

THE CITY OF OXFORD BAND
(FORMERLY HEADINGTON SILVER BAND)

Reminiscences of James Alder

The Band was formed, as far as is known, in 1887 in the village of Headington (now a suburb of Oxford). Who the original members were, I do not know.

Somewhere about the turn of the Century the Band was known as the 'Headington Temperance Band'. Even when I joined the Band they were still using the music pads which were engraved in gold lettering with that name.

My knowledge of the Band really emanates from the time that I joined as a learner in late 1918 and from members at that time. The driving force behind the Band from early this Century until his death at the age of 60 in June 1940 was Charles Clifton. When he came to Oxford, I am not sure, but he came from Manchester and was a cornet player with 'Denton Original Band', the very first Band to win the '1000 Guinea Trophy', for the championship at Crystal Palace in 1900.

This was the forerunner of the championships as we know them today which are now held at the Albert Hall.

The Band changed it's name to 'Headington Silver Band', in 1914 when a set of silver plated instruments were purchased from 'Highams of Manchester' and these were in use until 1929 when a new set were obtained from 'Boosey & Hawkes'.

The Bandmaster when I joined the Band was Mr Monty Bowen who had two sons in the Band. He also played solo cornet which appeared to be the general practise in those days, even in top class Bands.

My first tutor, for a while, was Mr Walter Coppock, a trombone player, who started a class of about 20 lads. This was towards the end of 1918 just as World War One was drawing to a close.

The Band at the time was very small in number having been depleted by the war. I believe one or two members may have been lost and others badly wounded and gassed. It was therefore absolutely necessary to start teaching would-be musicians to ensure the Band's survival.

Unfortunately many of these learners gradually lost interest and dropped out.

With the ending of the war in November 1918 a few members came back and Walter Miller (a regular soldier in the Oxford & Bucks Band) came out of the army early in 1919 and settled in Headington. I believe he was a local man, and became solo cornet player. He then restarted the learners class with about 20 of us. He was soon after elected as Bandmaster. The outcome of the learners class was that after about 18 months, several of us were drafted into the Band thus swelling the ranks to practically a full Band. The seven who went from learners to full Band members were; Bert Woodcock, myself and Bill Herbert (all cornet

players), Ted Cousins (tenor horn), Reg Cousins (trombone), Mr Woodcock Senior (Eb bass) and Jack Becket (Bb bass).

Other members of the Band at that time as I remember were M Bowen [*Montague Willam Bowen*], Albert Douglas, Mr Baker (who lost a leg in the war?), Mr Cox and son Cyril, a Mr Morris, C Hawley and son George, all cornet players besides Charles Clifton. Horn players were L Bowen [*Leslie William Bowen*] and Mr Jeffs, Baritone Archie Coppock who was gassed in the war (and therefore suffered breathing problems). Euphonium players were J Grimsley (I believe an original member) and Mr Hodges. Trombones were W Bateman and Walter Coppock and bass players were Sam Mitchell (Eb bass), Monty Bowen junior [*Horace Montague Bowen*] (Bb bass) and Douglas Woodcock (Bb bass). Drummers were a Mr Smith (bass drum) and Tom Grimsley (side drum). Out of all these Band members I believe about six came from Oxford and were possibly ex Salvation Army Bandsmen.

The Band first started contesting in 1922 when it took part in the Fairford contest on 15th July. This was all the idea of Charles Clifton, who was the Secretary, and who believed that the contesting was the only way to improve the Band. He also said that we should do it properly with a professional conductor, so he brought in a Mr T J Wornall from London who had many years of experience under the great Tom Morgan who had been one of the leading lights in the Brass Band world of contesting for many years. We most certainly felt the impact that Tommy Wornall had upon us. He was more like a fatherly figure and seemed capable of coaxing almost anything out of us. The upshot of all this was that we were 3rd in the march contest and 4th in the test piece out of about 10 or 12 Bands which were all of good quality and most of them with many years of contesting experience. We had no soprano player at that time so Mr Wornall played the soprano as well as conducting. Mr Miller, our Bandmaster, played solo cornet. I played repiano cornet that day and my brother played 2nd horn. That was our baptism in contesting and I think we were all well pleased with the result. We played '*Fraternity*' by John Moorhouse in the march contest and the test piece was '*Classic Gems No. 1*'. I remember as we were going home that night, someone said 'Never mind, we will win it next year', and we did! But that is another story.

