

STANHOPE SILVER BAND

“A BAND AT THE HEART OF A RURAL COMMUNITY”

Compiled by Steve Robson, Conductor.

INTRODUCTION

Stanhope Silver Band can boast a proud tradition of banding, which has been traced back as far as 1823. This history has been well-documented, highlighting the origins of the “Band of Hope”, whom it is known performed in Stanhope Methodist Chapel in 1823.

The principal aims of this treatise are to place on record some of the main events in the decade or so since the band history was written in 1992, and to examine the position Stanhope band currently holds in the community, and comment on the efforts, which are being made to ensure the survival of the band for future generations. The band has many positive attributes, which give them great hope for the future. They have tremendous public support and goodwill. They have an enthusiastic and active junior section. They own their own premises and were fortunate to purchase new instruments as recently as 1997. They have a dedicated management team, who are prepared to sacrifice many hours in order to give efficient leadership. It would appear logical that to address the current issues, an insight into Stanhope Silver Band’s colourful past would be a valid starting point.

CHAPTER 1

A CONDENSED HISTORY OF STANHOPE SILVER BAND {1823 – 1923}

“There is no more pleasing or interesting chapter in Weardale’s history than that of its brass bands. Can any rural district or any town in the kingdom equal the record of five bands in so few square miles, with a small, scattered population?” Perhaps John Lee’s enthusiasm for local history led him to believe that the band movement was not equally prevalent in many areas of the country, but it was true to say that in the mid nineteenth century, the area of Weardale which spans some fourteen miles of the river Wear, and the off-shooting settlements, boasted at least five bands. Wolsingham, Stanhope, Upper Weardale, are all documented to have had flourishing bands. The tiny settlement of Rookhope is known to have sustained two bands from a population of only 560 at this time. Stanhope is the only one of these bands, which survives today.

Joseph Fettes a clarinetist from Hexham was sent to live in Stanhope by the “London Lead Company”, and was appointed conductor of the “Peat Hill Band”. The locality of the Peat Hill Band is not clear, there being a “Peat Hill” at Crawleyside, on the fringe of Stanhope, and at Westgate, some 5 miles to the west. It is also noted that the “London Lead Company” made a grant of £5 to Stanhope band in 1825 and many subsequent donations. June Crosby, in her historic booklet, “Stanhope Silver Prize Band” postulates that the “Band of Hope” and the “Peat Hill Band” amalgamated at a very early time in their existence. The Lead Company supported many bands in the region until their final donation was made to Middleton Band in 1862 to purchase a Bass Drum. It was quite normal for large employers such as the Lead Company to aim to enrich the lives of their employees in this way. They were also responsible for building Schools, Village reading rooms and generally giving support to the community. These were the boom years of the lead mining industry in Weardale.

By 1859 Mr. R. De Lacy had become conductor of Stanhope Band, and it was he who persuaded the band to participate in the first band competition to be held at London’s Crystal Palace in 1860. The band travelled to London by train, departing from Frosterley station, and was one of 169 bands to compete in the two day Festival. On July 10th Stanhope band competed in one of the six preliminary

contests, performing the set Test Piece: “Gloria” {from the 12th Mass by Mozart}. The winners of this contest were Black Dyke, conducted by Samuel Longbottom, who went on to win the overall title the next day. A record of the bandsmen who performed on that day has been preserved, and makes fascinating reading. {Appendix 1} In his fascinating scholarly work “Brass Roots” {Ref 3} Roy Newsome attributes this contest as being a “Major Landmark in the History of Brass Bands. It may also be seen as a turning point in the development of instrumentation, with the start of significant moves towards the format of modern day bands.” It is fascinating to imagine the musicians from Stanhope making the substantial journey to the capital, and participating in this wonderful event organized by Enderby Jackson. On the evening of July 10th there was a massed band concert conducted by Jackson himself, where some 1200 bandsmen combined to perform “Rule Britannia”, “Hallelujah Chorus”, Mendelssohn’s “Wedding March” and “God Save the Queen”, amongst other music, all played along with the mighty organ. The Times newspaper reported the following day “The effect of the combined legions of blowers was tremendous. The organ which accompanied them, and which in less exceptional circumstances is apt to drown everything, was scarcely audible in the midst of the brazen tempest.” . It is fascinating to speculate as to the effect this must have had upon the bandsmen from Stanhope, and intriguing to note that this band, from such a small town in “England’s Last Wilderness” was one of the forward looking bands to participate in this immense Festival.

The entire band volunteered as members of “20th Durham Rifle Volunteers”, and in doing so the band was taken under the wing of the military, and band members were eligible to wear a Military Uniform, complete with Pill Box Hat, and belt lamp. The lamp was to be fastened to the shoulder, and enabled players to read music in the dark. In his memoirs, Jack Woodhall notes “The lamps enabled the player to play in the dark and resulted in many a burnt ear and oily coat.” When the South African War came along the whole band volunteered, but none were accepted, most being too old or infirm.

