

What did the Champions look like? – 50 years of National Brass Band Champions

Gavin Holman, May 2020

Pictures of brass bands had been made since the early days of photography, with most being formal staged portraits of the band in formed rows. There were some more casual pictures taken as well as some of the bands “in action” at various events. The advent of the picture postcard and its growth in popularity during the 1890’s and early 1900’s led to many bands not only having their photograph taken to commemorate a particular event (usually a contest win), but also to have postcards produced which could be sold or given away as promotional or souvenir items.

The National Brass Band Championships of Great Britain were established in 1900 and have been running continuously since then apart from breaks for the two World Wars (1914-1919) and (1939-1944). So, it was natural, when a band became National Champions, for it to sit for a formal, celebratory, portrait which, in many cases found its way onto postcards, and in a few others as a photographic print in the band room.

The *Thousand Guineas Trophy*, shown here, was first awarded to the National Brass Band Champions in 1900, having originally been created as the *Crystal Palace Challenge Trophy* in 1872 for choral competitions. After the destruction of the Crystal Palace in 1936, the trophy was passed on to London County Council and never again used as a contest trophy. It now resides in the Welsh Folk Museum at St Fagan's, Cardiff.



The magnificent *Thousand Guineas Trophy* was replaced, in 1945, by the more traditional *Daily Herald National Brass Band Championships Trophy*, but nonetheless a splendid cup to take back to the band room. It was, like its predecessor, proudly featured in formal band photographs taken of the Champions each year, and also was a much more suitable receptacle to fill with beer or champagne to celebrate!

The following pictures are all that I could find of the first 50 years of the National Brass Band Champions. In some cases, a relevant, dated photo could not be identified, and I hope that can be remedied in the future at some point.

1900 – Denton Old Original Band

This first contest, held at the Crystal Palace, was the brainchild of Henry Iles, following a successful massed bands concert in January 1900 at the Royal Albert Hall, with Sir Arthur Sullivan, to raise funds for the Daily Mail War Fund. This first event was limited to three sections, the Championship being adjudicated by four judges - Carl Kiefert, C. W. Pearce, J. W. Beswick, and Joseph Owen Shepherd, with the test piece being *Gems from Sullivan's Operas No. 1* (arranged by James Ord Hume). Denton Original were drawn number 8 out of 14, and were conducted to victory by Alexander Owen – their resident bandmaster being John Locker.



1901 – Lee Mount Band

Lee Mount were conducted by William Swingler, and were drawn number 3 in a field of 27, playing the test piece *Gems from Sullivan's Operas No. 3* (arranged by James Ord Hume), and were awarded 127 points. The judges were Carl Kiefert, E.H. Turpin, and J. Mackenzie Rogan.



1902 – Black Dyke Mills Band

Black Dyke were conducted by John Gladney jnr. playing the test piece *Hiawatha* by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (arranged by Charles Godfrey). They were drawn number 18 of 20 and were awarded 140 points by the judges George Seddon and Richard Stead.



1903 – Besses o' th' Barn Band

Besses were conducted by Alexander Owen playing the test piece *Die Meistersinger* by Richard Strauss (arranged by Shipley Douglas). They were drawn number 7 of 18 and were awarded 135 points by the judges George Seddon and Joseph Owen Shepherd.



1904 – Hebburn Colliery Band

Hebburn were conducted by Angus Holden playing the test piece *Mendelssohn's Works* (arranged by Charles Godfrey). They were drawn number 15 of 23 and the judges were Jesse Manley, Charles Godfrey, and Walter Reynolds.



1905 – Irwell Springs Band

Irwell Springs Band, from Bacup, were conducted by William Rimmer playing the test piece *Roland à Ronceveaux* by August Mermet (arranged by Renault). They were drawn number 17 of 24 and the judges were Walter Reynolds, W.M. Short, and James Ord Hume.



