience were then invited to join in with singing "The Holly and the Ivy" with three members of the Band leading the actions for the chorus. The Band rounded off the first half of the concert with another piece receiving it's first airing, "Step Into Christmas" as sung by Elton John.

Engagement Reports

After the interval the Band resumed the concert with "For Unto Us". This is a rousing chorus from Handel's oratorio Messiah and based on the text from Isaiah which reads "For unto us a child is born".

The choir responded with "Together At Christmas Time", the opening lines are:

*"Standing together as Christmas is near
The waiting is finally over
Now that the time for the snowflakes is here
We can all sing to each other"*

Band and Choir then performed "Rocking Around The Christmas Tree" made popular in 1958 by Brenda Lee and written by Johnny Marks who had also composed "Rudolph The Red Nosed Reindeer" and "A Holly Jolly Christmas".

The Band continued the concert with "Fairytale of New York" a song written by Jem Finer and Shane MacGowan and recorded by their Band the Pogues, featuring singer-songwriter Kirsty MacColl on vocals. In this arrangement by John Lee the song is an Irish folk-style ballad and was written as a duet, with the Pogues' singer MacGowan taking the role of the male character and MacColl the female character.

Back to the Choir for "Santa's Coming For Us", a lively modern song written by Sia and Greg Kurstin, it was released on 30 October 2017 as the lead single from Sia's first Christmas album, Everyday Is Christmas.

Then it was time for choir and audience participation as the Band played "Schneewalzer" (The Snow Waltz). Originally is a dance song from Carinthia and is one of the most famous melodies in the German-speaking folk music scene and no matter how often this gets performed the audience seem to love joining in with swaying and jumping up out of their seats.

The Choir's final solo item was "Shepherd's Song" before combining again with the Band for the finale of "Jingle Bells", "Rudolph The Red Nosed Reindeer" and "We Wish You A Merry Christmas".

There were words of thanks from a one of the school's teachers who said what an excellent experience it is for the choir to have the opportunity perform with the Band. There were some presentations made to the Band and to the choir's Musical Director who in turned thanked her colleagues for all of the support in rehearsals and organisation. The Band played "Jingle Bells" as the choir left the stage.

This concert has always been my favourite of the season as it combines the festive sounds of a Brass Band and children's voices. The choir's singing was inspired and their enthusiasm shone throughout their performance.

And to think we had only the one rehearsal with them before the concert!

Thank you once again for an amazing concert yesterday evening. I hope the band enjoyed it as much as we all did, there were so many families saying how much they'd enjoyed it on their way out. We really appreciate everything you do for us each Christmas. Everyone at TMA wishes everyone at the Bradwell Silver Band a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Kind regards,

*Em Marshall
Head of Music & Performing Arts*

Engagement Reports

Saturday 7th December Christmas Concert St. James Church, New Bradwell

Throughout the day we had anxiously kept an eye on the weather as Storm Darrah brought with it rain and very high winds. With many outdoor events having to be cancelled over the week-end we were indeed fortunate that we were not affected as badly as some other parts of the country. Despite the wind the Church were happy for the concert to go ahead as planned and the audience arrived in their numbers ready to kick start the Christmas period.

The Band's Musical Director Brian Keech raised his baton and the concert began with "Merry Christmas Everybody". This was followed by the well loved traditional "Christmas Song" with the familiar opening line of Chestnuts Roasting On An Open Fire.

Then came "I Believe in Father Christmas" a song released in 1975 by the English musician Greg Lake with lyrics by Peter Sinfield. Although it is often categorised as a Christmas song, this was not Lake's intention. He said that he wrote the song in protest at the commercialisation of Christmas. The instrumental riff between verses comes from the "Troika" portion of Sergei Prokofiev's Lieutenant Kijé Suite, written for the 1934 Soviet film Lieutenant Kijé.

This was followed by "Fairytale of New York" before the audience were invited to join in with the singing of three traditional Carols, "The Holly & The Ivy", "Once In Royal David's City" and "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen".

The concert continued with "For Unto Us", "Driving Home For Christmas", and the first half came to a conclusion with "Santa Claus Trophobia" which is a selection of songs which have "Santa" in their titles. Some are better known than others and it begins with "Santa Claus is Comin' to Town" followed by "Here Comes Santa Claus", "I Saw Mummy Kissing Santa Claus", the Theme from "Santa Claus the Movie", "When Santa Got Stuck Up the Chimney" and finally "A Rootin' Tootin' Santa Claus."