The Stanhope Band History goes on to document various concerts and musical engagements including various Royal events. The Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria provoked National Celebrations, and the band is often recorded as having

played the “Dead March” outside St. Thomas Church to commemorate Royal Death’s or those of Civic dignitaries. The early years of 20th century saw the formation of the Wear Valley Band Association, who organized local band competitions until the outbreak of war.

In 1904 a complete set of instruments was purchased and the band re-named “Stanhope Silver Band”. Funds were raised by Pie suppers, Dances, and a levy on local Quarrymen as well as a plethora of musical events. A local lady gave the last £25 as a loan to allow the band to proceed with the purchase.

JACK WOODHALL – “A MUSICAL LEGEND WITHIN WEARDALE” {1923 – 78}

1923 saw the role of conductor pass to young Jack Woodhall, a cornet player aged only 19, who was to lead the band for 50 years and become something of a musical legend within Weardale, indeed his achievements are recognized throughout most of County Durham. Even today as bandsmen share their memories, whenever the name of Stanhope Band is mentioned, the name of Jack Woodhall often follows into the conversation. In 1934 Stanhope Band won the “Iles Shield” at the Crystal Palace. This was the prize for the “B” section of the contest, and a tremendous achievement for the band. As part of the preparations for the contest, Mr. Fred Mortimer was asked to take a rehearsal. He was coming to Stanhope to conduct “Fodens Motor Works Band” who had been engaged to play at Stanhope Agricultural Show. He arrived at the band room to find only 5 players in attendance. The remaining players had boycotted the rehearsal as they felt Jack was doing a fine job. This story does not surprise anyone who is familiar with the unique character of this band, but it would be imagined caused much embarrassment for several people at the time.

The 1950’s saw Stanhope band enjoying a successful period, with several placings in the area contest. Indeed they were Northern Area Champions in 1957. In 1964 they were 2nd in the Northern Championships, and went on to victory in the 4th Section National Championships in London.

1971 saw the purchase of a set of new uniforms for the sum of £466, and the following year the band made the important decision to convert all their instruments

to “Low Pitch”. This decision, although an inevitable one, must have caused much deliberation, and a lot of effort to fulfill.

1973 saw the band preparing to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the formation of “The Band Of Hope”, and also 50 years of service by Jack Woodhall. Sadly, Jack Woodhall died on 20th September, but the planned celebrations went ahead, and a presentation was made to his daughter, Ann Harrison.

A TRAGIC LOSS

1987 saw a terrible day in the history of Stanhope band when their band room was burnt to the ground, with the loss of priceless instruments, music, and all the bands assets. One priceless possession was a huge drum; nicknamed “Big Ben” which it was believed had been purchased for the original “Peat Hill” band in the 1820’s. The skin had been removed for repair some years later, and many of the bandsmen had inscribed their names on the inside. Sadly no one ever recorded these details, so they are now lost.

Tradition had been for many years that the Committee of Stanhope Agricultural show would invite the National Champions of Britain to play at the show each September. The list of bands performing between 1920 until the 1980’s makes impressive reading. Black Dyke appeared at the show on no fewer than 14 occasions, Besses o’ the Barn {4}, Brighouse & Rastrick {8}, Fodens Motor Works {3}, St. Hilda’s {4}, Fairey Aviations {2}, Grimethorpe {2}, Carleton Main Frickley {3}, as well as Cameronians {Scottish Rifles}, Munn & Feltons, Wingate Temperance, Ransome Hoffmann, Yorkshire Imperial Metals, Scottish CWS, Bickershaw Colliery, Whitbread Band, Ever Ready and Leyland Motors {1985,6, & 7}. Following the fire in the band hut, the “Show Committee” wished to make a donation to the band but was prevented from doing so by some peculiar quirk of Charitable Law. The committee therefore decided to invite Stanhope band to play at the show instead, and pay them a substantial fee, to help them through difficult times. Looking back now, this was a wonderful gesture, but the end to a tradition, which had brought the best of the banding world to Stanhope.

1992 saw the band mount a historic exhibition of their history, which coincided with the publication of June Crosby's booklet on the band's history. {Ref 1}. In the closing paragraphs of the booklet a bleak future is feared for the band: "It is unlikely the band will ever be able to have their own headquarters again, but they are fortunate that they are allowed to practice at Horn Hall – a building that gave them shelter some 60 years earlier."

CHAPTER 2

CONTINUING THE HISTORY {1992 ONWARDS}

The band history over the last 12 years has not been formally documented, so it is aimed to create a record at this juncture. The 1990's were a time of great change in society, and many issues arose to challenge life in Rural Communities. Many of these changes impacted on the band, and a picture emerged that if the band is to continue to serve its community for many more years into the future, issues need to be addressed, and a clear direction set out for the band.

YOUNG MEMBERS

Doug Cleasby was conductor of the band in 1992, and it was he who decided to form a junior band. A nucleus of youngsters came forward, many of who already played other musical instruments, were in their early teens, and were rapid learners. Steve Robson shared the organizational duties of the junior band and within a few months took on the role of conductor. Within around 9 months some of the youngsters were ready to come along to senior band practices, swelling the depleted numbers in the band, and creating a positive atmosphere. It was not long before a new group of youngsters came along, and a second beginners group was set up. The older youngsters wished to maintain playing as a group, so "Stanhope Intermediate Band" came into existence. Steve Robson was conductor of both junior groups and ultimately took on responsibility for the senior band as well, with Doug Cleasby returning to playing and taking up the Solo Horn Chair in the band.

