

Bedford Town Band



Centenary

I would like to thank the staff of the Local Studies Unit at The Central Library, Bedford and all those who gave their time to help with this history.

Quotation marks are used to denote phrases or comments taken from documentation and local newspapers of the period.

Barbara Summersgill

On the 9th September, 1893, an item headed "Bands and Street Music" appeared as part of the Agenda for a meeting of Bedford Town Council. The person responsible for this 'item' would appear to have been the Mayor, Mr F A Blades, who felt that it would be a good thing to have a Town Band.

During the course of this meeting Mr Blades suggested that "... although there were bands of varying proficiency in the neighbouring towns, it had recently come to his knowledge that in certain competitions the Borough could not boast of a band who dared venture to compete with those of the surrounding area..." and that "... Bedford might follow the example of other towns and obtain a good band which would help make the town more attractive as a place of residence and they must not shirk their responsibilities for the sake of a small expenditure a sum of £200 being mentioned."

In response to this proposal concern was expressed that bands in the park might "... draw children away from Sunday Schools in the surrounding villages and turn The Lord's Day into a Bank Holiday." This was countered by the reading of an extract from a newspaper which stated that "... when Queen Victoria had opened the terrace at Windsor Park thousands of people had turned up to listen to the fine playing of the Military Bands." (The inference being that even Queen Victoria might not be as narrow minded as some of those councillors present!).

This appears to be the first occasion on which a 'Town Band' was officially mentioned and discussed, but unfortunately it was decided at this meeting that the matter be allowed to "... stand over for a year."

When reports of this meeting were published, a series of letters appeared in the local papers under the headings "The Band Question" and the "The Town Band Question". These letters discussed the relative merits of a competition for the title of 'Town Band' between the two existing bands in the Town which were the Wesleyan Mission Band and the Band of the 3rd Volunteer Battalion of the Bedfordshire Regiment.

This correspondence, which is reproduced in full below, is an indication of the keen interest which the subject of a Town Band evoked, but although these letters may have nurtured a seed sown earlier by the Mayor and the Council, there was still no immediate action.

It was late in 1893 when Mr William Tyrer, described in one newspaper as 'a gentleman',

16.9.1883

THE TOWN BAND QUESTION.

TO THE EDITOR.

appeared on the scene and offered £100 to a local string band. However, upon finding that this group had political affiliations, he moved his interest towards the existing Wesleyan Mission Band, members of which band were frequently entertained by him to supper at The Coffee Tavern in Harpur Street, Bedford.

It was at one of these gatherings, on the 13th April 1894, that the reformation and future management of the

Sir,—In the reports of the discussion at the last Council meeting his Worship the Mayor is reported as having said that "he thought it a disgrace and a reproach to this musical borough that no band was able, or had courage enough, to compete in the recent band contest at Bedford." I do not think his Worship wilfully intended to cast any reflection upon or to represent the one Bedford band, viz., the Bedford Wesleyan, who had enough pluck to enter against neighbouring bands, and who were rewarded for their pains with a prize value £8 7s., and who would, had there been no accident, probably have done better still.

The possibility or advisability of establishing a town band is just now occupying the attention of our worthy Councillors, and it must be admitted in all fairness to them to be a knotty question. It seems pretty evident that the rate-payers will never consent to £200 being drawn from their pockets for this purpose. It seems to me that the best way out of the difficulty is that the Council should make a grant, not to start a band, but to encourage the best band now existing to become more efficient.

We have several bands in the town, the best of which is, I am told by those who understand music, the present Wesleyan Band. If, however, our local musicians dispute this, let them try conclusions with them on any given piece of music before any competent judge, and let his decision settle the matter. If this could be done, I am quite sure the Wesleyan band-men will be only too pleased to try and demonstrate the respective merits of the bands in question and will most gladly accept the challenge at any time. Will some gentlemen offer a prize for the best local band at a given date upon equal terms for all the winners to be called the Bedford Town Band? One other point. His Worship said he and others were anxious to have a band that could compete with the Northamptonshire men. Well, to begin with, if this band is formed as requested, it is to be a reed band, which would at once disqualify it from any band contests, as they are strictly confined to brass instruments, so that Bedford, with its town band at £200, would have simply to remain "As you were."

A LOVER OF GOOD MUSIC.

23.9.1883

THE BRASS BAND QUESTION.

TO THE EDITOR.

Sir.—In answer to your correspondent "A Lover of Good Music," who I presume writes in the interests of the Wesleyan Band, I may state that my Band is quite willing to test the merits of the two Bands, not with one set piece, but with a program of nine pieces, viz., three overtures, three operatic selections, and three sets of waltzes. I don't think a Prize Band can object to such a test. Of course the Bands would play as they now stand as to instrumentation, and the pieces played would be those taught by their own Bandmasters. Any further communication on the matter may be addressed to

JOSEPH TILDESLEY,
Bandmaster, 3rd Vol. Batt. Bedf. Regt.