There was then an interval where refreshments were kindly provided by the Church members.

The second half of the concert followed the now well established tradition of featuring the Band's Development Group led by their Musical Director Keith Jones. With 34 players it was a tight squeeze fitting them all in and they opened their seasonal contribution with the march "Christmas Carols" which is a medley of well known Carols including "Hark The Herald Angel Sing", "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen", and "Joy To The World".



Engagement Reports

The group's announcer for the evening was 8 year old Jamie who reminded the audience that Christmas Day is celebrated all around the world and that the group's programme was selected to give a taste of this by featuring music from different countries.

Their second item was a Mexican Carol "A La Nanita Nana" sung in honour of Baby Jesus, that has become a popular lullaby in the Hispanic world. It is often accompanied by a gentle rocking motion or a cradling gesture, creating a calming atmosphere for the child. It has been passed down through the ages, from grandparents to parents to their own children, creating a cherished tradition in many Spanish-speaking households.

As we all know, a traditional Christmas legend tells us how Santa Claus had reindeer to pull his sleigh through the night sky to help deliver the gifts to children. These were first made popular in the USA in a poem by Clement Moore which gave names to the reindeer. These animals always seem to be happy in their work and the next piece played "Jolly Reindeer" was a light-hearted tribute to them.

The Group like to feature a soloist in their concerts and tonight it was the turn of Amelia on Flugel Horn with an arrangement of the Carol "In The Bleak Mid Winter". The words were written by English poet Christine Rossetti and set to music by Gustav Holst. This was Amelia's first public solo with the group and she did a super job and rightly received prolonged applause from the audience for her efforts.

The next item was "Cheesy Christmas" written by John Kirk as a throwback to the novelty cheesy Christmas tunes he used to love. He aimed to highlight the plight of the homeless at this time of year and how a man used to living on the streets would be content with just having cheese for Christmas rather than a lavish meal with all the trimmings. First performed under the name of Red Lester and the Baby Bells in 2010 we play for you "Cheesy Christmas". This included the youngsters of the group creating a party atmosphere with the blowing of whistles and then standing to sing the chorus "I Wanna Cheesy Christmas".

For the final item in an entertaining performance was the Musical Director's own arrangement of "Holly Jolly Christmas" a song that has become more familiar over the past couple of years as it has been featured in television advertisement. The song was written in 1964 for an animated Christmas special of "Rudolph The Red Nosed Reindeer". The programme has featured every year since 1964 on American television and is as popular there as the "Snowman" is here in our own country. The narrator in the film was Burl Ives who also sang this song.

The group stood to receive the appreciation of the audience for an excellent contribution to this evening's concert. The players included our two newest members James and Joseph who had only joined the group in the autumn. Thanks to the hard work (not to mention patience!) of Sam we now have a back row of nine cornets with an age range from 8 to 12 years old. The Development Group currently includes a mother and her two daughters, a mother with a son and a daughter, and another family group of father mother and son. The future of the Band seems secure with this amazing group of players.

The senior band then resumed their positions for the remainder of the concert. Brian read out the results of the raffle before saying how tonight the Band were shortly to be losing the services of Brin Carstens who has decided to retire from playing. Chairperson Steph made a presentation on behalf of the Band acknowledging the time he has spent with us.

The playing restarted with "Ding Dong Christmas" and was followed by what Brian has referred to in the programme as A Christmas Collection which features three Christmas tunes contained in the Carol books with "Last Christmas", "Let It Snow" and "Merry Christmas Everyone".

Next up was "Step Into Christmas!" before the audience were invited to sing "O Little Town Of Bethlehem" and the perennial children's favourite "Jingle Bells".

Irving Berlin's classic "White Christmas" was performed followed by "Schneewalzer" which had most of the audience swaying in time with the music and many standing up at the appropriate places.

Engagement Reports



The final item in the published program was "Savoy Christmas Medley" which is a selection of Christmas Carols and secular drinking songs. After an introduction with bell effects the selection starts with "The First Nowell" leading to the whole Band singing "Landlord Fill The Flowing Bowl" and "Little Brown Jug". This leads us on to "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen" and "Good King Wenceslas". "Joyfully Carol Christmas Bells", "The Vicar of Bray", "The Moon Shines Bright", "Here We Come a Wassailing" a reprise of "The First Nowell" before ending with "Auld Lang Syne" which of course is traditionally sung to welcome in the New Year.

There were words of thanks on behalf of the Church from Graham Crisp who shared with us his childhood memories of waiting to hear the Band play outside his house on Christmas morning which was the signal for presents to be opened.