MIDDLETON CONTEST

The Middleton In Teesdale Band Contest encourages Non Registered, and lower section bands to participate in friendly competition. The contest was initiated in 1987. Stanhope band have a close relationship with Middleton Band, with a number of members common to both bands, and each band helping the other by supplying players to ensure engagements can be fulfilled. It was natural that Stanhope Band should support this venture when it came about, and indeed, to the present date, they are the only band to have taken part in every contest.

“GLORIOUS DAY”

The band were delighted in 1995 to be asked to participate in a project entitled “Processional -The Last Wilderness”, along with Crook Town Band and Wear Valley Singers. Local composer Andy Jackson had written a work in several short movements for the combined musical forces. One of the choruses was entitled “glorious day”, and for several months following the four performances of the work around the Dale, band members would burst into spontaneous song echoing the words of this chorus. Performances took place at St. Catherine’s Church Crook, Bishop Auckland Town Hall, St. Johns Chapel Town Hall, and Low Barns Nature Reserve.

A NEW HOME FOR THE BAND

As events turned out, only a few years after the publication of the booklet, the band were forced to address the issue of a rehearsal room, as rumours began to circulate that Horn Hall Hospital was to be demolished. In fact the hospital still stands today, but the room utilized by the band, which was formerly the mortuary, has been demolished, and the band had to act once again to ensure their survival. The band recognized the need for action, and looked at a small number of available options, with a view to purchasing a room. The old “Co Op” store at the West End of Stanhope was one of the options, and thanks to enormous support from the Board & Trustees of the Stanhope & Weardale Co-operative Society, a new home was found. The Board accepted a very reasonable offer for the building, and offered an interest free “Mortgage” to help the band meet the cost. This fact was never widely publicized. It serves to demonstrate the great sense of reverence in which the band is held, and the tremendous amount of support that is regularly received from all sectors of the community. Stanhope Band moved into their new band room on 27th February 1997, and held their first rehearsal on Tuesday 4th March.

PLANNING FOR CELEBRATIONS

As early as 1996 it was noted that the band was due to celebrate 175 years since the formation of the “Band Of Hope” in 1998. Much thought was given as to the nature of any celebrations, and the band came up with ideas, which were to ensure

that their normal busy schedule became even more hectic throughout 1997 / 8. The band was making the final preparations for moving into the new band room, so already excitement levels were running high. A public appeal for funding support was made, with the band setting out their desire to purchase new uniforms, commission music for the forthcoming anniversary and apply to the National Lottery for funding for new instruments. The band was not disappointed, and the community responded with tremendous support. Plans could now be taken a step further.

1997 “A YEAR OF MUCH ACTIVITY”

On February 25th Stanhope Band took possession of a fine new uniform, manufactured by R & J Handley of Leeds. The Black Mess Jackets, decorated with Red & Gold collars and cuffs, were based on the bands traditional uniform, but instantly gave the band an increased feeling of pride in their appearance, and went down very well with Band Supporters. Banners displaying the Band Logo were also produced, and the bill for all the work came to £7238. Two days later the band took possession of their new band room, and a week later held their first rehearsal on the premises. A special Concert was planned for 23rd April to Celebrate “St, Georges Day”, with a “Festival of English Music.” The concert opened with the march “Standard of St. George”, and continued to feature music by Ralph Vaughan Williams, Gustav Holst, Sir Arthur Sullivan and a host of more modern English composers. The evening ended with Sir Edward Elgar’s march “Pomp & Circumstance”. On 15th June, Stanhope band had their most successful visit to the Kirby Lonsdale outdoor contest, returning home with 2nd prize. On 19th June the band were featured on Tyne Tees Television local news. Maurice Craig and Steve Robson were interviewed regarding the move to the new band room and the plans for the forthcoming year, and the bands principal cornet player, David Coates played the solo “The Paragon”. The programme had been recorded the night before the “St. Georges Day Concert” back in April. 6th July was the 11th Teesdale Band Contest, and for the first time Stanhope Silver Band won the Trophy for the best Selection, playing “Four Little Maids” {Carr} Having recently appeared on Tyne Tees Television, the band was employed to provide music for the “Great North Walk”, which took place around Bishop Auckland, finishing in the Glorious grounds of the Bishops Palace. The band had to play “Chariots of Fire” {Vangelis} for the benefit of

background music when the highlights of the walk were shown on TV. They were required to play the music 5 times for the benefit of the cameras, and then mime a performance, whilst TV personality Bob Johnson recorded an interview. Those people with astute vision who watched the film may have noticed some degree of difficulty exhibited by some band members at the task of miming the performance. The band received a fee of £250 from the TV Company, which at that time was a very healthy afternoon's work for a small rural band. Band members performing at the "Great North Walk" were unaware that the band had been awarded £86480 from the National Lottery. Steve Robson & Doug Cleasby had been informed earlier that week of their successful bid, but sworn to secrecy.