Later that year we played at our second contest. This was at Kirtlington Park and organised by Bletchington Band. The test piece was from the opera '*Lily of Kallarny*', and much more difficult than '*Classic Gems*'. Again Tommy Wornall conducted and played soprano. Only two Bands entered this contest, ourselves and a Band called 'Chawley Brick Works'. I have no idea where they came from. They were a Band of about 12-14 strong but were all old timers of vast experience and I remember hearing one say to another "'Us'll win this easily, they be all boys".

Each Band had to play a march going into the Park and as we started off I also remember another of them saying, "They might only be boys but they can't half play, can't em". We again played '*Fraternity*' for the march contest. This was on the stand, not the march into the Park, and were awarded 1st prize. We also won

1st prize for the test piece and that was how the word 'prize' was added to the title of the Band.

Just after this we had quite an influx of players owing to the fact that Morris Motors was expanding and taking on a larger work force. Amongst these were a number of Bandsmen who immediately looked round for a Band to join. As we were the only Brass Band locally they came to us. We got two cornet players and a solo horn player from the Wolverton area, and also a good soprano cornet player from Royston in Hertfordshire. This was Bob Hinkins whose uncle was head of the builders 'Hinkins & Frewin' and who helped the Band no end later on by providing work for players who joined the Band.

In 1923 the Band continued to prosper musically and competed at Swindon (this was in a hall), and if I remember rightly won 2nd prize in the second section, the test piece was '**Border Songs and Ballads**'. Then in July competed again at Fairford. Again 3rd in the march, as in the previous year, but winning on the test piece '**La Traviata**'. Also we won the medal for best solo cornet. This was won by Lewis Norwood who had joined us earlier from Wolverton. He went on to win many more medals before he moved on to form Morris Motors Band at the end of 1924.

Just after the Fairford contest we had a change of professional conductor and Mr Frank Brooks from Wolverton took over in August 1923. The Band competed at the first Association contest (test piece '**Dawn of Spring**') gaining 1st prize and also 1st prize for march, again playing '**Fraternity**'.

1924 again saw the Band on the contest platform. First at Swindon where they won two prizes, 2nd on march '**Joy of Life**' and 3rd on the test piece which was '**Rigoletto**'. The Band competed at Silchester with 1st on '**Joy of Life**', and 2nd on the test piece '**Rigoletto**'. The same again at Aldbourne, then at Henley where the Band won on the test piece '**Gems of the Opera**'. There was no march contest.

Then in July we competed again at Fairford [Saturday 19 July 1924] with 1st, playing march '**Joy of Life**', but only 2nd on test piece '**Rigoletto**'. The following week [Saturday 26 July 1924, Sports Ground, Worcester College, Oxford] was the Association contest where the Band won two 1st prizes playing the march '**Joy of Life**' and the test piece '**Woodland Revels**'. There was also an open section that year for Bands outside of the Association with a choice of two test pieces, either '**Rigoletto**' or '**Berlioz Faust**'. The Band also entered this section choosing to play '**Rigoletto**' which had been well and truly rehearsed that year. Three other Bands, Aldbourne, Swindon and Bletchley also played the same piece, but Hanwell Band from London chose to play '**Berlioz Faust**', a much more difficult piece and practically swept the board. They won both march and test piece and also medals for soprano, solo cornet, solo horn, trombone and euphonium. Headington were 2nd in both march and test piece and won the medal for flugel, the only thing that Hanwell did not take back to London. I still have that medal.