THE BAND QUESTION.

TO THE EDITOR.

Sir.—As "Lover of good Music" seems so much interested in the 'Town Band' question, which is, at present being discussed, and throws out what he believes to be some useful suggestions as to the establishment of a Town Band, I would like a space in your columns to try and show him that the very plan he suggests would ruin the best band, according to his information, there is in the town, namely, the Wesleyan Band. He asks that some gentleman should offer a prize for the best local band, the winner to be called the Town Band. According to "Lover of good Music's" information, the Wesleyan Band would secure the honour and become the Town Band, and would be required to play music which several of the best men in the Band would object to, and rather than sever their connexion with the Wesleyan body would leave the band and thus cause its ruin. I might say when the Wesleyan band was started its promoters had higher aims and nobler objects in view than to play secular music, and I for one hope after the useful services rendered in mission work by that band at the open air preaching on the Market Hill and other places, they will not be led to give up the spiritual for the secular, but rather receive more scope for their talent from the body to which they belong. If the town wants a band for all purposes let it get one by voluntary subscriptions. No doubt our worthy Mayor would lend the list with a substantial donation. MISSION WORKER.

Thus it was on the 13th April, 1894, that what had been known as the Wesleyan Mission Band became 'The Bedford Town Band.'

The newly named band's first engagement was on the 4th May, 1894, (Whit Monday) at a Grand Fete in Cardington Road, under the baton of Mr William Taylor who had been the conductor of the Wesleyan Mission Band, which now formed the nucleus of the new

Wesleyan Band was discussed. In addition to the majority of the existing members, other "interested parties" were present who were willing to advance sums of money for the future support of a band. At this time only fifteen instruments were owned by the Wesleyan Band, having been bought with money loaned by a previous benefactor, with other members owning their own instruments. A Committee was formed and a set of rules drawn up, but most importantly it was decided to change the name.



Charles and Harry Ginn

involved were St Albans, Olney, Luton Red Cross, Leighton Buzzard and Dunstable Excelsior. In keeping with modern procedures the 'Judge' was hidden in a tent in the centre of the grounds and the bands played on an adjacent platform. Such was their prowess that Bedford Town Band won two competitions, the first for the playing of a quick step, the prize being 15s and the second, for the competition proper, for which the Test Piece was 'Elixir of Love'. The first prize for the main competition was £4 and a cornet to the value of £9.9s. A silver medal was also awarded for the best cornet player. An auspicious start for the new Bedford Town Band.

Bedford Town Band. The general comment on the performance was favourable and it was reported that the Band played with "... much taste and expression with selections of an elevating class and understanding of the people."

On the 18th August, 1894, the Band entered their first contest at The Athletic Ground in Luton and engaged Mr Ogden, of the Luton Red Cross Band, to conduct them. Other bands

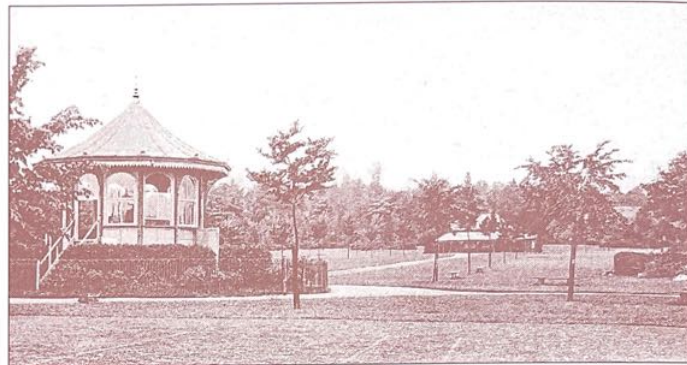
Shortly afterwards the Band were again successful, this time with two first prizes at a contest in Wolverton. On returning to Bedford the Band marched triumphantly from the railway station towards The Coffee Tavern but were interrupted in Silver Street by an unusual incident which was reported by a local newspaper in the following fashion:

"A couple of young fellows, who it was stated belonged to Olney Band and had cause for feelings of jealousy at the success of the Bedford Band, rushed through the ranks and threw the bandsmen into confusion. Several instruments were damaged but in the excitement and indignation aroused at the outrage, the persons who were the cause of it made a lucky escape and were seen no more."

In addition to contesting, during the following summer, the Band "discoursed sweet music" mainly of a religious nature, (since there was still concern about 'entertainment' as such on a Sunday), to large appreciative audiences in Bedford Park.

Following these early successes the Band made its first venture to London on 28th June, 1895, where they entered an open contest for bands which was held in conjunction with the International Music Trades Exhibition. As the majority of their instruments had been made by Messrs Besson and Company, the Band were taken on a tour of the works in Euston Road, London, prior to the contest. The visit was followed by refreshments and a practice outside the works. The Test Piece for the contest was a selection from Wallace's famous opera 'Maritana', this music is still in the Band's library. Despite playing at number 16 late in the evening, the Band gained 4th prize which was £5 and a cornet to the value of 7 guineas.