As an encore the Band played "Rudolph The Red Nosed Reindeer" followed by "We Wish Yo A Merry Christmas"

It had been an excellent evening with fine playing from the Band and the Development Group and a great appreciative audience.

We would like to thank our trusty team of helpers for their front of house duties. Thanks to Steph for producing posters and concert programmes, while we had Chey and Sami on the tickets & programmes. On raffle tickets we had a real family concern with Anne, Florence and her twin brothers William and Henry, whilst the Band's President Peter adorned in traditional festive attire was on hand to ensure our audience received a warm welcome to the event. The evening raised nearly £1,200.00 which was equally divided between the Band and the Church.

Engagement Reports

Thursday 12th December Street Carolling New Bradwell

On a damp evening with some drizzle, the players who were available met at the School for the first of the scheduled street playing evenings. We had a well balanced turnout of 18 players led by Keith who kept up a good standard of playing as the evening progressed. We started our playing in Spencer Street, moving on to School Street followed by stops in the High Street, North Street, Thompson Street and Harwood Street. We then walked to the eastern end of Newport Road and worked our way back towards the school. We were delighted to again be offered festive food and drinks where people had gathered outside for a party especially organised to hear the Band play in Newport Road. Our thanks go to Paula for her hospitality and this year got to chose one of her favourite Carols for the Band to play.



We finished our playing for the evening outside the old Cuba public house bang on 9:00pm. There seemed to be quite a few households who did open there doors but the reception we got from those who did was very welcoming.

Treasurer Karen provided the following report:

"Thank you everyone who came out to play and help collect on tonight's rather drizzly 1st street carolling session around New Bradwell. We managed to raise £348.38, almost the same as last year which isn't bad considering how few people seemed to be at home!

Once again it was lovely to join our friends along Newport Road for hot chocolate and mince pies, such a treat.

Big thank you to the collectors Doug and Peter, and for Alison who very kindly offered to collect rather than play to help out."

You are so welcome, we can't even think about Christmas till it's been Silver Band night, it's a fabulous start to the season for us. Thank you all so much for keeping the carolling tradition going strong in New Bradwell all through December, it's such a lovely thing to see & hear. I do wonder what drivers think as they go past ours though!

Engagement Reports

Saturday 14th December Carols and Brass Newport Pagnell

This evening saw the Band back in the historic St. Peter and St. Paul's Parish Church for a joint concert with the Newport Pagnell Singers. This well established annual event was tonight raising funds for Unity MK, a charity based in Milton Keynes who offer practical and emotional support for those experiencing homelessness or who are at crisis point. This includes the provision of overnight accommodation during the coldest nights of the year.

The large audience were welcomed to the event by Jonathan Harris the Musical Director of the Singers who then introduced the opening item by the choir "Adam lay ye bounden". This Carol has a 15th century English Christian text of unknown authorship which relates to the biblical events in the Book of Genesis on the Fall of Man. The musical setting sung was by Boris Ord who was Director of Music at King's College Cambridge.

They followed that with "Rejoice In The Light" by modern British composer Ben Ponniah which had received its premiere the week before in the Singers concert in Sherington

The choir were accompanied this evening by Richard Heyes, a former musical director of the singers and now organist at St. Peter and St. Paul's Parish Church in Olney.

The Band conducted by Musical Director Brian Keech opened their playing for the evening with "Merry Christmas Everybody" before accompanying the congregational singing of the Carol "Once In Royal David's City". The first verse was sung unaccompanied by the choir followed by three more verses which culminated with the Willcocks descant.

The singers continued with "Jesus Christ The Apple Tree". Originally a poem written in the 18th century this has been set to music by a number of composers and the one used tonight was by Elizabeth Poston. No choral concert is complete without at least one of John Rutter's composition and tonight the singers featured "What Sweeter Music".

The Band responded with what we refer to as A Christmas Collection which features three Christmas tunes contained in the Carol books with "Last Christmas", "Let It Snow" and "Merry Christmas Everyone". This was followed by "Driving Home For Christmas".

It was then time for the audience to join in with the singing of "O Come All Ye Faithful" accompanied by the Band and featuring the well known descant in the final verse.

The choir sang the another John Rutter's songs with "Jesus Child" followed by "Sir Christèmas", a 15th century medieval Carol set to music by the 20th century Welsh composer William Mathais.

