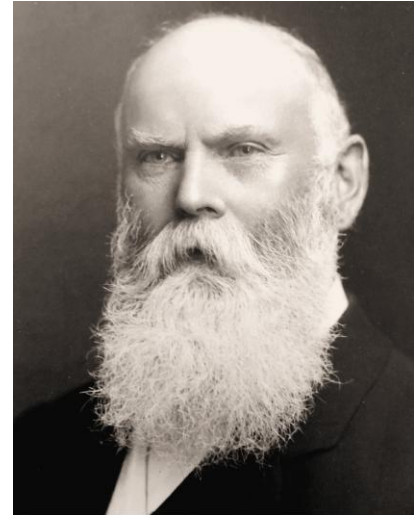


Earle, Bourne & Co. Brass Band – a short-lived band from a Birmingham tube works.

Gavin Holman, 20 April 2026

Born in 1844 in Aston, Birmingham, John William Earle trained in the factory of Messrs. Potts and Cox, who were tube manufacturers having works in Moors Row. Moving to a managerial capacity in the tube works of Messrs. Jones and Williams, he there became associated with George Bourne. At this time, in the early 1870s, the metallic bedstead trade and other industrial requirements increased the demand for drawn tubes and rolled metals. Together Earle and Bourne formed a new company to capitalise on this growing market, starting with tubing for bedstead and chandeliers. Over time, patents were acquired and the business expanded and became known for their seamless brass and copper tubes, copper sheets and metal rolling of all kinds, as well as for the rolling of German silver. Their premises were enlarged and moved twice to larger locations. By 1908 the firm had probably the largest mills in the country for the rolling of brass and copper; and the Birmingham works give employment over six hundred people.



John Earle, c. 1910

The company even had its own fleet of barges to transport their goods and raw materials.



Following the death of George Bourne in 1898, John's two sons, John William and Joseph took a greater role in the management of the company.

John Earle took a keen interest in the welfare of his workpeople, establishing a sick and dividend society, an ambulance corps and, in May 1905, a brass band, which soon became a favourite at concerts in the Birmingham parks. Fond of music himself, John Earle encouraged the men to exploit any musical abilities lurking in their midst, and the smart uniform and musical accomplishments of the firm's bandsmen were greatly appreciated by Birmingham audiences.



Earl, Bourne & Co. Brass Band (John Earle, centre), c. 1910

The Earle Bourne & Co. Brass Band made its first known public appearance as part of the wide range of park concerts arranged in Birmingham, on Saturday 16th June 1906 in Queen's Park.

Most of its subsequent appearances over the next six years would be at similar park concerts:

Saturday 30 June 1906 – Cannon Hill Park

Saturday 18 August 1906 – Queen's Park

Saturday 8 September 1906 – Lightwoods Park

Saturday 15 September 1906 – Calthorpe Park

Sunday 23 September 1906 – the band took part in the West Birmingham and District Friendly Societies' church parade, together with the Handsworth Council Employees Brass Band and the G.W.R. Military Band.

Saturday 27 April 1907 – Victoria Park

Saturday 4 May 1907 – Calthorpe Park

Saturday 11 May 1907 – Calthorpe Park

Saturday 18 May 1907 – Warley Park

Sunday 19 May 1907 – Nechells Recreation Grounds

Monday 27 May 1907 – St Mark's Recreation Ground

Sunday 16 June 1907 – Burbury Park

Sunday 7 July 1907 – Queen's Park

Sunday 28 July 1907 – Highgate Park

Sunday 11 August 1907 – Warley Park
 Saturday 17 August 1907 – Cannon Hill Park
 Saturday 14 September 1907 – Lightwoods Park
 Saturday 30 November 1907 – the band held its third annual dinner, at the Wagon & Horses, Summer Row, at which 25 shillings was collected to send to the Birmingham ‘Christmas Tree Fund’ for poor children.
 Saturday 2 May 1908 – Queen’s Park
 Sunday 10 May 1908 – Calthorpe Park
 Sunday 17 May 1908 – Burbury Park
 Saturday 23 May 1908 – Warley Park
 Saturday 30 May 1908 – Queen’s Park
 Saturday 6 June 1908 – Lightwoods Park
 Wednesday 10 June 1908 – the band took part in the Birmingham Sunday School Gala Day, leading the first parade of scholars, halting by the Post Office and playing music, while their various contingents filed past them to their allotted places. The band then moved to Summerfield Park where it, together with the Springfield Brass Band, entertained the crowds and children.
 Saturday 27 June 1908 – Highgate Park
 Saturday 11 July 1908 – Balsall Heath Park
 Saturday 18 July 1908 – Cannon Hill Park
 Saturday 25 July 1908 – Aston Park
 Sunday 16 August 1908 – Ward End Park
 Sunday 30 August 1908 – Lightwoods Park
 Sunday 6 September 1908 – Warley Park

During the week of 26 October 1908, the Coventry Empire Theatre held a brass band contest, with two bands performing each evening, and the grand final on the Saturday evening. The event was to celebrate the second anniversary of the Theatre. The adjudicators were Alderman A. Drinkwater, F.W. Humberstone, Fred Hanson, and Bandmaster Scott. The individual heats were:

Monday 26 October: Rugby Town Band + Bedworth Town Band

Tuesday 27 October: Coventry Silver Band + Nuneaton Brass Band

Wednesday 28 October: Rugby Steam Shed Silver Band + Long Buckby Temperance Band

Thursday 29 October: Earle Bourne & Co.’s Brass Band + Royal Spa Prize Band (Leamington)

Friday 30 October: Cubbington Excelsior Brass Band + Walsgrave Temperance Band

The bands were divided into A and B divisions, and three from each took part in the final on Saturday 31 October. The final competitors and results were:

Class A – 1st prize, £20, Rugby Steam Shed; 2nd prize, £10, Earle Bourne & Co.’s; 3rd prize, £5, Leamington Spa.