Having had a taste of competition the Band then organised their own contest which took place on the 22nd August, 1896, in a meadow in Cardington Road Bedford. Although some of the Band did not think that this venture would be financially viable, a sum of £60 was found as guarantee. The event was obviously successful with 17 bands entering and there were about 1500 spectators. Each band



Bedford Park Bandstand 1900

played two pieces of their own choice, an early version of current entertainment contests, with varied programmes ensuring that the public were not subjected to the "... monotony of hearing the same selection time after time." Even though a seemingly enjoyable day was had by all the Judge, a Mr George Hames of Nottingham, was a trifle scathing in his comments: "... the playing to say the least was very disappointing, all bands being in a hurry, scurry to get done."

The Town Band continued to perform at various functions including the festivities to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria on 22 June, 1897, when they played on a craft moored near the Suspension Bridge. Upwards of 2,000 people were in attendance, no doubt encouraged by the portions of "mouth watering roasted Jubilee Ox" which were given away.

At this time there was only one bandstand in the town which had been erected in 1888 in Bedford Park, where it still stands, on a site originally intended for a fountain. Although various visiting and local bands used the bandstand almost every other Sunday, it was not greatly favoured as "collections did not yield satisfactory results." Such were the logistical difficulties of banding in the 1890s that bands from out of town were obliged to meet the cost of two vehicles, four horses and

two drivers plus their own refreshments all from the collection. It was suggested at the time that "... if everyone in the crowd over sixteen years of age gave one penny there might be a band in the park every Sunday." In June, 1898, the following letter appeared in one of the local newspapers:

"Any sixth rate continental town would have long ago run up a private subscription for a lightly ornamental, gaily painted, pagoda iron bandstand and would consider a plank platform a disgrace. That there is room for complaint and need for alterations is evident to all frequenters of the Mill Meadows during these concerts. The present platform where it now stands is simply useless. It is so low that the children are all rolling and playing round the legs of the musicians, so near the trees and in the corner as to make it dark and to deaden the music and so close to the weir that the rush of the water drowns the melody. There is no doubt it is unsuitable and I would suggest that the worthy Councillors take this matter up and erect a proper stand as they have done in the Park. Suggestions to place the new bandstand between the locks and the Suspension Bridge. If too expensive, raise the platform another 5 to 6 feet and move to the open side. Suggest Band Secretaries write to the Mayor and ask him to put it before the Council. Regular Listener."

This appears to be the first suggestion for a bandstand by the river, to complement the one in Bedford Park, but the idea was not formally considered by the Borough Council until the following year and even then there was no immediate decision.

The Band continued their summer seasons of Sunday concerts in Bedford Park and Mill Meadows, but the question of 'entertainment' on the 'Sabbath' again raised its head at a Council meeting in March, 1902, where the fact that the Band made a public collection was objected to. In reply it was stated that their entire collection for the 1901 summer season amounted to the princely sum of £24 18s 11d, and the only money shared amongst them was that earned from carol playing, which, in 1901, amounted to a grand total of £10 11s 9d. It was also pointed out that every year the Band contributed an

unspecified amount to Hospital Funds.

At the same meeting one particular Alderman stated that "... if he had his way, he would have prevented the bands playing at all on Sundays ... (since) ... the bands playing in Mill Meadows, particularly, caused scenes of rowdyism and ruffianism which were a positive disgrace and a curse in the town. There were many present at the concerts who would otherwise be in a place of worship and as to the argument that some people were kept away from the public houses he would contend it was better to let such people stay in the public houses than that the youth of the town should be demoralised in the way that they were at the concerts in Mill Meadows. He had frequently been obliged to go a longer way home from church on a Sunday evening because he would not take his children past such scenes of ruffianism as were to be witnessed." It was agreed however that the rowdyism was not the fault of the Band, even though they were the main reason for the people being there.

Despite this 'picturesque' description of Sunday afternoons in Mill Meadows the Council again discussed the subject of a bandstand and compromised by instructing the Borough Engineer to accept a tender of £48 15s for the "... raising of the existing platform with the provision of a fence, hand rail, also proper footpaths."

It may well have been that these 'improvements' were carried out because 1902 saw the Coronation of Edward VII and one of the proposed festivities was a grand procession, headed by the Band, and an illuminated lantern parade culminating in a river fete. Later the same year the Band gave a concert by the river when the major item performed was an unusually realistic fantasia, which comprised two dozen episodes, musically illustrating 'A Soldiers Life' accompanied by the discharge of revolvers, maroons, cannon and fireworks.

From 1903 to 1906 the Band gave regular concerts in Bedford Park and Mill Meadows, with further engagements at Woburn Flower Show and the Liberal Party Picnic at Southill Park.

1903 produced the Band's first photograph, commemorating their success at a contest at the Langford Show where they were again to win in 1904 and 1907. On this latter occasion there was unfortunately some difficulty regaining possession of the cup, which only became available after action was taken at Kettering County Court, the other party being Burton Latimer Britannia Band.