The announcement of all lottery bids at that time had to be made via the local press, and the band were informed that an announcement would be made on July 24th. Band members were informed of the fantastic news during their rehearsal on Tuesday 22nd and the rehearsal finished half an hour early to allow everyone to congregate in the local pub to celebrate the news. At that time, the award was the biggest made to a Brass Band, and the result of a vast amount of time and energy being put into the bid. On the day of the announcement the band was well prepared, and put up banners to announce that a March and free open-air concert would be held in celebration of the news. An announcement was made on local radio, and telephone calls made to ensure regular supporters were aware of the situation, and for that evening Stanhope came to a standstill as the band marched, then played beneath the market cross outside St Thomas Church. The junior band also played proudly, and the photographs of the event still adorn the band room walls.

On November 7th Bob & David Childs performed a concert with Stanhope Band in St. Thomas Church. Wear Valley Arts financially supported the evening, and several local dignitaries were in attendance. This was a memorable evening for many reasons. Bob Childs was at the height of his illustrious playing career, and Soloist with "Black Dyke Mills" Band. Bob's son David played solo euphonium with "EYMS" band of Hull, which Bob was conducting. Bob asked if David could join him in this concert, as he was improving rapidly as a player, and the experience would be very positive for him. David went on in subsequent years to become Young Brass Musician of the year, and to develop into a fine virtuoso soloist. At one point in the

evening, Bob disappeared from view, to return carrying a huge Alpine Horn, which he used to great effect, firstly making everyone jump out of their seats, then performing in a most impressive fashion. Bob also conducted the band in 3 items. George Allan's tremendous march "Knight Templar", which of course has been used so often by Black Dyke Band at marching contests, an arrangement of "Praise My Soul" which was presented to Consett band by Bob's father John Childs, and finally David's solo performance of "Blaydon Races" {Langford}. The highlight of the evening for many people was the performance of two duets: "Deep inside the Sacred Temple" {Bizet arr. Wilkinson} and "Softly As I Leave You" { De Vita arr. Catherall}

1998 "175 YEARS OF BANDING IN STANHOPE"

This momentous anniversary year got underway with Stanhope Band entering formal registered contests for the first time in over 20 years. A credible 3rd place in the Durham Brass Band Association Contest in February was followed by a disappointing 10th place in the Area contest, with a severely depleted band performing on the day. The disappointment paled into insignificance as the anniversary committee continued planning for festivities later in the year.

On 26th July the band were visited by their old friend Paul Munch, from the Westerwald region of Germany. Paul was invited to play along with the band in a free concert given in the Church Hall, and during the concert he and his wife presented a wonderful plaque to the band as a memento of the anniversary. Stanhope Band commissioned two composers to write music for the band, with a view to recording these works and other music on a CD. David Golightly was born in Stanhope, and was known to have become a successful composer, so he was approached, and agreed to write a major work for band entitled "A Weardale Portrait". Goff Richards was a very popular composer within the band movement, whose music regularly featured on the concert programmes of the band, and he agreed to write a "Lively Opening Number" for the band to be called "Stanhope 1998". Both commissions were delivered and rehearsals began. The Weardale Portrait presented real challenges for the band, yet a great effort was made to produce a good performance of this excellent commission. The band even went to the length of bringing percussionist Simone Rebello to town to help the section with their parts. An open workshop was arranged, and student percussionists invited.

Simone provided a really productive workshop, which culminated with everyone participating in a Samba. She then joined the band in a full rehearsal of the Weardale Portrait, which was an effective boost to preparations on the piece.

On 5th & 6th September 1998 Stanhope band proudly recorded their CD which, like the major commission was entitled "A Weardale Portrait". 500 copies of the CD were made along with 500 cassette tapes. Local businesses agreed to support the venture by selling both items in the shops, and the band had already received orders from friends, supporters and audience members at recent concerts. The project had funded itself and was into profit within a year, and it was necessary to order another batch of 500 tapes soon after. The CD's are now all sold. It was a tremendous experience for the band to record the CD. They were fortunate to be pointed in the direction of "ASC" recording company. Richard Scott engineered the recording, and proved to be a magnificent choice. His professional experience proved invaluable, and he has since been involved in other band projects in the region. Steve Plews worked alongside Steve Robson to carry out the production work and prepare an 8-page booklet of programme notes. David Golightly came to one or two rehearsals in advance of the recording, and accepted an invitation to conduct both the recording of his piece and the first performance. The CD's are a lasting record of the anniversary year, and band members were delighted to note that copies have been circulated to many people in different countries around the world.

