

the Brass Band BRIDGE



bridge: a link, a tie, a connection, an alliance, to band together, to unify, a bond

ISSUE 6, NOVEMBER 1981

OUR THANKS ARE SENT TO... Joel Whitten of Moore, Oklahoma and Ron Foster of Washington, D.C. for their financial contributions sent to *The Bridge*. We sincerely appreciate the support of so many readers and in turn promise to keep "building bridges."

YAMAHA MUSICAL PRODUCTS... of Grand Rapids, Michigan has assumed the mailing and printing costs of issues 5, 6, 7, and 8 of this newsletter. This generous offer permits us to gather information about British brass activity as we find it throughout the United States and Canada. We sincerely appreciate the wonderful support of this fine company and wish to publicly denote this fact. We hope that our readers will supply pictures and news items so that everyone will know of the British brass band activities as they happen. The next two *Bridge* deadlines are:

December 31 for Issue 7
March 31 for Issue 8

We sincerely hope that one and all will mark those dates on your calendar and send your concert date, the music performed including the composer and arranger, the kinds of events for which your band performed, the names of your officers, fund raising ideas, the organizing structure of your band, and all other such information. We sincerely believe the readers of this newsletter will find information of this nature most readable and useful.

THE FIFTH ANNUAL BRITISH BRASS BAND JUBILEE... will be held on the campus of North Carolina State University on Saturday, April 24, 1982. Although, as this is being written, the Steering Committee has not made final decisions regarding format and content of this annual event, the structure will probably be maintained. That is, there will be several individual bands to perform by themselves followed by a grand finale of a massed band performing several selections. The North and South

Carolina Divisional Salvation Army Band is always invited to participate in this event. Along with that band will be several of the other British brass bands. Anyone interested in more information about this event, or any band interested in performing, is requested to contact the writer of this newsletter. We will be pleased to furnish you with additional information.

WILL YOU HELP PROMOTE... British brass bands in the United States?? If so, you will be interested to learn that the writer of this newsletter has designed a sticker suitable for use on automobiles, windows or bumpers, at home, or in the office. This is an attractive red, white and blue vinyl sticker that measures 15" long by 2 3/4" high. Although not shown in color, a sample of this sticker is found printed at the bottom of the middle two pages of this newsletter. These are for sale and cost 75¢ each, including postage. Anyone interested in this type of promotion should contact the writer of this newsletter and he will be happy to supply your needs. Besides...he would not like to eat 400 of these stickers. PLEASE????

FROM NEW ZEALAND... word has been received from Ernie Omrod concerning the activities of that country's brass band association. Ernie, you might remember, was the administrator and organizer of last year's National Band of New Zealand tour. Ernie informs this writer that John Harrison will arrange the National Band tour which is to take place in 1985. Those interested in having this outstanding brass band appear in your area should contact John, right away. His address is P.O. Box 13211, Armagh, Christchurch, New Zealand. We are certain that John will be please to hear from you and would like to have an expression of interest about the National Band appearing in various places throughout the United States and Canada.

SCENES FROM THE SOUNDING BRASS COURSE AT MARLBOROUGH, ENGLAND.



Edward Gregson rehearses the euphoniums, baritone and trombones.



A nice picture of the main part of the campus as the band puts the final touches to the first week's program.

AN AMERICAN VIEW OF MARLBOROUGH'S SOUNDING BRASS COURSE

By Dr. Douglas Smith

We Americans pride ourselves on being goal-oriented—motivated by the lure of success. One area in which our success has floundered, however is that of instrumental music-making by adults. Some of our adults do play, mind you, but more often than not they only play when they get paid for it! Playing strictly for fun is an activity which adults in the US seem to avoid in droves.

Not too many years ago, we began receiving faint trans-Atlantic rumours about adult brass bands in England, and as the rumours grew in both number and intensity several of us proposed to discover from the inside what makes this highly successful British phenomenon work. Professor Perry Watson of the North Carolina State University faculty visited in 1978, met the people who were involved in the movement, and began laying the ground work for an international workshop realized at Marlborough, England.

Robert Peel of the Marlborough College faculty served as host, and leaders for the individual weeks were Edward Gregson and Roy Newsome. Roy's experience both with the Black Dyke Mills Band and now the Besses o'th' Barn affords him an unusually keen perspective into the world of brass bands.