First Band Photograph

During the early 1900s river concerts were given by the Band on the Dame Alice Barge. In 1907 a floating bandstand, built by Messrs Chetham Sons and Biffen, was in use but unfortunately this developed dry rot and during the 1914/18 War it broke up and went over the weir.



1909

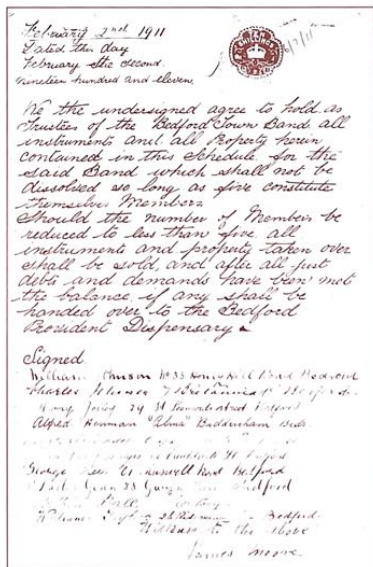


Bedford Band on Bedford River 1909

In 1909 the Band was fortunate enough to obtain the services of Mr C A Vine, retired Chief Bandmaster of the Royal Navy, as conductor. He was obviously a man of many talents, having taught for ten years at Harrow School, who offered tuition in piano, violin, cello, mandolin and banjo as well as all wood wind and brass instruments.

Such was his rapport with the Band that a series of concerts followed which culminated in the presentation of a set of tubular bells by local shop owner and dignitary, Mr E P Rose. Unfortunately Mr Vine died later that year.

With the support of ten local businessmen, who agreed to act as trustees (see document), the Band were able to promote a concert by the then famous Besses 'o' th' Barn Band, who had already made two world tours. This concert took place in front of an enthusiastic audience at the Corn Exchange



with "hundreds of other people" listening from the adjacent Saracen's Yard.

July 1912 saw the first mention of the Band playing at the Bedford Regatta: "Whilst the Band were providing a feast of music, starters with megaphones, boys with programmes, and the one hundred and one aiders and abettors of noise and commotion were doing their powerful best to drown its strain." (T'was ever thus!)

BEDFORD TOWN SILVER BAND.

CONCERT

AT THE
Town Hall, on February 6th, 1906.

PROGRAMME.

1. MARCH	"Washington Grays"	
2. SELECTION	"The Spring Chickens"	<i>Coyell and Moulton</i>
	Interpolating - Ring and Chorus, "The Grand Discomfiting", Valse Song, "I don't know but I guess", Song, "The cross along the Park", "Duet", "The Kiss was Fanned", Song, "Oh, so Gracely", Song, "The National Anthem", Song, "The Mass of May", March Song, "Coups de Pistolet", Flutes, "The British Tenth",	
3. SONG	"In Friendship's Name"	<i>Grubbs</i>
	MR. G. SHARBATE.	
4. VAISE	"The Old Belly"	<i>Dezell</i>
5. SONG	"Oh, what a Happy Land is England"	
	MR. G. SHARBATE.	
6. EUPHONIC SOLO	"The Conquering Hero"	<i>Herman</i>
	MR. G. SHARBATE.	
7. SONG	"A May Morning"	<i>Dines</i>
	MR. G. H. BARKER.	
8. DESCRIPTIVE FANTASIA	"A Sailor's Life"	<i>Cape</i>
	Interpolating - January Day, "Home In, You In, You In", "By Anchor", "Farewell, farewell to me", "Good-bye, Good-bye, Good-bye", "On the Ocean", "A wet shoe and a starting gun", "Anemone on Sand", "A Homage to", "The (Treason) Bell", "A Song appropriate, "All Roads go South", "Ball the ball", "Home Sweet Home, The same gradually goes", "A pretty little house", "Famous Old Bells", "Famous Wattle", Song, "England expects that every man should do his duty", "God is down", "Hurdy,urdy, Hurdy,urdy", "Bullie Bells", "Home of Victory", "Bide Britannia", "Fare",	
9. SONG	"My Queen"	<i>Blumenthal</i>
	MR. G. H. BARKER.	
10. SELECTION	"Carnegie"	<i>Arr. by Cape</i>
11. SONG	Selected.	
	MR. G. SHARBATE.	
12. SONG	"Sing me to sleep"	<i>Green</i>
	MR. FRED HALL.	
13. AMERICAN SKETCH	"In Old Kentucky"	<i>Shipley Douglas</i>
	Interpolating - Home, "Off to Work", "Good Evening", "The Old Folks at Home", "Come Here", "Fareyou Home", "Serenade by de Night on de moon", "Good-bye", "Come's Love Duet", "Now don't be foolish, Ann", "Goodnight, Goodnight", "I want to see the Old Folks", "Fareyou and Sleep", "Good-bye", "Cute Walk, and Finish.	
GOD SAVE THE KING.		
Accompanist - Mr. R. Totherick.		
Conductor - Mr. C. H. Baker.		
A COLLECTION WILL BE MADE TO DEFRAY EXPENSES.		