In September [27 September 1924] the Band played in the 5th section at Crystal Palace on the test piece '**Labour and Love**'. Our professional conductor, Frank Brooks was unable to train and conduct the Band on this occasion as he said that he had his hands full with his own Band, Wolverton, who were in the Grand Shield section, one section below the Championship, and were playing '*Oliver Cromwell*'.

As a result we engaged Mr Albert Lawton from Leicester who had been the adjudicator at Oxford. This, I am afraid was a very bad mistake as he was a Yorkshireman and he was continually saying "I want more tone, more tone". We never were a heavy Band and so on the day, we practically blew our heads off and were well slated for it. It could all have been so different with our usual conductor.

Just after Crystal Palace, Morris Motors Band started up and depleted the ranks of Headington Band by nine players, myself included. Three solo cornets, flugel, solo horn, solo euphonium, two Bb basses also three former Headington players on cornet, baritone and trombone. All of these players were employees in the works. I was not working there at that time but went along as I was offered the soprano which was what I had always wanted. This left Headington Band in the doldrums for some little while and the following year, 1925, the Band moved its headquarters to Oxford, to the *Cape of Good Hope* and that was when the idea came to change its name. The Band did however compete at the association contest and were 2nd to Morris Motors. The test piece being '**Echoes of the Opera**', and they also took the medal for best solo cornet. So although down, were not out!

1926 saw the Band gradually building up a little with a learners class again. The Band entered the association solo and quartet contest which was held in the Town Hall and which originated the year before in 1925.

They obtained 2nd in solo and 2nd and 3rd in the quartet. Later in the year they took part in the association full Band contest and were 2nd again to Morris Motors, the test piece being '**Oberon**'.

It was shortly after that contest that I returned to the Band and helped out as assistant soloist.

1927 saw the Band gradually making progress. In 1926 the Pressed Steel works had opened and several Bandsmen from Wales who got jobs there joined us. A lovely solo cornet from Aberdare, a euphonium from Ogmere and an Eb bass from that region. 1927 saw the Band back to the contest field, gaining 3rd prize in the second section at Hanwell, the test piece was '**Operatic Beauties**'. The Band also competed at Egham. Then again at Fairford gaining 1st prize on '**Operatic Beauties**'. The Band also competed at association contest which turned out to be a real farce. Only two Bands entered the open section, Hanwell and Morris Motors which was won by Hanwell, and only two Bands in the association first section, Morris Motors and Headington, finishing in that order. No entries at all in the lower section. Headington won the quartet earlier that year.

1928 was a year of changing fortunes for the Band. The Band were 2nd at Fairford, test piece '**Semiramide**' and then won the association contest which was held at a new venue (Shipton Manor). Morris Motors did not compete as they were also having problems. The test piece was '**Semiramide**'. As far as I remember that was all the contesting we did that year until September when the Band decided to enter the contest at Hanwell which was being held much later than usual. This, however caused a rift in the Band and Mr Miller objected to the Band going, on the grounds that it was a waste of money and that we could not afford to go. He resigned when it was put to the vote and the Band decided to go. This was a great pity as he had been a good Bandmaster for almost ten years. This left me to coach the Band for the last two weeks before the contest as Frank Brooks, our professional, could not attend until the night before the contest as he was busy preparing his own Band for Crystal Palace which was later that month. I had earlier that year been elected as the assistant Bandmaster with little or no experience so that it was a lot on my shoulders. However, as things turned out, we did very well to get 2nd prize which was one better than the year before. We were without a Bandmaster for a while so I continued taking the Band in rehearsal and a couple of concerts that we did in the Town Hall were taken by Mr Brooks. About this time one of our members who worked at Pressed Steel told us of a Mr William Uzzell working at Pressed Steel who was a former Bandmaster in Wales. As a result he was invited along for an audition and was offered the position as Bandmaster which he accepted. I stayed on as a Deputy Bandmaster working closely with Mr Uzzell and we got on well together and he entrusted me with the 'A' quartet and shortly after we won the association quartet contest.