Trombone virtuoso "Brett Baker" joined with Stanhope band on October 3rd 1998 for the highlight of the year, the first performance of "A Weardale Portrait" and the official launch of the CD recording. Stanhope Methodist Church was a superb venue for the evening, and over 300 band supporters packed in to the beautiful building to enjoy the occasion. In fact some major work had had to be done to the building in order to accommodate the band, and the efforts of the Chapel members were gratefully appreciated. A row of seats were removed, a ramp built, and the levels at the front of the Chapel were raised to create an area big enough for the band. A splendid new carpet was purchased, and in subsequent years a number of similar events have occurred in the Chapel. Brett Baker gave an impressive performance of solo's including "Thoughts of Love" {Pryor}, "Annie Laurie" {arr. Drover} "Feelings" {Albert} and "Mercury" {Greenwood}. He also joined the trombone section to enjoy a

terrific performance of "Pink Panther", arranged as a trombone quartet. {Mancini arr. Barry} The performance of "A Weardale Portrait" was conducted by David Golightly, and met with a great ovation. Such was the success of the night that both Brett and David were asked to return one week later and perform the same concert in St. Clare's Church Newton Aycliffe, the home Church of conductor Steve Robson. On December 13th 1998 Stanhope Band gave the premiere performance of "Stanhope 1998" at the Town Hall in St. Johns Chapel. The piece was played as originally intended, as a concert opener, and was also called for as an encore at the end of the evening. The junior band shared the concert on this occasion, performing with their conductor Liz Gill.

WAHLROD 1999

It would be impossible to make any record of the history of Stanhope band, without paying tribute to a unique gentleman who now lives in Borod, in the Westerwald region of Germany, who has maintained friendships with many people in Weardale for many years, and now has initiated musical exchange visits between the two communities which have touched the hearts of a multitude of people. Herr Paul Munch is described as an honorary member of Stanhope band, and there is no doubt to anyone who knows him, that he considers his position to be an honour. Paul's father was a Prisoner of War in the POW camp at Harperley in Weardale. Many of the prisoners were put to work on local farms, and Paul's father was sent to work for the Craig family in Stanhope. After the war Paul's father decided to stay in Stanhope and continue to work on the farm. Paul therefore grew up in Stanhope, where he was proud to be a member of the band. When he returned to bring up his own family in Germany he maintained friendships with many people in Weardale, including band member Maurice Craig. Paul and his wife Renata regularly visit Stanhope, and Paul needs no invitation to attend band practice. Paul proposed the notion that Stanhope Band visit his town of Borod, in order to participate in a music festival that was being planned to celebrate 750 years of the neighbouring town Wahlrod. The band committee needed no persuading, and preparations began. The visit was an enormous success for the band, who were promoted to superstar status for the duration of the visit which took place in June 1999. The festival took place in an enormous heated tent, and in true German tradition, beer was flowing freely. Top

German groups “De Rauber” and “Pavier” were included in the festival along with “Queerbeet” a tremendous local rock group who performed several slots. The band were to establish great friendships with the group, and the entire festival was pronounced a huge success. Stanhope band received the warmest of welcomes, and thoroughly enjoyed the experience of performing in the festival. Stanhope band surprised their hosts by acquiring a copy of the region’s most popular tune “Westerwald, Du Bist So Schon”, which when performed resulted in huge ovations. Several street performances were also given, and a memorable march around the town. The march will be recalled by band members, as a “Short” march, which they were informed would be about quarter of a mile. They decided one march would be sufficient, so Slaidburn was taken. Estimates vary as to the final length of the march, but Slaidburn was well repeated, and band members pleased to receive some fine German Beer at the conclusion of the marathon.

MATT BAKER – WORKSHOP & CELEBRITY CONCERT – 17TH APRIL 1999

Matt was at this time principal cornet player with Black dyke band. He gave a workshop to enthusiastic youngsters from Stanhope band, and guests. The Northern Regional Brass Band Trust funded the workshop. The funding for the concert was paid with assistance from one of the bands loyal supporters, “Joan Woodhall’s Fruit Shop”. Leela Clarke, one of the youngsters in the band with an artistic flair volunteered to design the programme for the event, and an announcement was made that these were available for a small donation towards the Band youngsters proposed visit to Sedburgh Brass Summer School. The programme donations raised a staggering £312, which set the youngsters well on the way. Matt thrilled the audience with his performance of “Paragon”, “My Love is like a Red Red Rose”, “Facilita” and “Share My Yoke”. The junior members were invited to play a few tunes in the middle of the programme, and Matt joined the cornet section for the Finale “Pastime With Good Company”, and the encore “Pomp & Circumstance”.

STEVE SYKES CONCERT OCTOBER 1999

Doug Cleasby took on the role of conductor during July 1999 for about a year. This was his third spell in the position. During this period one of the highlights was a concert with the effervescent Steve Sykes, Tuba player extraordinaire.

GERMAN GUESTS IN STANHOPE

A contingent of friends from Westerwald visited Stanhope on a whistle stop tour of Weardale. The party only had three days but managed to pack a lot into their visit. Guests were housed in Fairfield House, the Bonny Moor Hen, the Queens Head, or in band member's homes. A Civic welcome and reception was held in the town hall to greet the guests, and in true German style the celebrations were excessive. When the bar was due to close, a burly German gentleman put his arm across the hatch to prevent it closing. He then produced £140 from his pocket and said to the barman "We will stay a little longer". The group split into groups to visit either Durham Cathedral or Killhope Lead Mining Museum the next day, and a concert was held in the evening at St. Thomas Church featuring Wahlrod Blasercore and the Blaumen Singers. Hervere, the conductor of the Blasercore, who is also blind, is a very accomplished organist. He played a duet with his son on the cello, and a solo item on the organ, which provoked an extended standing ovation. Stanhope band joined in the proceedings, with Doug Cleasby conducting. The final day of the brief visit was Grand Prix Day, and the majority of the visitors refused to go anywhere, preferring to watch Michael Schumacher win again. A concert was given by the German musicians in the Town Hall that evening.