With the coming of the 'Great War' many members of the Band enlisted in the armed services. However, concerts for the troops were held at the Empire Cinema in Midland Road (now the Electricity Showrooms), The Picturedrome (now the Moat House Hotel), the Corn Exchange, and at recruiting rallies in Russell Park.

It was during the first year of the war that the Band's association with the famous Mortimer family began, as members received tuition from Mr Fred Mortimer of the Luton Red Cross Band. Several years later, in 1921, his even more famous son Harry, appeared as soloist with the Band at the Corn Exchange playing 'The Lost Chord' and 'Les Follies'.

On December 12th, 1920, at another grand concert at the Corn Exchange, Master Reginald Crane (then aged 13), gave a performance on his cornet of 'Alice Where Art Thou?'. Over the next 50 years 'Reg' Crane was to play a key role in the continuity and development of brass banding in the town.

Whilst the Corn Exchange and former Empire and Plaza cinemas were ideal venues for indoor concerts, the 'platform' in Mill Meadows was still felt by many to be far from suitable. In response to this dilemma the Band agreed to build a raft, but only on the understanding that the Council would take over the maintenance, (they were presumably mindful of the unceremonious fate that befell its predecessor) and make it available to anyone. The raft was to be made up of three punts supporting a playing platform, one foot (!) above the level of the water. Many are the stories told of the day the raft 'sank' and the following is one account that appeared in a local newspaper under the heading "The Band's Adventure":

"Thousands of Bedfordians and visitors had gathered on the Embankment on Whit Monday, 1923, on a day that had improved with keeping and the riverside was attractive at eventide, to which was to be added the dulcet strains of silver instruments played in harmony. With an air of expectancy the crowd waited, soon to be heightened, while the silver instruments and the hopeful instrumentalists shipped aboard the floating bandstand from the Mill Meadows End. Eight or nine of the bandsmen congregated at the outward end of the bandstand, just as it pushed off from shore and were soon vastly perturbed to discover that their edge was sinking in the deep. Their hurried movements threw the Band into confusion and the motion that ensued aboard the craft did not

improve the situation. The edge was soon awash and feet were getting wet. Three of them then dived into the stream and swam ashore. One of these 'heroes' who had not swum for many years, said 'He wasn't going to wait to be drowned'. The craft was evacuated and the instruments and music were rescued intact, the incident being put down to indiscriminate distribution of weight."



Following this incident the raft was dismantled with the intention of adding further floats.

In September, 1922, Mr Fred Mortimer was again involved with the Band when he conducted them at the annual Crystal Palace Contest playing 'Classic Gems No 2' in the Junior Cup. In 1924 the Band were at the same contest playing 'Kubla Khan' by Granville Bantock. On both occasions they were unplaced.

Following the departure of the Mortimer family to the Foden's Works Band, the Band had difficulty maintaining the standard of their players. This situation was made worse by other members transferring their talents to the then popular "jazz and dance bands". In addition there was competition from the newly formed Bedford Trades Band.

The continuing popularity of band concerts prompted a further series of letters in the local newspapers regarding the provision of local facilities for "municipal music". Consequently on the 18th September, 1925, the Town Council agreed to accept a tender from Messrs Rowell and Co Ltd of London for the construction of a bandstand in St Mary's Gardens. The cost was to be £731 which was made up of £353 for the bandstand; a windscreen £146 and the foundations, to be constructed by the Borough Engineer, £232. The additional details of the contract included that it was to be "... finished in two shades of green with eight ornamental columns and having hanging baskets between a roof of red asbestos, in its own gardens and as such being worthy to complete the new St Mary's Gardens. The platform was to be surrounded by an ornate cast iron railing three feet in height with concrete approach steps to a gate glazed sliding windscreen also to be fitted."

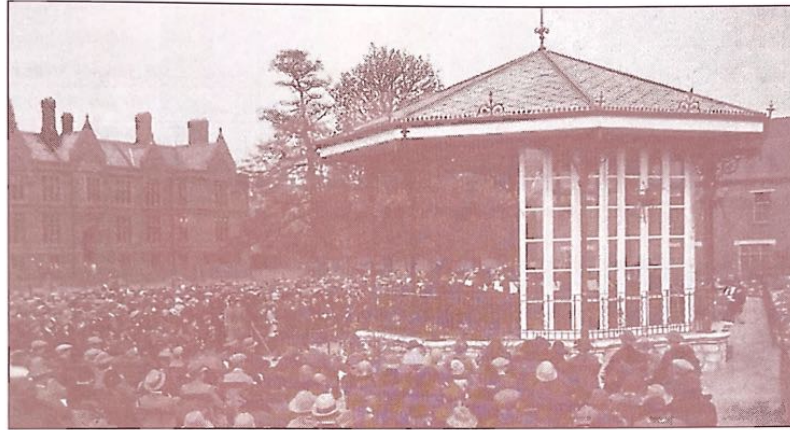
The bandstand was officially opened on the 10th April, 1926, by the Mayor, Alderman G H Barford. In an effort to avoid any possible jealousy or unpleasantness amongst the three local bands, (Town, Trades and Military), the Council, after much deliberation, invited the Luton Red Cross Band, which was at that time one of the finest in the country having won over £5000 in prize money, to play at the opening ceremony. Their playing was subsequently described, by a local newspaper, as "beautifully balanced". However the same report went on to say