This was now 1929. In the ensuing months we also gained a number of new players, mostly from Wales where the pits were closing and there was work in Oxford at both Pressed Steel and Morris Motors, and also in the building trade which went in hand with the expanding car industry. In that year, 1929, we attended a number of contests. The second section at Leicester being one of them, amongst some very good Bands indeed. We did not win a prize but I feel sure that we all felt so much better having competed in such good company. The test piece was Weber's '**Der Freischuetz**'. We later on competed at Aynho but I am not sure about the name of the test piece and again no prize having played under our own conductor Mr Uzzell, Mr Brooks not being available, also the Band was in the process of rebuilding with the new players who were still settling in. In July we again competed at Fairford also still under Mr Uzzell where the Band gave a very good performance and were awarded 2nd prize. Next came the association contest which was again held at Shipton Manor and the Band, playing under Frank Brooks gained 1st prize, again playing '**Der Freifchuetz**'. Next the Band played at Bournemouth winning the march contest [with '**Puncinello**'] which was actually played on the march, then were 2nd in both first and second section. As I remember it, the test pieces were 'Summer Day', for section two, and '**Der Freifchutz**', for section one. The Band then competed at Hanwell for the third year in succession and after being 3rd in 1927, and 2nd in 1928, we managed to win it this time. The test piece was '**Rigaletto**'. I forgot to mention that the Band took possession of a new set of instruments earlier in the year and this appeared to give the Band a much heavier tone than previously. That was

about all the contesting for that year, 1929, apart from a solo and quartet contest at Bicester in November which my quartet again took 1st prize and I won the solo contest playing flugel. I believe Mr Uzzell got 3rd with one of his quartets. That was a very busy year and quite a baptism for Mr Uzzell as Bandmaster. There were, of course, quite a number of engagements and concerts which were carried out by the Band, both out of doors and in the Town Hall and also out of the City.

The following year (1930) was, in my opinion, the highlight of the Band's career when the Band won 2nd prize at the May contest at Belle Vue, Manchester. We started off the year by retaining the association quartet championship playing '**Hymn to Music**', as we had done at Bicester. The previous year (1929), we had played Hubert Bath's '**Sunshine and Shade**', at the association contest. In April we also competed at Aynho in the quartet and again winning 1st prize playing '**Hymn to Music**'. Then came that magnificent performance at Belle Vue where the Band played number seven out of twenty Bands. Blackhall Colliery from Durham who played last were the only Band to beat us that day. The test piece was '**Songs of Old England**', and originally specially arranged for the Grand Shield section at Crystal Palace in 1922 by Hubert Bath (who also wrote the test piece '**Freedom**', for the championship in 1922). This title might make it sound like an easy piece of music, but far from it! He had taken several old English songs, stripped them down to the bare melody, re-harmonised them and turned out a wonderful test piece. There were solos for soprano, solo cornet, solo horn, tenor trombone, bass trombone and euphonium. On top of all this the second and third cornets, trombones and basses were, at times, buzzing about like bees at a wedding. The last movement 'Here's a health unto his majesty', was a real cracker. The final chord 'FF' and the solo cornets on a top 'C', what a finish! We played two sopranos that day, there being two soprano solos plus a cadenza and helping out the top cornets. There was a wonderful run down in fast quavers from the top of the Band right down to the basses leading into that last movement. The Band spent the weekend as guests of 'Denton Original Band', and gave two concerts in Denton Park on Sunday afternoon and evening. The secretary of Denton Band was Ernest Clifton and brother of Charles Clifton, our secretary.

The next contest was the association contest which was held on the University running ground. I am a bit hazy about this one as there were only three Bands in the top section which was won by Willesden Town from London. Morris Motors were 2nd and we were 3rd. Now as the London Band were not members of the association (being outside the distance limit), they could not compete for the Frank Gray Shield which was for association members only, so Morris took this and we also had a shield. I believe what happened was that Willesden were the only entrants for the open section and ourselves and Morris the only entrants for the association, so it was decided to lump the three together to make a contest of it. The test piece that day was '**Coriolanus**'. What happened about the lower section I do not know. There was usually a very good entry for that.