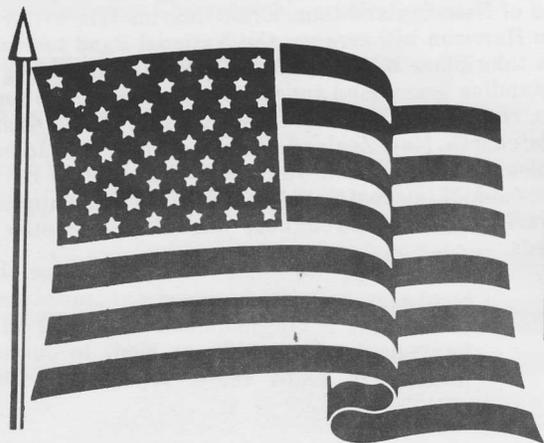
Boosey & Hawkes graciously provided new instruments for the Americans to play, without which the workshop would not have been nearly so effective. Of all the unique characteristics of British-style brass bands, we found that the playing qualities of these instruments required of us a significant, immediate conceptual change. We were familiar with baritones, euphoniums, tubas (at least BBb), and even flugel horns: trombones, we found, might just as

easily be Conn or Bach as Boosey, but the agile Eb horns and the dark, veiled cornets transformed our tonal thinking with the first flick of the baton. It did help us bridge the nationalistic chasm to hear both Ray Farr and James Watson play American-made trumpets in their respective clinics, but we refused to be distracted by such reminders of home. We wanted to know first-hand what it felt like to be part of an authentic British brass band.

Incidentally, one suggestion for future Sounding Brass workshops concerned having a true, amateur cornet soloist play for a session. The organizers somewhat apologetically warned that too often the volunteer soloist would not be able to explain what he did, but rather would be able to play innocently, technically, and beautifully out of the richness of his experience.

Indeed! How marvellous! Such a person may not have appealed to the English participants: he or she can perhaps be found in any number of places close by. For the Americans, however, it would have come as a precious revelation. We found the playing of the English professionals impressive, but amazingly familiar, right down to their instruments and the pieces they played. Also, amid clinics presented wittily and authoritatively, we were confronted with ideas which had been seriously questioned or completely invalidated by scholarly research in our own institutions. In short, we knew plenty about the functioning of the diaphragm and the articulation of baroque crotchets: what we wanted most was to hear a real, live amateur play Arban's *Carnival of Venice* 20 years after his high school graduation. That would have super.

We did get to see and hear some fine examples of the amateur brass world. In fact the very first night of registration the Kennet Vale Band played a concert and sacrificially allowed us 'aliens' to read the music in public



BRIT BRASS E

Sounds

with our brand new Boosey Sovereign instruments. We also visited a rehearsal of the magnificent National Youth Brass Band conducted by James Scott, yet while glorying in the demonstrated abilities of these children, we were able to reflect upon similar achievements by all-state children's groups in our own country.

The real thrill of our two-week workshop, at least for me, was to observe and sit in on a rehearsal of the Aldbourn Band, a recently-crowned 'West of England Champion' which included in its membership two 13-year-old and two retirees who have played with the same band a combined total of 111 years...and are still playing! The rehearsal we attended, coincidentally, was the first for the bands on the Borgeois *Blitz*, this year's test-piece for the October national finals in Albert Hall. Our advanced degrees were blended amazingly well with the sounds of a painter, an electronics engineer, a blacksmith, a coach driver, a farmer, and 20 odd other walks of life. Maurice Richens of the Kennet Vale Band has shared a quote hours earlier which kept echoing in my mind as I looked around the simple rehearsal hall: "I drive a truck all day long, and when I sit down to play with this band it is sheer pleasure!" For all these players it obviously was!

To match the success of Aldbourne (or Kennet Vale, or Beses, Grimethorpe, or Black Dyke) we Americans may have trouble sure enough trying to compress more than a century of tradition into a few years, but we all came away from Marlborough determining to challenge our students toward a life of joyous musical expression. If the course, or any part thereof, did that for us, it was indeed the experience of a lifetime.

Note: One Canadian, eight other Americans, and this writer attended the Sounding Brass course at Marlborough, England this past summer. This two week offering was the culmination of two year's work by this writer and Roy Newsome of the United Kingdom. In addition to having day-long brass band rehearsals and activities for each five day week, special guests were scheduled to visit and lecture, demonstrate, and meet with the Sounding Brass participants. In addition to the ten of us from this side of the Atlantic, the remaining participants all came from the British Isles.