The Band brought the first half of the concert to an end with "Step Into Christmas" followed by "Schneewalzer" which had choir and audience swaying from side to side and leaping up at the suitable points of the music. No doubt there were some in the audience who were grateful to be able to generate a bit of warmth into what was become a cold night inside this huge Church.

After the interval the Choir resumed the concert with "Love Has Come" with words written by Sharon Grenham-Thompson who until recently was a local Vicar and music by Sarah MacDonald, a Canadian born organist, conductor and composer who now lives in the UK. They followed this with the R. Jacques arrangement of the traditional Carol "The Holly and the Ivy".

The Band accompanied the singing of "O Little Town of Bethlehem" before playing "For Unto Us" and then "Fairytale of New York".

For their final featured slot the singers performed "In Dulci Jubilo" arranged by R. Pearsall and then "Tomorrow shall be my Dancing Day" by John Gardner.

Engagement Reports

The Band continued with “Ding Dong Christmas” and “Savoy Christmas Medley” in which the members got to exercise their vocal chords.

The Singers Chairman Peter Dodman announced the results of the raffle and thanked people for attending the concert encouraging them to give contribute funds to Unity MK as they left the Church. The Newport Pagnell Mayor Councillor Paul Day spoke a few words to thank the Singers and the Band for this evening’s concert. He also mentioned the Band’s tradition of playing around the streets on Christmas morning, something he had personally experienced as a child growing up in New Bradwell.

The final Carol was “Hark the Herald Angels Sing” which in this Willcock’s arrangement also has a descant in the last verse.

The Band played “We Wish You A Merry Christmas” to bring the music making to an end. Despite the cold conditions it had been a enjoyable evening sharing the concert with another local well established musical group.

This evening was the last appearance with the Band for Brin and a group photograph was taken with him at the centre.

From the Newport Pagnell Singers Facebook Page:

“We’re delighted to announce that our Christmas concert with Bradwell Silver Band raised £857.51 for Unity MK . Thank you to everyone who supported this fantastic charity, and of course to the amazing volunteers.”

Sunday 15th December

The Roman Crown

Bancroft

This year saw a new venue for the Band to perform in. Formerly known as the Roman Park Residents Club, the Roman Crown is now a popular pub and cafe located in Bancroft Park, a few hundred yards from the historic site of a Roman Villa which dates back nearly 2000 years. After the bitter cold experienced the previous night it was a pleasure for the members to be playing in a warmer environment. It had been decided to take a smaller group for this event and we had a well balanced group of 11 players suitably attired in their festive jumpers. After an introduction from Robin the group played a selection of Carols and popular Christmas songs. They treated the audience to such favourites as “Rudolph”, “Jingle Bells” and “Its Beginning to Look A Lot Like Christmas”.

It was a good evening of music making with an enthusiastic audience ready to get into the festive spirit. We had invited requests for favourite Carols/Songs but the only one brave enough to ask was a German lady who wondered if we had “O Tannenbaum” which we know as “O Christmas Tree”. We were more than happy to oblige and the lady who stood in front of us as we played it was profuse with her gratitude at the end of it.



Robin the landlord of the Roman Crown stands next to Sue and Band President Peter Blake as the Band performs in the background.

Engagement Reports

Tuesday 17th December Street Carolling Bradville

On a milder evening, players and collectors met at the junction of Stanton Avenue and Bradwell Road for the second of our three scheduled street carolling evenings.

We had 22 players led by Keith and began playing in Bradwell Road before making stops in Althorpe Crescent, Edwards Croft, and Stanton Avenue. We played in front of Halley's Comet and received a very warm welcome. Some of the pub's clientele particularly enjoyed our rendition of "Merry Christmas Everyone" and thanked us for stopping outside to play for them.

We continued along Abbey Way and Bradvue Crescent and covered most of Mercers Drive before the 9:00 p.m. playing deadline. We performed almost forty different tunes which included a request and there was some very good playing from the players we had out tonight. Our presence attracted a lot of attention with family groups standing outside their homes to listen while others followed us around the streets. It was good to have Ben back and playing with us tonight

Treasurer Karen provided the following report:

"What a great evening it has been. We have managed to raise a fantastic £592.57 which is slightly more than last Thanks to everyone who turned out for a rather cold evening but we were rather lucky with the weather in the end...it tipped it down after we got home. Little Patrick even made his debut carolling, resplendent with his fairy lights.

Massive thank you to our stars who stepped up to help collect - Doug, Gareth and Lucy, really appreciated guys "

Friday 20th December North Crawley

An ensemble of Tug, Julia, Oliver, Sam, Nicola, Karen, Steph, Julie, Maria, Lucy, Louis and Robin led by MD Brian played at a Lights of Love event at North Crawley.