Next came the Bournemouth contest [Saturday 5th July 1930]. On this occasion we only came 2nd on the march which was won by Radstock who were a very good Band indeed. In the second section we were placed 2nd, the test piece being '*Souvenir of the Opera*', this being held in the Winter Gardens. Then we played in the top section, the test piece for this being '*Rienzi*', and upon which the Band gave a very good performance, as did Radstock. Then came the shambles! This was Yeovil Band who had won the previous year. They were quite good to start with but then came the movement with a cornet solo. About halfway through, the soloist completely broke down and the rest of the Band gradually came to a stop. After what seemed an eternity, the Band started up again and struggled through to the end. The outcome was that the adjudicator (Manuel Bilton), a well known Army Bandmaster, awarded them 1st prize and also the cornet medal. There was sheer

pandemonium in the hall at this announcement. Not from us! I think, we were just too dumbstruck by this result to say or do anything. All that the adjudicator could say above the uproar was 'For all I know the man might have been ill'. I do know that the Band said that they would never patronise such a contest again as it was felt that we had a raw deal the year before, but I won't dwell on that.

There were, of course, plenty of concerts, mostly council, and one or two engagements which took us up to September when it was decided to enter the Crystal Palace contest. We were put into section 4 which was one section higher than 1924 when we competed in section 5. The test piece was not a very good one, '*Concert Suite*', and did not really suit the Band whom, by now, had developed quite a big tone. Moreover, there was, at this time, an undercurrent of unrest in the Band and it was being left to me more and more to take rehearsals besides my own Band, Kidlington, whom I had taken over twelve months earlier. I had stated my intention of leaving the Band after Crystal Palace so as to enable me to concentrate on Kidlington who, incidentally, were paying me well so had first call upon my services.

Well, Crystal Palace, unfortunately, was a disaster in as much that the Band drew number one and, although given extra time by the stewards, we went on the stands a few players short. Quite a few players decided to go by car instead of the coach and were late in arriving. Some dashed on to the stand after we started playing and a few did not make it at all, including the Bandmaster, Mr Uzzell. Had I been Mr Brooks, I don't think that I would have taken the Band under those conditions. Mr Uzzell resigned shortly after I left which was a very sad end to a brilliant year.

I do not know a great deal about 1931 apart from the fact that a new conductor took over, a Mr Hammond (ex Royal Marine I believe). My brother kept me informed to a certain extent. The Band did take part in the association contest which was once more held at Shipton Manor in June and were 3rd to Aylesbury Printing Works with Morris Motors 2nd. The test piece was '*La Favorita*'. I remember that the Band played well although I was not with them. I conducted Kidlington who were 2nd in a lower section and that was their first ever contest. I believe that the next contest the Band played in was at Banbury where they surprised everybody by winning against the same Bands as at Shipton and it was

a thoroughly deserved win. They were conducted as usual by Frank Brooks although I am not sure who was the resident Bandmaster at that time, it may have been ROG Jenkins who played the second soprano at Belle Vue. He and his brother Eddie (a horn player) came from Maesteg in South Wales when Pressed Steel first started in about 1928-29. Headington Band were 2nd on the march that day in Banbury which was played on the march through the Town, all three sections were lumped into one section for the march and my own Band (Kidlington) were 1st to everyone's surprise. It was no surprise to me as I had an ex-corporal from the RAF drilling them on the march in the streets of Kidlington for a couple of nights a week for two weeks before the contest. Also I saw to it that they played a march that they could manage, how the giants fell on that day!