that there was a "... most disconcerting reverberation, echo was too gentle a word, from the buildings on the other side of the river, the Old Shire Hall Brewery, the sound coming back to hit the ear with quite an unpleasant effect." Mr Ball, Secretary of the Bedford Town Band at that time, had apparently already suggested that the proposed site for the bandstand would prove to be unsuitable from the point of view of acoustics.

There was no animosity between the local bandmen; indeed, they had proposed a massed performance for charity. However, it was felt by some members of the respective bands, that it was something of an insult to invite a rival band from a different part of the County, to be the first to perform on the new bandstand when they would be expected to provide entertainment on Sundays thereafter.

Such was the strength of feeling on this issue that a protest march was held on 16th April, 1926, (in the pouring rain), involving the Town, Trades and Military bands, beginning at the Midland Station,

with each band playing in turn as they proceeded to the Market Hill. A public meeting then took place at which a reported crowd of over four thousand passed the following resolution:



Official Opening of the Bandstand
10th April 1926

"That the public meeting unanimously resents the action of the municipal authorities in permitting the official opening of the new bandstand in St Mary's to be performed by a band outside the Borough and it is the opinion of the meeting that the authorities' decision deprived the citizens and ratepayers of their legitimate rights."

Furthermore, a local bandsman was also reported as saying that "... all Bedford Bandsmen had the greatest admiration for the Luton Band. They were proud of belonging to the same County but if the Council liked to spend £728 of the ratepayers money and build a bandstand in the wrong place to start with (laughter) at the very least, they might have consulted the local bandmen or invited a representative to be there."

The meeting then closed with a massed performance of the National Anthem:-



Junior Band on stage at the Granada cinema 12.4.71



Bedford Park Bandstand 1990



Tommy Rose Reg Crane John Duffield October 1969



Band in concert 1967



Fourth Section winners Watford 13.3.77



Recording Centenary Cassette

Towards the end of 1980, the Band recorded two sessions for the BBC's 'Listen to the Band' and 'Bandstand' programmes (see appendix iii). A later session for '*Among Your Souvenirs*' meant that the Band had broadcast on all the National BBC programmes featuring brass bands. Indeed 1983 was the fifth consecutive year in which the Band were invited by the BBC to record a programme. At the time of the first broadcast the Band was still in the Second Section.

In April, 1983, the Band accepted an invitation to compete at the Grand Shield Contest in Rochdale, an event organised by Mr Harry Mortimer, and although unplaced, the Band enjoyed a weekend in the company of some of the finest bands in the country.

A great deal of the credit for the Band's achievements during this 'purple' period must go to Mr Ralph Fawthrop who was the Band's Manager and Chairman. In addition, the Junior Band, under the capable direction of Mrs Marion Hext, (wife of the Musical Director), provided a vital source of new talent for the Senior Band which, inevitably, experienced a regular turnover of members as many of the youngsters moved on.

In early 1988, Mr Hext left the Band and a local peripatetic teacher, Roy Turner, took charge at the Area Contest.

In July, the Band was invited to play at a '*Victorian Weekend*' to celebrate the Centenary of Bedford Park, where they had played on many occasions since their formation in 1893, but not, unfortunately in the bandstand which had, over recent years, fallen into a state of disrepair. The County Council also celebrated its Centenary with a service at St Paul's Church at which the Band provided the music.

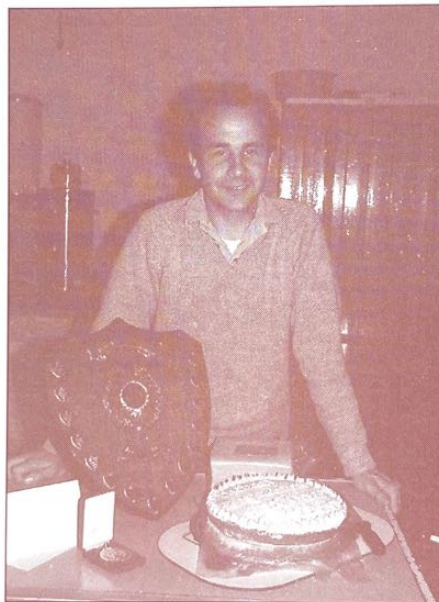
New uniforms, comprising navy blazers emblazoned with the town crest and grey trousers/skirts, were purchased with a generous grant from the Borough Council and were worn, for the first time, at the Milton Keynes contest in February, 1989, where Michael Statham (flugel) won the prize for best soloist in the Second Section, playing '*Concerto de Aranjuez*' by Rodrigo.