Our 40 minute set of carols was either side of the lights switch on and following a performance by a choir.

We did have rain for part of our playing but battled on regardless.

The band was thanked by Brian Currie chairman of the organising committee as well as many people from the village who listened to us.

A massive thank you to Robin who made sure we had adequate lighting.

Engagement Reports

Saturday 21st December Street Carolling Stony Stratford High Street

Bradwell Silver Band has a tradition of playing in the High Street of Stony Stratford, normally on the last Saturday before Christmas Day. Over this time the character of the historic coaching town has undergone many changes with many of the family owned shops having closed their doors for the final time. So by comparison the High Street is now a much quieter place as the Band began their three hour playing session at 9:30am on a dull morning.

The players who had declared themselves available had been divided into two groups to share the playing duties although some members were present for the whole time. As the morning progressed more people were to be seen as they headed towards the cafes or restaurants for some refreshment with many of them standing around to listen to the Band playing. We had our usual visit from the couple from the Salvation Army who can be seen collecting in the High Street every Saturday. We were again very happy to play their favourite Carols for them.

We were very pleased to have some guest players with us today. We had Jack and Brioni and Ben who was home from University for the holidays. We also welcomed Development Group members Karen and Isla. It was also good to see some of our former members who stopped by to say hello. We had John Lee, Rod and Patrick Pakes, as well as Alan and Duncan Bruce.

Treasurer Karen provided the following report:

"Thank you for a fantastic effort over at Stony Stratford yesterday morning. Considering the dull grey, cold weather we managed to play to a constant stream of people and the appreciation was lovely to see. One lady was in tears after hearing "Little Donkey" and there was much applause. It usually tails off towards the end but we were still playing to passers- by this year. It sounded really good.

*We raised a wonderful £667.73. This is less than last year but still fantastic!
Big thank you to all the collectors who did a marvellous job: Peter, Gareth, Jess, Sami & Chey, and Doug."*

Sunday 22nd December Christmas Concert Stantonbury Sports & Social Club

It was very windy night for Bradwell Silver Band's final indoor concert of the year. This is the longest established formal engagement for the Band at Christmas time and although the modern day title is the Stantonbury Sports and Social Club, those of us of a certain vintage still refer to it affectionately as the Side Club where it was the local drinking establishment of choice for many of the older members.

Over the years the concert room has seen a number of changes in layout with the audience now directly in front of the Band rather than surrounding us. There were not as many present as usual but there was a good crowd of mostly family groups very much in the mood to hear the Band perform a festive musical programme.

Musical Director Brian Keech raised the baton to start the concert with "Merry Christmas Everybody" quickly followed by "The Christmas Song". The audience were then encouraged to get involved by singing the traditional Carols "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen" and "Silent Night". The singing was so enthusiastic Brian added another extra Carol with "O Little Town Of Bethlehem".

The Band continued the concert with "I Believe In Father Christmas" and "Fairytale of New York" which has become a favourite with this audience in the past few years. "Rocking Around The Christmas Tree" then led us on to the singing of two more Carols, "The Holly and the Ivy" and "O Come All Ye Faithful".

Engagement Reports

The Band continued with "For Unto Us", "Driving Home For Christmas" and bringing the first half of the concert to a conclusion with "Santa Claustrophobia."

The second half of the concert opened with "Ding Dong Christmas" and "Jingle Bells" which was the signal for the arrival of Father Christmas in traditional attire and accompanied by Mrs. Christmas and an Elf who was distributing treats to the audience (many thanks to Peter, Sue and Jess for dressing up in such great looking costumes). The Band played "Jingle Bell Rock" as Santa posed for photographs with people of all ages.



With Santa finally leaving we played our Christmas Collection which features three Christmas tunes contained in the Carol books with "Last Christmas", "Let It Snow" and "Merry Christmas Everyone". Then it was "White Christmas", "Step Into Christmas" and "It Feels Like Christmas". The final Carols for the audience to sing along with were "We Three Kings" and "While Shepherd's Watched".

The concert came to an end with "Schneewalzer" and "Savoy Christmas Medley". As an encore the Band played "Rudolph The Red Nosed Reindeer" and of course "We Wish You A Merry Christmas"

The audience was not as large as it has been in the past few years but there were enthusiastic throughout the concert singing along to the songs and Carols and throwing themselves around during Schneewalzer.