Class B – 1st prize, £10, Long Buckby Temperance; 2nd prize, £5, Bedworth Town; 3rd prize, £3, Coventry Silver.

Each conductor also received a silver-mounted baton.

The selections chosen by each band were: Rugby - *“Reminiscences of Herold”*; Earle Bourne - *“Bohemian Girl”*; Leamington - *“Lucrezia Borgia”*; Long Buckby - *“The Messenger Boy”*; Bedworth - *“The Daughter of the Regiment”*; and Coventry Silver - *“Faust”*.

The remarks on Earle Bourne's performance were:

The brass band of Earle Bourne and Co., Ltd., Birmingham, appeared first, and struck up the familiar overture to the "*Bohemian Girl*" (Balfe), a favourite piece for showing off the abilities of a pure brass combination. The band impressed one at once by its crispness and precision of their attack - really a very fine attack. The soprano cornet was a little uncertain, and the solo cornet in the "I dreamt that I dwelt" air was uneven in the tone production. The foundation of the band was excellent, and the tone throughout of a good robust quality. The phrasing of the solos was a weak point, breath taken in the wrong places. Solo cornet passage fluently executed in the repetition of the gypsies' chorus, and nice saxhorn tone produced from the middle. The ensemble playing, was the best feature, the faults lying chiefly in the solo work, where a more level tone was required, and phrasing to correspond with the words of the songs. Considering that the hand has been in existence only 3½ years its performance was extremely creditable.¹

Mr. Scott says: The, Earl, Bourne and Co. Band took second prize. Their selection was "*The Bohemian Girl*" overture. The opening movements of the overture were well played, the attack being nice and crisp and decided. The solo cornet rendered the air of the second movement very artistically, the harmony was well balanced and nicely in tune, the crescendo was well portrayed, bringing out the double forte on the first beat of the allegro movement, all the marks of this movement being well observed. The trombones, baritones, euphonium, and basses were slightly out of hand in the double forte unison passages, being in front of the conductor's beating, no doubt due to a little excitement. The playing of the solo cornet in the legato passages was most artistically rendered; the soprano and horn also played their melody very nicely. The last movement was splendidly done, being well up to time and showed off the effects of a good brass band. Taken all through it was a most excellent performance. The band has only been in existence slightly over three years, and this was their first appearance in a brass band contest. With a little more experience and tuition they have a very bright future. Of course this piece does not bring out the qualities the same as the selection played by the Rugby Steam Shed Band, which was much more difficult.²

After the excitement of the band contest, the Earle Bourne Band resumed their park concerts in 1909.

Sunday 16 May 1909 – Aston Park
Sunday 23 May 1909 – Warley Park
Saturday 29 May 1909 – Aston Park
Sunday 30 May 1909 – Burbury Park
Wednesday 16 June 1909 – Warley Park
Saturday 26 June 1909 – Cannon Hill Park
Sunday 4 July 1909 – Victoria Park
Wednesday 7 July 1909 – Warley Park
Saturday 21 August 1909 – Aston Park
Sunday 5 September 1909 – Aston Park
Sunday 26 September 1909 – Warley Park
Saturday 11 June 1910 – Queen's Park
Sunday 11 June 1911 – Warley Park
Saturday 24 June 1911 – Victoria Park

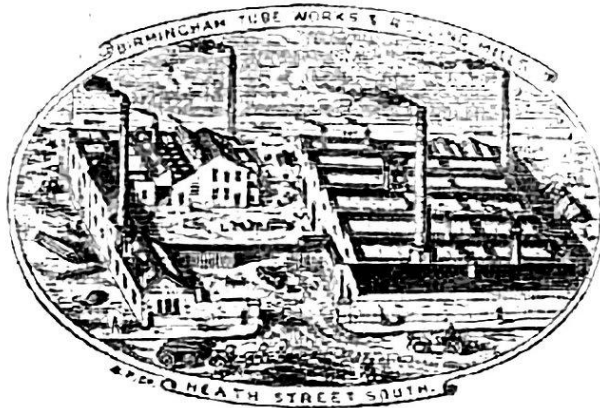
¹ Coventry Evening Telegraph, 2 November 1908

² Coventry Times, 4 November 1908

Sunday 25 June 1911 – Calthorpe Park
 Sunday 30 June 1912 – Walmer Recreation Ground
 Sunday 18 August 1912 – Handsworth Park

The band seems to have faded from view from this time – why, is not known, it may have been due to the failing health of John Earle (who was to die in 1914), or other reasons. Nevertheless, it made a small but significant musical contribution to the life of Birmingham for six years.

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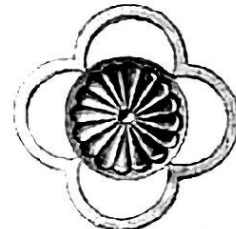


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