When Roy Turner left the band in March, 1989, to take up a position at the Royal Worcester Grammar School, the Band came under the capable direction of another local peripatetic, Michael Lock, who was assisted by visiting conductors Len Jenkins, David Twitchings with Jim Hibbert taking the baton at the annual Christmas Concert at the Corn Exchange.

Upon his appointment as Musical Director in December, 1990, Mr Kevin Prince brought with him several players from his previous band Sundon Park/Farrs of Luton, whose talents greatly strengthened the Band.

The beginning of the 'nineties' and the run up to the Band's Centenary saw a change of rehearsal venue from The Bedford Trades Club to The Southfields Centre Kempston, and an improvement in the Band's fortunes at contests:

These results are an indication of an improving band with a very competent resident conductor, Mr David Twitchings who, as well as being a good cornet player, is an exceedingly skilled arranger of brass



Michael Statham

**Prizes at Crawley Entertainment Contest
1991 and 1992**

**2ND prize at Aylesbury
playing 'Salute to Youth' (1991).**

**3RD prize at the Area Contest at Watford
playing 'Celebration' (1992).**

**1ST prize at Watford playing
'Diversions on a Bass Theme' (1992).**

**2ND prize at Aylesbury playing
'Diversions on a Bass Theme' (1992).**



Mr Michael Lock conducting B Band at Turvey Fete 24.6.89

band music. It was under his direction that the appropriately entitled cassette 'Centenary' was recorded in September, 1992.

Over the last ten years there has been a 'B' Band, comprising a number of younger players, who have reached a good standard, ably assisted by several adults. This band, as well as grooming players for the senior band, also give concerts in their own right under the enthusiastic direction of Mr Roger Nicholls.

The Town Band are currently confident enough to invite, as necessary, other experienced Musical Directors to instruct and assist them. Mr David Barron has taken the Band at recent contests, and Mr Gordon Higginbottom took the baton at the Christmas Concert and the Milton Keynes Contest.

In earlier times band members had to support their music by an annual subscription (8s 8d in 1902), collections at concerts and carolling plus an annual house to house collection. Membership is still based upon an annual subscription plus weekly 'subs', with funds augmented by a Local Authority grant, concert fees and the proceeds of the 'tuck shop' and various fund raising activities.



BANDSTAND SUMMER 1992

Andrew Nicholls	John Lingings	Alan Litchfield	R obin Medley	Andy Gronkowski	Alan Alexander	Colin Randall	Tony Wiles
		Steve Simpson	Sarah Jones	Darren Wiles			
Malcom Mardle	Norman Jones	Reg Gardner	Michael Statham	David Twitichings	Karen Nutting	Richard Hull	Louis Sherry
		Lesa Jones		Julie Wildman			Ivan Summersgill

Conductors and players come and go but every band is dependent upon those who give their support and enthusiasm, often without being in the 'limelight', and it is to them that sincere thanks must be given, for, without them, 'banding' would be well nigh impossible.

Whilst many bands appear to be in decline and are experiencing dwindling support, The Bedford Town Band has continued over the past 100 years, largely on a self funding basis. It is to be hoped that this will continue and that any future historians will discover that...

...THE BAND PLAYED ON!

Appendix i

CONDUCTORS

W Taylor	1893 - 4, 1899 - 1902
J T Ogden	1894, 1913, 1921 (for contests)
J Holdsworth	1894 - 1898 (for contests)
C H Baker	1902 - 1907
C Johnson	1903 - 4, 1906, 1910 - 11
C Chamberlain	1907 - 8, 1912 - 1923, 1935 - 1939
L Thompson	1908 (professional musician)
C A Vine	1909
G A Mastin	1909 - 1910
R W Chamberlain	1911
F Mortimer	1914, 1922 (for contests)
J Curran	1923 - 1926
A H Warrington	1927 - 1932, 1948
F Robinson	1933 (for contest)
W A Giddings	1933 - 1934, 1945 - 1947
R W Crane	1949 - 1973
W Scholes	1949, 1950, 1951 (for contests)
R Dilley	1973 - 1974
T Hext	1974 - 1988
R Turner	1988 - 1989
M Lock	1990 - 1991
Dr A Morgan	1991
K Prince	1991
D Barron	1992
D Twitchings	1992 - to date