A. Shepherd, Esq., President.

W. Rimmer, Esq., Conductor.

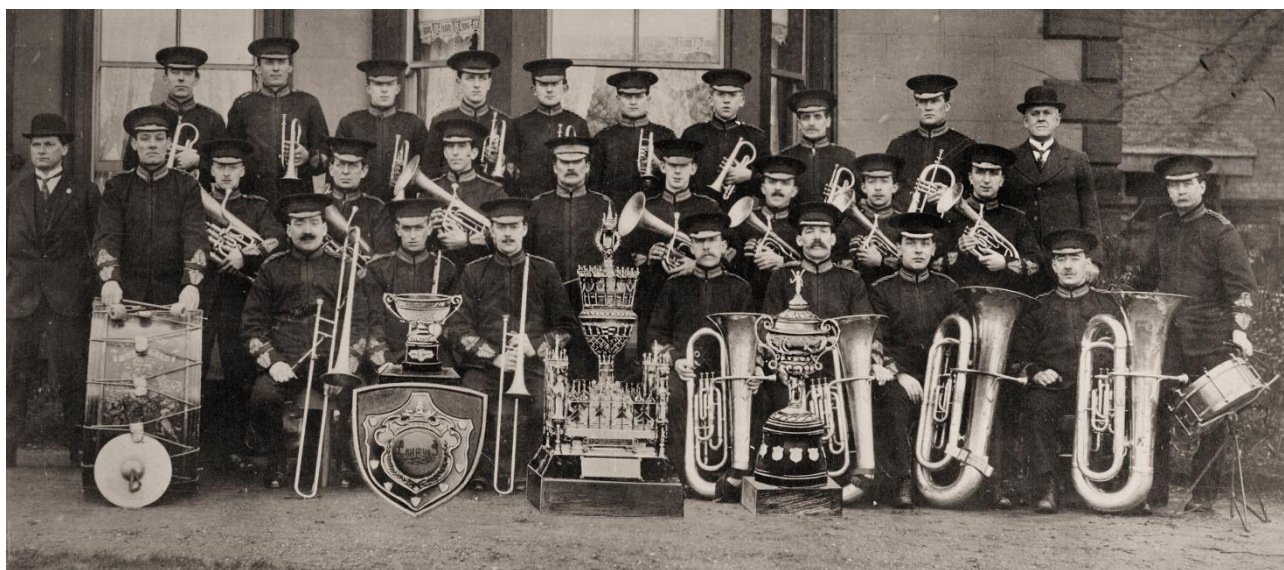
1906 – Wingates Temperance Band

Wingates were conducted by William Rimmer playing the test piece *Gems of Chopin* (arranged by W.M. Short). They were drawn number 11 of 22 and the judges were Tom Morgan, Charles Godfrey, and W.M. Short.



1907 – Wingates Temperance Band

For their second consecutive win, Wingates were again conducted by William Rimmer, playing the test piece *Gems of Schumann* (arranged by W.M. Short). They were drawn number 11 of 18 and were awarded 250 points by the judges Richard Stead, Charles Godfrey, and Walter Reynolds.



1908 – Irwell Springs Band

Irwell Springs were again conducted by William Rimmer, playing the test piece *Rienzi* by Robert Wagner (arranged by Sam Cope). They were drawn number 2 of 16, and the judges were James Ord Hume, Charles Godfrey, and Walter Reynolds.



IRWELL SPRINGS BAND, Crystal Palace and New Brighton Winners, 1908

1909 – Shaw Brass Band

Shaw Brass Band were conducted by William Rimmer, playing the test piece *Der Fliegende Holländer* by Robert Wagner (arranged by Charles Godfrey). They were drawn number 16 of 18, and the judges were James Ord Hume, Charles Godfrey, and James Brier.



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SHAW PRIZE BRASS BAND.
WINNERS OF THE CRYSTAL PALACE 1000 GUINEA TROPHY

1910 – Fodens Motor Works Band

Fodens Band were conducted by William Halliwell, playing the test piece *Gems of Schubert* (arranged by William Rimmer). They were drawn number 2 of 15, and the judges were James Ord Hume, Richard Stead, and J.W. Beswick.



1911 – Perfection Soap Works Band

Perfection Soap Works Band, from Warrington, were conducted by William Halliwell, playing the test piece *Les Huguenots*, by Giacomo Meyerbeer (arranged by William Rimmer). They were drawn number 15 of 23, and the judges were James Ord Hume, James Brier, and Walter Reynolds.



1912 – St Hilda Colliery Band

St Hilda Band, from South Shields, were conducted by William Halliwell, playing the test piece *William Tell*, by Gioachino Rossini (arranged by William Rimmer). They were drawn number 18 of 22, and the judges were James Ord Hume, Charles Godfrey, and George Mercer.



1913 – Irwell Springs Band

Irwell Springs were conducted by William Halliwell, playing the test piece *Labour and Love*, by Percy Fletcher. They were drawn number 5 of 22, and the judges were James Ord Hume, Percy Fletcher, and Manuel Bilton.



1920 – St Hilda Colliery Band

St Hilda were conducted by William Halliwell, playing the test piece *Coriolanus*, by Cyril Jenkins. They were drawn number 10 of 18, and the judges were Cyril Jenkins, Tom Eastwood, and Walter Reynolds.

1921 – St Hilda Colliery Band

St Hilda were conducted by William Halliwell, playing the test piece *Life Divine*, by Cyril Jenkins. They were drawn number 9 of 18, and the judges were Cyril Jenkins, John Carter, and Hubert Bath.