START CHARITY OCT 2001

Stanhope Band was offered the opportunity to perform at a large-scale charity event at the Chester Le Street Riverside Stadium, the home of Durham County Cricket club. The evening was to raise funds for a young girl from Weardale who was working in India, and trying to establish a hospital to support people with leprosy. The evening was an immense success and helped raise the profile of Leah Pattinson, and helped the Charity set up in her name to become well established in the minds of the Weardale population.

FISHBURN BAND – CONDUCTED BY IAN ROBINSON 17TH NOVEMBER 2001

The band were invited as Northern Area Champions to come to Stanhope and present a concert. The evening was a great success, and conductor Ian Robinson included several arrangements of his own in the programme, including "Volte",

“Shenandoah” and “Here Comes that Rainy Day”. The evening finished on a rousing note with Mussorgsky’s “Great Gate of Kiev”.

QUEENS GOLDEN JUBILEE CONCERT JUNE 23RD 2002

This auspicious occasion was recognized by the band, together with a young and flamboyant Organist by the name of Michael Smith, who is organist in the Church at Lanchester. He presented a well thought out programme for the occasion including music by Purcell, Vaughan Williams, and Walford Davies. The band opened with Frank Wright’s “Fanfare & God Save The Queen”, and included several patriotic items in the programme. One item of particular interest was “Royal Silver Jubilee Fanfare and March” by George Benjamin. Conductor Steve Robson was able to inform the audience that he had played this as a youngster in a National Schools Band Festival, and by a quirk of fate had discovered copies of the music in the band library, just weeks before the occasion.

MIDDLETON 2002 & [Stanhope Band Festival of Brass 2005](#) – SUCCESS IN CONSECUTIVE YEARS

Having been ever present at this contest since its formation, Stanhope Band were to have victories in the overall Championships for the first time in 2002, then go on to match the result the following years.

2002

- MARCH KENILWORTH 1ST
- HYMN ELLERS 3RD
- SELECTION OKLAHOMA 1ST
- JUNIOR SOLOIST I DON’T KNOW HOW TO LOVE HIM WINNER - VALERIE CRAIG

2003

- MARCH NEW COLONIAL 1ST
- HYMN WARRINGTON 2ND
- SELECTION RHAPSODY ON NEGRO SPIRITUALS 1ST

2004

- March 1st
- Hymn 2nd
- Selection 1st.

['Stanhope Band Festival of Brass 2005'](#)

- March To Regions Fair 1st
- Hymn Passion Chorale 2nd
- Selection Grease 1st

BEAMISH 26TH AUGUST 2002

Stanhope band were delighted to be asked to perform one of the summer season concerts on the bandstand at the Beamish Open Air Museum for the first time in 2002. The museum is known as a living museum, dated around 1911, so conductors are requested to perform music befitting the era. Stanhope band rose to the challenge, and performed music by Rimmer, Allan, Sousa, Denza Sullivan and Dvorak amongst others. The band was proud to take this event on, on an annual basis.

MOVING ON

September 2002 brought about 5 departures from the band within 2 weeks. Leela Clarke {Flugel Horn} and Rebecca Craig {2nd Cornet} departed to commence University education, Victoria Buddin {Solo Cornet} and Ella Kate Nye {3rd Cornet} commenced respective boarding schools, and David Lowes {Bass Trombone} joined the army. To lose five very capable players in one go was a huge blow for the band, but of course Warmest Wishes were sent with all the young musicians. Here certainly though was cause for the band committee to recognize the need to constantly educate new players. Victoria and Rebecca return to Band during holiday periods, and Victoria has now taken on the role of Principal Cornet with the band in many events that she has been able to participate in.

JAG MOUNT CHARLES 2002 & 2003

In October 2002, Paul Beere, organizer of the North's prestigious Contest "Brass in Concert", made a phone call to Steve Robson. The "JAG Mount Charles" Band from Cornwall had just agreed to step into the contest at a late juncture, and were hoping to find a venue in the region to perform a concert on the night preceding "Brass in Concert". Stanhope band accepted the challenge, and a concert was organized within days. Jag & Stanhope shared the concert in Stanhope Town Hall, where the guests performed their programme for "Brass in Concert" to everyone's delight. The evening ended with the two bands joining forces to perform. Bryan Hurdley was the conductor in 2002. When the band returned in 2003, Russell Grey was at the helm, and conducted a sprightly rendition of "Gaelforce" as part of the massed finale.

EVER READY – CONDUCTED BY STEVE MALCOLM – 30TH NOVEMBER 2002

Once again the Northern Area Champion Band was invited to give a concert in Stanhope. The Ever Ready Band are often described as the premier band in the region, and their concert did not disappoint the large crowd that gathered in Stanhope Methodist Chapel. Highlights of the night included a superb arrangement by Roger Payne of "Bottle Dance" from "Fiddler on the Roof", and a superb performance of the Irish dance music "Riverdance".