Well now, I believe the next and final contest of the year (1931) was at Crystal Palace where the Band was promoted to section 3 owing to their win at Banbury where they beat at least two Bands who were playing in the Grand Shield (one section below the Championship). Two nights before the contest I was asked if I could help out as they were short of a first horn player, so I went along and played with them. My brother played solo horn as usual. In those days there was no such thing as a registration and the practise of borrowed players was rife. I, however, was simply filling in a gap in the Band which brought me up. The test piece was '*Gems of Melody*', from the works of Liszt. No prize though!

One rather strange coincidence about the day that the Band played in the 3rd section at Crystal Palace in 1931. These contests first started in 1900 but as no contests were held between 1913 and 1920 owing to the World War No 1, the contest on that date became the 26th annual contest. It was also held on the 26th September which was my 26th Birthday and believe it or not the Band drew number 26 to play. I'm afraid I have no idea where we finished in order of merit.

I have very little knowledge of the Band's activities in 1932 as I was again playing with Morris Motors (now in the Championship class) as well as still the Bandmaster of Kidlington. I believe that Headington were still organising their own solo and quartet contests and were most certainly still organising their carnival and Band contests which were held on Tuckwells Meadows in Grandpont. This carnival was first started in 1926 and attracted good quality Bands from far and wide with some wonderful trophies.

1933 and 1934 I know very little of as I had dropped out of the Band world having started my own business and had no time to spare.

I eventually came back to help out a little in 1935 as the Band were struggling having lost a few players and my own business by now settled down somewhat. Walter Chapman (an ex-Salvationist) was at this time Bandmaster and I don't think the Band had contested for some time. There may be records to prove otherwise.

At the beginning of 1936 I was asked to take over the Band as it appeared to be falling apart. I agreed to do so as long as it did not interfere with my business which was expanding. The first priority was the quartet contest early in the year

which we managed to win. We played a quartet of my own composition which was titled '**A Springtime Phantasy**', and was very satisfying. We later on went to a quartet contest at Saltley in Birmingham where I feel sure that we should have won. We had a fairly late draw but instead of staying close to the hall some of them decided to go shopping. Unbelievably seven quartets drawn in front of us dropped out so that somebody had to go looking for them. By the time that our members were found and came racing back coughing and panting they were in no fit state to play. The result was a shambles. The solo cornet player of Birmingham Metropolitan Works Band came to me afterwards and said, 'What in God's name happened'. He said, 'I heard you in rehearsal in the work's canteen and I told Harry Heyes, our conductor, that nobody was going to beat that today'.

We played at Fairford contest and also in two sections at Banbury without gaining any prizes apart from the solo trombone being awarded the prize for best solo of that day. He was Tom Coulthard who had recently joined us from the North of England. The Band was in a pretty poor state and very few players of the Belle Vue days left. We carried out quite a few council and other concerts and then one or two players came along to swell the ranks somewhat and we were now almost back to strength.

It was decided to enter the top section at Reading as the test piece was '**Songs of England**', the former Belle Vue test piece. We had nothing like the band of that time and it was going to be a lot of hard work to get the Band into shape for this one. As it happened the Band rose to the occasion and were awarded 2nd prize. The Band was also on the evening concert programme as a guest Band to give a solo item. We chose to play a selection from '**Lohengrin**', and as a result literally brought the house down and turned out to be the star turn of the night. Very satisfying indeed.

About three months into 1937, I had to relinquish my position with the Band owing to pressure of business and ROG Jenkins took over once more. This must have been very unsettling for the Band with all of this changing around. I have no further knowledge of the Band during that year.

1938, ROG Jenkins was still in charge and I had a serious illness early in the year followed by a long convalescence during which time I looked in on the Band and was promptly pressed into service on the flugel. This was just before the association contest which was held on Botley Road Recreation Ground. I believe the test piece was '**Recollections of Balfe**', and the Band was 2nd in both march and test piece, the winning Band in each case being Spring Gardens from Reading. This was a very good Band whom we had met on numerous occasions in the past.