After the concert ended the Wilson family entertained with a performance on Post Horns and trombone by Tug, Jack and Louis with Luke popping up at the end with a cameo last note on a small yip horn.

It had been a good concert with a big full sound. We thank our returning guest players for the evening, Jack on soprano cornet, Dan home from uni on 2nd cornet, Adam Chappell on the front row, Ben on trombone with Toby joining the percussion section.

Engagement Reports

Tuesday 24th December

Street Carolling
New Bradwell

A group led by Brian met at the school for the traditional Christmas Eve tour around the streets of New Bradwell. It was a mild evening with just a bit of drizzle as we started in Bounty Street and weaved our way along Queen Anne Street on to King Edward Street where we stopped to play the favourite carol in memory of a true local lady who passed away several years ago. Her husband and family stood outside to hear the Band play her favourite Carol "In The Bleak Midwinter". We continued on to St. Giles Street, St. Mary Street, St. James Street, Newport Road, Wood Street, Caledonian Road and finishing off in Wallace Street. There were many groups of people out in the streets to listen to the Band in the final countdown to Christmas Day and it was good to be able to bring a bit of seasonal joy to the locals. Special mention to George who was not only playing trombone but was again pushing his baby son in a buggy!

Treasurer Karen provided the following report:

"Thank you to everyone who came out tonight for another excellent evening carolling. We managed to raise a wonderful £665.02. It was lovely to see so many people out following us around, a real community feel. My big thanks go to Doug, Peter & Sue as well as Sam and Jess who collected tonight. Without you guys we could not have collected such a brilliant amount."

Wednesday 25th December
Christmas Day Street Carolling

On Christmas morning 2024 we started with an excellent turnout of 23 players led by Musical Director Brian Keech to start off the traditional tour of the local streets at 6:00 a.m. in Caledonian Road with "Christians Awake".

There were lots of residents looking out of windows or standing in their doorways to wish us a Merry Christmas.

We do not knock on doors on Christmas morning but were delighted to receive several donations to the Band.

We had a number of listeners on foot who followed us as we made our way around Wood Street, Queen Anne Street, St. Mary Street, St. Giles Street, King Edward Street, Bounty Street, School Street, High Street, North Street, Thompson Street and Harwood Street. A few players left us at this point but we continued over the hill to play in Chipperfield Close. Next stop was Melbourne Terrace just past the old railway station and we continued along Bradwell Road, Stanton Avenue, Althorpe Crescent and ended up in Bradvue Crescent for our final stop where again there were drinks and food ready for us from a generous local resident who always looks forward to the Band playing outside his house.

We were joined today by former players Jack, Adam Chappell, Orla and Joe.

So another year in the long history of the Bradwell Silver Band was brought to a conclusion. The members are now enjoying a well earned break before facing whatever challenges 2025 may have in store for us.

From The Archive!

As we look forward to our 125th Anniversary, this series delves into the band's archive for stories about its early history.

The First Band.

Brass bands were virtually ubiquitous in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. So much so that a reporter for the Buckinghamshire Advertiser & Aylesbury News, on seeing a Drum & Fife band in Aylesbury, commented that it provided

"... a pleasing variety of tone and colour to the now all-predominating brass bands".

Certainly there were a number of bands in the area, the Brass Bands of The British Isles: a Historical Directory lists the 1st Bucks Rifle Volunteers Band and the Wolverton Carriage Works Band as being active in 1901. It also mentions McCorquodale's Printing Works Band, Wolverton St Mary's Band, Wolverton Wesleyan Mission Band and the Stantonbury Brass Band as being active through the 1890s.

The Bradwell United Brass Band formed in January 1901 and started performing within five months of being established.

- On 18th May 1901 they played at the homecoming of the Service Section of the Bucks Volunteers [from the South Africa War] at which, according to the Wolverton Express, they "acquitted themselves creditably".
- Also in May they started playing for Friday evening dances at the recreation ground.
- On Whit Monday [now the late May Bank Holiday] they played for the Sports on the recreation field in Bradwell, at which they collected £2 15sh.