CONTESTING IN 2003

Stanhope Band once again made a return to formal contesting in 2003 and registered a credible 2nd Place in the Durham Brass Band Association Contest in February playing "Divertimento by Eric Ball. This was followed on 16th March by 4th place in the Northern Regional Championships, playing "Lydian Pictures" by Simon Dobson.

MISSION TO COMMISSION CONCERT & EXHIBITION 26TH APRIL 2003

Tradition has been that each year Stanhope Band mark the opening of Stanhope Agricultural Show, by marching down "Front Street". The band are cheered as they march through the street, then to make the way onto the show field, they must cross the river Wear. To do this, the band stop playing, and walk across the stepping-

stones on the river. As conductor of the band, I have always felt this unique procession should be documented for posterity, and through a scheme called "Mission to Commission", run by Wear Valley Arts, I was able to see my dream come to fruition. Watercolour Artist Chris Mouncey was commissioned to paint the scene, and to involve the community in our project, a painting competition was run by the band in local schools, and for adults. The scheme culminated in an exhibition of all the paintings, including the huge image of the band, with over 200 paintings on show. In the evening the Band gave a performance in the same hall as the exhibition, with many pictures still on display. Themes for the paintings included "Churches & Chapels", "The River", "Show Day", and "Fields and Fell". During the concert prizes were given to the winners in each category, and the public had their chance to buy copies of a limited edition print of Chris Mouncey's painting of Stanhope Band Crossing the Stepping Stones on the River Wear. First performances were also made of my first compositions and arrangements. "Love Unknown" {John Ireland arr. Steve Robson} and a march "Show Day" were played to reflect two of the categories in the art competition. The whole project resulted in a considerable boost to band funds, and prints of Stanhope Band now hang in many homes in Weardale and beyond, so this unique tradition has been effectively recorded. By a happy coincidence, when photographs were taken of the crossing, for the benefit of the artist, Paul Munch was on one of his regular visits from Germany to attend Stanhope Show. He is clearly visible in the painting, as he marched with the band playing "Clash Cymbals".

OCTOBER 2003 - GERMANY REVISITED

Stanhope Band was delighted to be asked to once again visit Westerwald, but could hardly hope that the occasion could match their splendid first visit. However, with Herr Paul Munch organizing affairs, all things are possible, and the band once again were treated like Royalty, received awesome support at all their musical engagements, and best of all, developed friendships with old acquaintances. Musical highlights of the visit included a formal concert in Hackenburg Town Hall, an outdoor performance at the doors of Koln Cathedral and a very beautiful Church Service held in both languages. One very special moment came on the tour, when the band participated in a March, which will be remembered for as long as the bandsmen live.

On several occasions the march was halted and the band ushered to one side and presented with refreshments. This gave a wonderful opportunity for Stanhope Band to present Paul & Renata Munch with a framed print of the band crossing the river. The moment when Paul realized that he was included in the painting was so special, and saw many bandsmen with more than a tear in the eye.

WOLSINGHAM CLUB – ANNUAL CHRISTMAS CONCERT 5TH DECEMBER 2003

This annual event was made special in 2003 by a joint performance of the Senior Band with the Junior Band. The junior members conducted by Ray Gill made a huge impression, playing four items on their own: “Can Can”, “Vino Calypso”, “Cool Cat Blues” and “Away in a Manger”. They were then joined by the senior band to play a piece written for both bands by Steve Robson. “Ted’s Day Out” is an arrangement of the Teddy Bears Picnic in three contrasting movements, and the juniors joined in the performance in style.

IAN PORTHOUSE - CELEBRITY CONCERT 24TH JANUARY 2004

The principal cornet player of “Fairey’s FP” was a popular choice as Celebrity Soloist. Ian is familiar with a number of band members, due to his role as tutor at the International Summer School. His solo’s included “Carnival Of Venice”, “Someone Cares”, Willow Echoes” and “Post Horn Gallop”. He also joined Victoria Buddin in the “Flower Duet”. Ian also ascended the stairs to the Chapel gallery to perform “Something Stupid” as a cornet feature. The piece is arranged as a duet, but every member of the cornet section, plus Sophie Robson on Flugel, were given the chance to play a duet with Ian. Fortunately everyone had marked his or her copies well and the performance went off well. Stanhope band invited several guests from the Durham Brass Association, to present “50 Year Service Awards” to five band members. Ambrose Burdiss, Maurice Craig, Ken Dawson, Ivan Gowland and Clyde Woodhall each received the awards, marking a huge investment of devoted service to the band movement. An award was also presented to Doug Cleasby whose father Fred had passed this milestone with the band, but who had retired subsequently and was not able to be present. The awards were presented by DBBA Chairman Vaughan Evans and DBBA President George Bramfitt.

NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL – £20,000 TO SPEND

As a result of the initial round of seeking potential funding bodies for the band room project, {see Ch. 4} the Band were advised to apply for the above funding. Their bid was successful, but when the money was awarded it was clear that it could not be utilized on building work, as the feasibility study was not yet complete. The money had to be spent by the end of March 2004. The band officials decided to make several improvements to the existing décor in the band room, provide some temporary heating upstairs, purchase new chairs and bookcases, purchase computers, music software packages, a range of instruments, a music resource library and around £1000 addition to the music library. It was surprising how difficult it proved to spend £20,000 in a week but the task was achieved. Within a few days when the goods arrived, the upstairs of the band room suddenly took on a life of its own, and the band were heading in a very positive direction.

CHAPTER 3

THE ROLE OF STANHOPE SILVER BAND IN THE COMMUNITY TODAY

Stanhope lies in a remote rural community, in the heart of Weardale, an area often described as “England’s Last Wilderness”. Weardale comprises some 10 villages and towns and a number of smaller hamlets. The towns mainly lie on the A689, a cross Pennine route from Bishop Auckland in the East to Penrith in the West. Stanhope band have always enjoyed a great deal of support from the community, and they are regularly in demand to perform in each of the settlements. A typical year will see the band perform around 40 engagements. These might include Agricultural Shows, Garden Parties, Formal Concerts, Civic Receptions, Remembrance Day Services, other Church Services, along with contests and joint events with other musical groups.

For over a decade now, and on other occasions in the past, the band has been responsible for running a “Junior Band”, nurturing youngsters through their formative steps in their musical careers, as well as providing a much needed social outlet for young people. It has been recognised that opportunities for young people generally within the dale are limited, so the band try to compensate by offering various stimulating opportunities for this age group. When top bands come to other parts of the region, band members invariably organise tickets and transport to take young members along. Various workshops on specific instruments have been organised and successfully run. The band work hard to ensure that a group of young people attend the International Brass Band Summer School each year, hopefully to add to their own skills and musical development, then to come back and have this progress rub off on the remaining members.

When recording the band history, it was interesting to note on how many occasions when the community wished to celebrate a great occasion, or share grief on a sad occasion, the band seemed to be their first port of call. The band was there to perform on the occasion of Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee, and similarly a special concert was arranged to celebrate Queen Elizabeth’s Golden Jubilee.

The band love to entertain the people of Weardale, but they also see it as a part of their role to ensure that those same people are given the opportunity to share in musical performances by musicians of the highest standards. For many years the Agricultural Show Committee used to invite the Champion Band of Britain to play at the show. This tradition is no more, but Stanhope band have made steps to bring the best bands to perform in Weardale. Ever Ready and Fishburn Bands have both performed in Stanhope, and it is hoped to attract bigger names from further afield in the future. JAG Mount Charles needed somewhere to have a trial run of their “Brass In Concert” performance two years ago, and Stanhope band jumped at the opportunity of acting as hosts. It is probable that JAG will return each year now, as they were made to feel so welcome. Stanhope band has developed a policy over recent years of inviting top celebrity soloists to share in concerts. This in a way is a case of the band trying to do something special for their supporters, but it is also recognised that these occasions have a very positive effect on band morale, and are providing experiences that band members can always treasure.

Stanhope Band like all other organisations have a constant struggle to finance their activities, but try to ensure that they are fair to other sectors of the community. The band has a standard performance charge of £100 within Weardale, so even the smaller organisations can engage the band and still be confident of raising money for their own purposes. Even though this is the case, the band seeks to recognise occasions where other groups need support, and it is not uncommon for fees to be waived for such events. The band steps in to support Churches and Chapels throughout the Dale whenever they can. “Wesley’s Weardale” was an example of a project to help other organisations within the dale, namely the Weardale Museum and High House Chapel. The band played an integral part in the entire project, which has done a great deal to promote the image of the museum and assist the Chapel financially.

The people of Weardale hold the relationship the band has developed with the community in the Westerwald region of Germany in high esteem. It is recognised the importance of such relationships, not only to the particular individuals and organisations, but to the entire community, and indeed on a greater scale the band

are playing a role in leading the way to developing international links, which most people in today's world see as being of immeasurable value.

With so many changes in today's society, the band has had to keep a keen eye on developments, and try to move with the times. Financial matters are a constant demand upon time. Organisations of many descriptions have to "Fight their Corner" to prove they are worthy potential recipients of funds, and records of the highest standards must be maintained. Policies are required to make perfectly clear the bands attitude to discrimination, whether that be Race, Sex or disability. Child protection policies must be in place and enforced and insurances maintained on buildings, instruments, and public liability. Bands must adapt to these changes, to keep themselves viable.

Many bands face a similar challenge to that which has arisen in Weardale, when education services cut or withdraw services. It is easy not to react when these changes occur, but what of the long-term future if no action is taken?

It is fair to say that the band enjoy support from the community which most similar bands could only dream of. Higher profile events regularly attract audiences in excess of 300 people, and the local newspaper follows the bands every move with enthusiastic interest. The band feels a responsibility to maintain their standards to serve the community, which supports them so well, and which has supported a band in the dale for over 180 years now. They are looking to the future, and hoping they can continue to enjoy unique community support, and take appropriate actions when new challenges arise.

Compiled by Steve Robson, Conductor