Appendix ii

CONTEST SUCCESSES

Year	Venue	Result	Test Piece
1894	Luton	1st	Elixir of Love
	Luton	1st	Quick Step
	Wolverton	1st	Elixir of Love
1895	Agricultural Hall London	4th	Maritana
	Olney	1st	Torquato
	Wolverton	2nd	Viva Petre
	Leighton Buzzard	1st	Maritana
	Thame	1st	(not known)
1896	Luton	3rd	Gems of Albion
	Agricultural Hall	3rd	(not known)
	Leighton Buzzard	1st	Cinq Mars
	Thame	1st	(not Known)
	Luton	3rd	Gems of Albion
1897	Hitchin	3rd	(not known)
	Leighton Buzzard	1st	Helevy
1898	Bletchley	3rd	La Favorita
1900	Bedford	3rd	(not known)
1903	Biggleswade	3rd	Gems of Welsh Melody
	Langford	1st	Gems of Welsh Melody
1904	Dunstable	2nd	Poliuto
	Langford	1st	(not known)
1907	Langford	1st	(not known)
1920	Northampton	2nd	(not known)
1921	Letchworth	3rd	Emilia
1949	Northants ABBA	1st	Moses in Egypt

Appendix ii

CONTEST SUCCESSES *continued*

Year	Venue	Result	Test Piece
1950	Westminster Hall, London	2nd	Mayday
1960	Newport Pagnell	2nd	(not known)
1961	Newport Pagnell	3rd	(not known)
	Southend	3rd	(not known)
1962	Southend	2nd	(not known)
1963	St Pancras, London	2nd	Four Little Maids
	Southend	2nd	(not known)
1967	Wembley	3rd	A Garland of Classics
1976	Reading	2nd	Peter Schmoll
1977	Watford (Area)	1st	Hungarian Fantasy
	Reading	2nd	Snowdon Fantasy
1978	Watford (Area)	1st	Call of the Sea
	Watford	3rd	Rococo Variations
	Watford	1st	Prometheus Unbound
1979	Watford (Area)	2nd	Introduction and Elegy
1980	Wembley	2nd	Concert Overture
	Watford (Area)	1st	Concert Overture
	Milton Keynes	1st	Mosaic
1981	Folkestone	2nd	Symphony of Marches
1983	Lewisham	2nd	Connotations
1991	Aylesbury	2nd	Salute to Youth
1992	Watford (Area)	3rd	Celebration
	Watford	1st	Diversions on a Bass Theme
	Aylesbury	2nd	Diversions on a Bass Theme

Appendix iii

BROADCASTS

On the 11th May, 1979, a letter was sent to the BBC requesting that the Band be allowed to audition, in the hope that a broadcast might be forthcoming. Mr Giles came from London to listen to the Band at Pilgrim School on the 4th July and with his subsequent approval, arrangements were made for the Band to record a session for the 'Bandstand' programme on 2nd September, in Studio 1 at Maida Vale.

Programme: Concert Prelude
Romanza (trombone solo) Michael Hext
Prometheus Unbound
Coliseum

The recording date was amended to the 16th September, 1979, and was broadcast on Radio 3 on the 29th September, 1979, and again on the 11th October, 1980. The fee was £145.

23rd October, 1980 'Listen to the Band'. This was scheduled for recording on the 8th July, but was postponed because of Industrial Action taken by the Musicians Union. Broadcast on 7th January, 1981, on Radio 2.

Programme: March Old Comrades
Scarborough Fair
Sir Duke
Hogarth's Hoe Down
Galop from Little Suite No 2
Heykens Serenade
The Girl I Left Behind Me

Appendix iii

BROADCASTS *continued*

On 3rd December, 1980, the Band recorded another 'Bandstand' programme at Maida Vale which was broadcast on 21st March, 1981.

Programme: Intrada from Partita
Culloden Moor
Resurgam
Fee £145

On 16th June, 1981, the Band recorded a programme for 'Among Your Souvenirs' which was broadcast on 19th August, and 30th September, 1981.

Programme: Blaze Away
Semper Fidelis
Love's Old Sweet Song
The Boulevardier
The Grenadiers
The March of the Bowman
Fee £240

29th March, 1982, 'Among Your Souvenirs'. Recorded at the Hippodrome, Golders Green. Broadcast 12th May, 1982.

Programme: Cossack Patrol
Liberty Bell
March Lorraine
Early One Morning
Greensleeves
The Londonderry Air
Il Bacio
Imperial Echoes
Fee £140

Appendix iii

BROADCASTS *continued*

13th April, 1983, 'Listen to the Band'. Recorded at the Hippodrome, Golders Green. Broadcast 29th June, 1983, on Radio 2.

Programme: Viscount Nelson
Trail Blaze
Things to Come
Rhythm of Life
May Dance
The Shadow of Your Smile (trombone solo Stephen Bainbridge)
Pineapple Poll
Marching through Georgia

Fee 210

5th November, 1986, Charlie Chesters' 'Listen to the Band'. Broadcast on Radio 2.

Programme: Boccaccio March
Caller Herring
The Hustle
Playa del Ray
Our Boys will Shine Tonight
Opus 13 Beethoven
Cortege form Milada
Air from Suite in D
Marching the Blues
Hey Mr Music Man