*Advertisement from the Buckingham Express
14 June 1902 [Mr Beach was the band's
Secretary]*

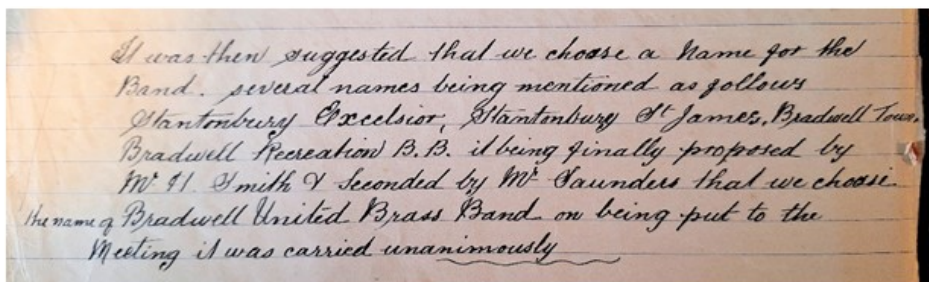
On 27th Nov 1901 they organised a concert to raise funds.

The concert proper, consisting of various people performing songs, piano pieces etc, started at 7.30pm. The band itself played outside the hall from 7.00pm to entertain the audience as it arrived. The concert was reported in the Wolverton Express [4th December 1901] which commented that:

"For some time since Bradwell, like all other go-ahead villages contemplated the idea of possessing a brass band of its own, and accordingly a few of the musically inclined enthusiasts of the place formed themselves into a small body... A meeting was called and the result was that... a band was formed, comprising many of the now defunct surrounding bands".

The last line of the quotation explains how the band was able to put on public performances so soon after forming – the players, or at least a significant core, all came from other local bands. As well as those bands already mentioned, Bill West, in his book Remember Wolverton, also mentions the Bradwell Excelsior, Stantonbury St James, Bradwell Town and the Bradwell Recreation brass bands, but states these were earlier names of the band. As the Band Minutes show these were certainly considered as possible names in 1901 but were voted down, it is quite possible that these were the names of some of the now defunct bands referred to in the Wolverton Express. The decision to call it the Bradwell United Band may well reflect the idea that it was bringing together players from these other bands. The fact that it was formed as a subscription band may also have given it a sounder financial footing than the previous bands might have had.

From The Archive!



Extract from the Band Minutes of 22nd January 1901 deciding the name of the band

The band's early repertoire is difficult to establish, with most references in the minutes being to "music books" or the purchase of the "Band Journal", but two entries give a bit more detail:

- 15th May 1901: the committee agreed to order books of dance music from Smiths & Richardsons
- 22 July 1901: the committee ordered from Wright & Round - Vital Spark, Adeste Fideles, The Death of Nelson and Rousseau's Dream.

Wright & Round was established in 1875 and continues to be a major publisher of music for brass bands. The Death of Nelson is still in their catalogue.

The minutes of 6th February 1901 record the initial allocation of instruments as follows: J Clarke, Eb Bass; Thomas Godfrey, 2nd Trombone; Henry Saunders, 1st Baritone Horn; Charles Hardwick, Eb Bass; Samuel Saunders, 2nd Baritone Horn; Percy Hardwick, 2nd Tenor Horn; Henry Smith, Eb Bass; Thomas Jarvis, Solo Euphonium; Walter Throsby, 1st Tenor Horn. In March R Pitkin was allocated a Cornet. To these founding players we have to add Gilbert Lock, [Bandmaster until Aug 1901], William Hardwick [Bandmaster from August 1901] and J.E. Johnson who became Bandmaster in 1910 but is mentioned in later sources as an early member of the band, as is William Walters who served as secretary 1914-1958.

The original minutes of the meeting on 6th Feb 1901 have "C Hardwick Jun." as being allocated the 2nd Tenor Horn. Sylvia Mead in *Marching Out* [1996] lists him as "A Hardwick" but this may be a misreading of the entry. In the para prior to the list in the minutes is a ref to "Mr C Hardwick & Son" the most likely candidate for "C Hardwick Jun" is Charles Hardwick's eldest son Percy aged 18yrs. There was another son, Archie but he was only 9yrs in 1901. In 1907 a "P Hardwick" was nominated for the band's committee as a playing member and is also listed on the 1922 band photograph.

At its AGM in January 1916 the band presented JE Johnson with a clock to mark his forthcoming marriage and refers to him having been associated with the band since its formation. Reporting on the 50th Anniversary Dinner in 1951, the minutes again refer to JE Johnson as being a founder member of the band. The only J Johnson in 1901 census for Bradwell was James Johnson, aged 16yrs, the second eldest son of Samuel Johnson. His age would fit with James marrying in 1916 and remaining bandmaster into the 1950s.