1922 – Horwich R.M.I. Band

Horwich Band were conducted by J.A. Greenwood, playing the test piece *Freedom*, by Hubert Bath. They were drawn number 8 of 14, and the judges were Hubert Bath, Manuel Bilton, and Charles Hoby.



1923 – Luton Red Cross Band

Luton Band were conducted by William Halliwell, playing the test piece *Oliver Cromwell*, by Henry Geehl. They were drawn number 6 of 16, and the judges were William Havergal Brian, Henry Geehl, and Manuel Bilton.



LUTON RED CROSS PRIZE BAND

Champions of England, 1923, and Holders of The Crystal Palace One Thousand Guinea Trophy
Champions of the South of England, 1900 to 1923

1924 – St Hilda Colliery Band

St Hilda were conducted by William Halliwell, playing the test piece *On the Cornish Coast*, by Henry Geehl. They were drawn number 16 of 17, and the judges were Henry Geehl and John Carter.



1925 – Marsden Colliery Band

Marsden Colliery Band, from South Shields, were conducted by J.A. Greenwood, playing the test piece *Joan of Arc*, by Denis Wright. They were drawn number 4 of 16, and the judges were Charles Hoby and Denis Wright.



1926 – St Hilda Colliery Band

St Hilda, were conducted by William Halliwell, playing the test piece *An Epic Symphony*, by Percy Fletcher. They were drawn number 7 of 14, and the judges were James Brier and Hubert Bath.



1927 – Carlisle St Stephen Band

Carlisle St Stephen Band were conducted by William Lowes, playing the test piece *The White Rider*, by Denis Wright. They were drawn number 8 of 16, and the judges were Edward Dunn and Henry Geehl.

1928 – Black Dyke Mills Band

Black Dyke were conducted by William Halliwell, playing the test piece *A Moorside Suite*, by Gustav Holst. They were drawn number 4 of 15, and the judges were Cyril Jenkins, Henry Geehl, and Granville Bantock.



1929 – Carlisle St Stephen Band

Carlisle St Stephen Band were conducted by William Lowes, playing the test piece *Victory*, by Cyril Jenkins. They were drawn number 10 of 18, and the judges were Cyril Jenkins, Thomas Keighley, and William Havergal Brian.



1930 – Fodens Motor Works Band

Fodens were conducted by Fred Mortimer, playing the test piece *The Severn Suite*, by Edward Elgar. They were drawn number 14 of 16, and the judges were Henry Geehl, T.J. Rees, and George Nicholls.



1931 – Wingates Temperance Band

Wingates, from Westhoughton, were conducted by Harold Moss, playing the test piece *Honour and Glory*, by Hubert Bath. They were drawn number 22 of 24, and the judges were Hubert Bath, Charles Ward, and George Mercer.