Those of us attending were Glenn Kelly from Wenatchee, Washington; Ron Phillips from Phoenix, Arizona; Brian Stride from Vancouver, British Columbia; Doug Smith from Louisville, Kentucky; Deborah and Elizabeth Colagiuri (sisters) from Upper Montclair, New Jersey; Frank Brister from Big Rapids, Michigan; John Kincaid from Gunnison, Colorado; Dick Tolley from Lubbock Texas, and this writer. In addition, four wives and one son accompanied us to attend this most interesting offering, of courses. There were a total of 67 different kinds of courses, from .22 rifle shooting to

computer operations, and from trout fishing to French, making this a very unique family oriented type of school.

The first week's guest lecturers to the Sounding Brass Course included John Ridgeon, Don Lusher, Ray Farr, and Trevor Austin. The second week's visitors included Gordon Langford, Harold Nash, James Watson, Harry Mortimer, Peter Wilson, Denzil Stephens, Tom Beckingham, and Trevor Austin. The preceding article was written by Doug Smith for The British Bandsman. We wish to express our appreciation to The Bandsman for the privilege of reprinting Doug's comments and observations.

The writer of this newsletter has been asked by the administration of Marlborough College to act as a contact for anyone in the United States and Canada interested to know more about their unusual offering of courses next summer. We shall be sending out printed brochures from Marlborough sometime the beginning of 1982. Anyone desiring additional information should contact the writer of this newsletter.

TO CONTINUE OUR LISTING OF BRASS BANDS...carried in a Brass Band Registry this writer is developing, please add:

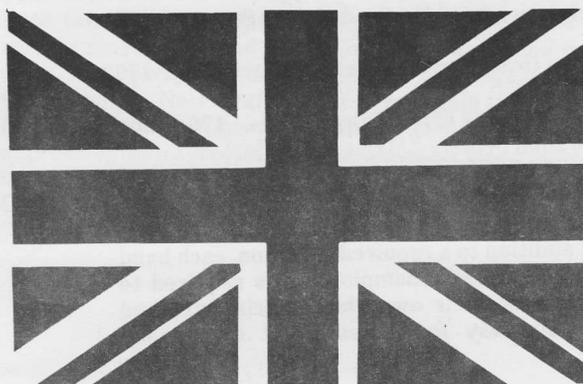
Wilson Community British Brass Band, Inc.
c/o Andrew Preston
Music Department
Atlantic Christian College
Wilson, N.C. 27893

The University of Illinois Brass Band
c/o James E. Curnow
Harding Band Building
1103 South Sixth Street
Champaign, Illinois 61820

The Town of Wilson, North Carolina was one location visited by Peter Wilson and Earle Braunhardt as a result of the British Brass Band Showcase held last March at North Carolina State University. Andy Preston has always been interested in British brass bands. These two facts have led to the establishment of the Wilson Community Brass Band, Inc. Andy informs this writer,..."we are almost in the position of ordering our instruments as everything has been accomplished regarding our tax exempt status, our organizational structure, and almost all of our financial backing. We hope to have the instruments in hand sometime this Fall." Great news for the British brass band movement!! We are delighted to learn of this activity and shall be pleased to keep the readers of *The Bridge* informed of their progress.

Jim Curnow wrote to say ..."we just finished our third

**BRITISH
BRASS BANDS ?**
Ideal !!!



rehearsal last night and it is going to be an **excellent** group. We are using the standard brass band instrumentation which includes the Eb horns, two English-bore baritones, the Eb Soprano cornet-all Yamaha- with a total membership of 27 players. The band is working on *Connotations* (Gregson), *Procession of the Nobles* (Rimsky-Korsakov/Curnow), *La Gazza Ladra* (Rossini/Wright), *March Bravura* (Himes), *Crown Imperial* (Walton/Wright), *Themes from the Italian Symphony* (Mendelssohn/Goffin), *Celebrations* (Condon), *Nimrod* (Elgar/Goffin) *The Last Spring* (Greig/Steadman-Allen) for a concert on November 15." (Writer of this newsletter...Whew!!)