Having only one cornet in the band allocations seems odd but these were simply the instruments purchased by the band and who had been allocated them, other players may have been using their own instruments. This possibility is supported by the fact that in September 1904, the committee approved a loan of £1 to Mr A. Farrow to help him purchase a cornet.

From The Archive!

1901 was also a Census year and, of those named, all but Messrs Clarke, Pitkin and Walters have been traced which gives us some idea of the ages and employment of the band.

- All but one, possibly two, had jobs in the Railway Carriage Works in Wolverton: the two exceptions being Henry Smith, a book binder, and Samuel Saunders who is simply described as a fitter's labourer and may or may not have been employed at the carriage works.
- Five of the eleven lived Wolverton, the other six in New Bradwell. Of the six, all but one lived in Queen Anne Street, the other being on the High Street.
- They were all family men and heads of households except Percy Hardwick, aged 18yrs [employed as a Railway Wagon Wood Finisher] who lived in Ledsam Street, Wolverton, with his parents and three brothers, and James Johnson aged 16yrs, an Engine Fitter.

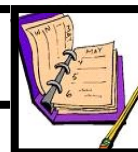
In 1901 James Johnson was living with his parents and six siblings in Queen Anne Street. His father, Samuel, a railway coach painter, was one of the original non-playing committee members of the band. By 1909 there is also a David Johnson in the band, who was probably the youngest son, the census shows him as being 8yrs in 1901.

That most of the bandsmen listed were employed at the Carriage Works, probably reflects the local employment opportunities at the time. What is noticeable is that they were mostly skilled workmen or craftsmen and either heads of households or their sons, setting a pattern of family involvement that has continued to this day.

Chas Leslie

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- i. Buckinghamshire Advertiser & Aylesbury News 2nd September 1899
 - ii. *Brass Bands of The British Isles: a Historical Directory* 1st Edition, Gavin Holman [2018].
 - iii. On 2 January 1900, to support the war in South Africa, the War Office sanctioned the raising of 66 Active Service Companies from the Volunteers, to be attached to regular battalions in South Africa on a year's engagement. The 1st Bucks Rifle Volunteers had to find approximately 60 men for the composite active service company to be attached to the 1st Battalion, Oxfordshire Light Infantry (the 43rd). 23 men from the Wolverton Detachment were selected, they left on 10th March 1900 and returned on the 18th May 1901.
 - iv. *Remember Wolverton Stratford & Bradwell*, Bill West, Baron Birch 1991 [ISBN 0 86023 474 6]. The chapter *Say It with Music* provides a brief history of the various bands in the area.
 - v. The original minutes of the meeting on 6th Feb 1901 have "C Hardwick Jun." as being allocated the 2nd Tenor Horn. Sylvia Mead in *Marching Out* [1996] lists him as "A Hardwick" but this may be a misreading of the entry. In the para prior to the list in the minutes is a ref to "Mr C Hardwick & Son" the most likely candidate for "C Hardwick Jun" is Charles Hardwick's eldest son Percy aged 18yrs. There was another son, Archie but he was only 9yrs in 1901. In 1907 a "P Hardwick" was nominated for the band's committee as a playing member and is also listed on the 1922 band photograph
 - vi. At its AGM in January 1916 the band presented JE Johnson with a clock to mark his forthcoming marriage and refers to him having been associated with the band since its formation. Reporting on the 50th Anniversary Dinner in 1951, the minutes again refer to JE Johnson as being a founder member of the band. The only J Johnson in 1901 census for Bradwell was James Johnson, aged 16yrs, the second eldest son of Samuel Johnson. His age would fit with James marrying in 1916 and remaining bandmaster into the 1950s.
 - vii. Ledsam Street was one of the streets south of and perpendicular to, Stratford Road, Wolverton. Later known as the "Little Streets", they were built mostly in 1840 and were Creed Street (which still survives), Ledsam Street, Glyn Square and Young Street. They were demolished in the 1960s, the site of Ledsam St is now the Asda supermarket and some commercial premises.

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With Grateful Thanks...

I should like you to pass on to band members my gratitude for their kind remarks at last Saturday's concert and your parting presentation in recognition of my impending retirement from playing with you all.

This was unexpected and, I believe, undeserved on my part, your generosity goes to show how caring a community you all are at Bradwell. I shall of course miss my regular contact and making music with you all, and I will continue to support the band by attending your concerts.

Best wishes to you all for a successful year ahead and, especially, at the Regional Contest. Hopefully, I shall be reading in the Bugle and 4 Bars Rest of a much deserved promotion.

*Thank you all
Best regards
Brin*

10th December 2024