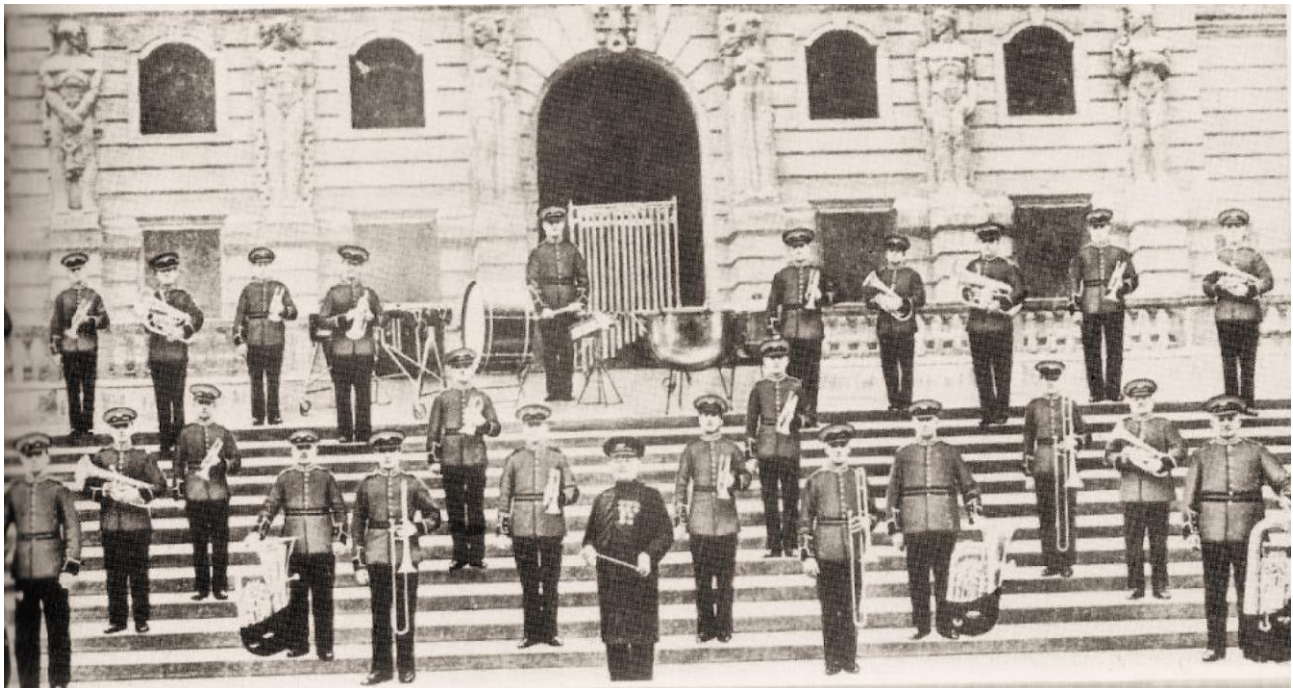
1932 – Fodens Motor Works Band

Fodens Band were conducted by Fred Mortimer, playing the test piece *A Downland Suite*, by John Ireland. They were drawn number 4 of 23, and the judges were James Brier, Henry Geehl, and Herbert Bennett.



1933 – Fodens Motor Works Band

Fodens Band were conducted by Fred Mortimer, playing the test piece *Prometheus Unbound*, by Granville Bantock. They were drawn number 23 of 23, and the judges were James Brier, Harold Hind, and Herbert Bennett.



1934 – Fodens Motor Works Band

Fodens Band were conducted by Fred Mortimer, playing the test piece *Comedy Overture*, by John Ireland. They were drawn number 10 of 23, and the judges were Frank Wright, Henry Geehl, and Walter Reynolds.



1935 – Munn & Feltons Band

Munn & Feltons were conducted by William Halliwell, playing the test piece *Pride of Race*, by Kenneth Wright. They were drawn number 10 of 23, and the judges were Frank Wright and James Brier.



1936 – Fodens Motor Works Band

Fodens were conducted by Fred Mortimer, playing the test piece *Kenilworth*, by Arthur Bliss. They were drawn number 18 of 24, and the judges were Walter Reynolds and Herbert Bennett.

1937 – Fodens Motor Works Band

Fodens were conducted by Fred Mortimer, playing the test piece *Pageantry*, by Herbert Howells. They were drawn number 18 of 22, and the judges were Frank Wright and James Brier.

1938 – Fodens Motor Works Band

Fodens were conducted by Fred Mortimer, playing the test piece *An Epic Symphony*, by Percy Fletcher. They were drawn number 15 of 20, and the judges were Herbert Bennett and Frank Wright.



1945 – Fairey Aviation Works Band

Fairey Aviation Band, from Stockport, were conducted by Harry Mortimer, playing the test piece *Overture for an Epic Occasion*, by Denis Wright. They were drawn number 6 of 17, and were awarded 180 points by the judges Henry Geehl and Frank Wright.



1946 – Brighouse & Rastrick Band

Brighouse & Rastrick Band were conducted by Eric Ball, playing the test piece *Oliver Cromwell*, by Henry Geehl. They were drawn number 13 of 15, and were awarded 192 points by the judges J.A. Greenwood and Frank Wright.



1947 – Black Dyke Mills Band

Black Dyke were conducted by Harry Mortimer, playing the test piece *Freedom*, by Hubert Bath. They were drawn number 15 of 16, and were awarded 194 points by the judges J.A. Greenwood and Herbert Bennett.

1948 – Black Dyke Mills Band

Black Dyke were conducted by Harry Mortimer, playing the test piece *On the Cornish Coast*, by Henry Geehl. They were drawn number 12 of 15, and were awarded 195 points by the judges J.A. Greenwood and Herbert Bennett.

1949 – Black Dyke Mills Band

Black Dyke were conducted by Harry Mortimer, playing the test piece *Comedy Overture*, by John Ireland. They were drawn number 15 of 17, and were awarded 198 points by the judges Harold Moss and Herbert Bennett.

1950 – Fodens Motor Works Band

Fodens were conducted by Harry Mortimer, playing the test piece *Pageantry*, by Herbert Howells. They were drawn number 9 of 17, and were awarded 194 points by the judges Frank Wright, Herbert Howells, and Herbert Bennett.



1951 – Black Dyke Mills Band

Black Dyke were conducted by Alex Mortimer, playing the test piece *An Epic Symphony*, by Percy Fletcher. They were drawn number 13 of 17, and were awarded 195 points by the judges Frank Wright and Harry Heyes.



Two further images to complete this article. Firstly, Luton Red Cross were featured in a “British Champions” series of cigarette cards issued in the 1920’s by Gallaher’s Tobacco



Secondly, this car radiator cap mascot, modelled on Fred Mortimer, was produced to commemorate Fodens' win in 1930.