"Since the Illinois Bands (Dr. Harry Begian, Director of Bands) have continued to carry on the tradition of using cornets for concert bands, our students have already developed a sense of a cornet playing concept, so the brass band sonority is quickly taking place." What a pleasure it is to be able to relay this information on to the readers of this newsletter. We eagerly look forward to learning of this brass band's activities and accomplishments and reporting to you.

FROM THE PAGES OF THE BRITISH BANDSMAN...

we learn that this years British Open Championship was the last to be held at Belle Vue's Kings Hall in Manchester, England. This venue was the "grand old lady" of brass band contesting and many fond memories are attached to the location and event. In 128 years of contesting, there must have been millions of notes played and judged. Next year's Open Contest will be held in Manchester's Free Trade Hall. The result of the year's event were as follows:

- City of Coventry (Major Arthur Kenney) 196 points
- Leyland Vehicles (Richard Evans) 195 points
- Fodens Motor Works (Howard Snell) 194 points
- Hammonds Sauce Works (Geoffrey Witham) 193 points
- Grimethorpe Colliery (Ray Farr) 192 points
- Besses o'th' Barn (Roy Newsome) 191 points

The required selection was *Variations on a Ninth* by Gilbert Vinter.

From the Royal Albert Hall in London, the National Contest results were as follows:

- Black Dyke Mills (Major Peter Parkes) 190 points
- Brighouse and Rastrick (Derek Broadbent) 188 points
- Whitburn Burgh (Geoffrey Whitham) 187 points
- Yorkshire Imperial (John Pryce-Jones) 186 points
- Sun Life Stanshawe (Christopher Adey) 185 points
- Besses o'th' Barn (Roy Newsome) 183 points

The required selction was *Blitz* by Derek Bourgeois.

And finally, the European Championship results were as follows:

- Brighouse and Rastrick from England (James Scott) . . . 177 points
- Manger Musikklag from Norway (Michael Antrobus) . . 176 points
- De Waldsang from Holland (Tjeerd Brouwer) . . . 170 points
- Whitburn Burgh from Scotland(Major Peter Parkes) . . 167 points

The required selection was *Caliban* by Arthur Butterworth. In addition to a required selection, each band competing in the European Championship is required to perform a selection of their own choice. Brighouse and Rastrick played *Fantasy for Brass Band* by Arnold,

Manger Musikklag played *Connotations* by Gregson, De Waldsang performed *Triumphant Rhapsody* by Vinter, and Whitburn Burgh selected Ball's *Journey Into Freedom*.

THE BANDSMAN went on to report..."the challenge was thrown out by B & H Band Festivals boss Bill Martin to bands in Canada, USA, New Zealand and Japan to form British-style brass bands and enter a world contest within the next few years fired everyone with a sense of purpose."

Highland British Brass Band
 Fayetteville, N.C.
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 and
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 Fairmont N.C. 28340
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PERMIT US THIS PERSONAL COMMENT....regarding an observation or two made by some folks attending the Sounding Brass course in Marlborough, England last summer. During the two week program, we formed a British brass band and rehearsed music of varying kinds and difficulties. For some, it was the first time they had actually performed in a British brass band and also it was the first time they had performed on cornets in a long while. The end result being that we were all of the opinion that "the equipment is important!" By that, it is meant to say that conical bore instruments are necessary to achieve the typical British brass band sound. This would mean also that trumpet players must learn to develop a cornet approach to the cornet and not sound like a short model version of a trumpet. Coupled with this, was the observation that the upright tenor horns are necessary in order to maintain the integrity of a complete family of saxhorns. It was apparent from this experience that those unfamiliar with the refined and unique qualities of a British brass band recognized the importance of the all conical bore sound (excepting the trombones, of course) and found that it was more beneficial to the overall results if the proper equipment was used. Those of us familiar with the desired quality of sound have recognized this need for some time. All of this points to the fact that in some cases substitutions are made for the traditional instruments (for example, French horns for tenor horns, and trumpets for cornets) with the results of such substitutions doing little to enhance the overall quality and uniqueness of a British brass band. Hopefully, we can have a concentrated effort to see that the proper instrumentation is utilized when we present ourselves as being part of a world wide British brass band movement. **UNTIL NEXT TIME...**that's *fine* for now. Let's hear from you!

J. Perry Watson
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 Raleigh, N.C. 27650