We next went to the Banbury contest, entering both sections where we had a field day winning both sections plus solo cornet medal in each section and Frank Austin, our euphonium player, taking the trophy for the outstanding player of the day. We did quite a few concerts, and the next contest was at Reading which was outdoors and earlier than the annual contest held in the Town Hall. The test piece here was again '**Recollections of Balfe**' and was conducted by ROG Jenkins and myself playing flugel, and we were again 2nd to Spring Gardens. Then in the march contest I was invited to conduct the Band playing '**Punchinello**', and ROG

Jenkins sat in playing cornet and we won 1st prize. After that I gradually got my health back and resumed work in my business so that I dropped out of the Band for the time being. At the end of the year ROC Jenkins resigned from the Band. For what reason I do not know and I received an SOS from the Band to take over once again.

I took over the Band from January 1939. This turned out to be a very tragic year with the start of World War 2 later in the year. The Band played at two contests, Chippenham and the association, the test piece in each case being '**A Selection of the Works of Weber**'. There was no prize at the Chippenham contest, but 2nd at the association which was won by Aylesbury Printing Works in both march and test piece. We played the march '**The Conqueror**'. Kidlington were 3rd in each case. The Band gave several concerts in the Parks that summer before the war started on the 3rd September. We immediately lost a number of players to the armed forces as did Morris Motors to the extent that neither Band could function on it's own so that it was decided to amalgamate and help each other. This worked for a few months, in favour of Morris Motors. We helped them do a couple of BBC broadcasts and also a number of engagements round the various RAF stations and army camps in the vicinity known, in those days, as Garrison Theatre. This meant that any fees coming were going to Morris Motors whereas we were getting nothing.

In June the following year, 1940, Charles Clifton who, at the age of 60, had just retired from work became very ill and died. It was then decided by the trustees and Band Committee to close the Band down for the duration of the war. In effect, the trustees were members of the Carnival Committee (which was formed in 1926 for the sole purpose of the purchase of the new instruments which were obtained in 1929), Charles Clifton had been the brains behind all of this. In about 1935 CH Giles became Band Secretary, with Charles Clifton in an overall managerial position of both Band and Carnival Committee, and this worked well. Apparently some time during the war, the Pressed Steel works decided to start a Band and approached the trustees for the loan of the instruments, music and music stands. Some of our Band members who had not gone into the armed forces and were employed at Pressed Steel works were, I believe, behind this. The trustees agreed to the transfer of instruments etc. When I came out of the RAF at the beginning of 1946, I was very surprised to learn of this and immediately got in touch with the trustees with a view to getting the instruments back and restarting our Band. Without going into details let me say that it took twelve months to get the property returned as Pressed Steel were very loathed to part with it and we had to wait until they got another set of instruments. As the records must show the Band restarted in January of 1947 with myself as Bandmaster until the end of 1951 when I was obliged to give up owing to ill health, more or less a result of some of my wartime experiences. As will be seen, there were a great many changes of Bandmaster for various reasons. During my association with the Band starting in 1918, they were, M Bowen, W Miller, WD Uzzell, Mr Hammond, ROG Jenkins, W Chapman, JA Alder, ROC Jenkins and JA Alder. Cyril Challis took over in 1952 and, I believe, that was the year the Band changed it's name to 'City of Oxford', something that had been in mind since the Band moved it's headquarters from Headington in 1925.

THIS IS A SORT OF CODA AND RE-APPRAISAL

I hope that the enclosed history of the Band (as I know it) will help you in your quest. It is quite possible that I may have left out a few facts and figures of the Band's history as I have no data or records whatsoever, just my memories! I have not given any details of contests etc. from the restarting of the Band in 1947, or subsequent years, as surely there must be records covering that period. If you wish to condense or cut out any of the history as I have given it, that's entirely up to you.

P.S. - One Band member was lost during the war, that was Bert Hollis who was a long standing member and who played 2nd cornet at Belle Vue in 1930. I had put him on the flugel during my pre-war days as Bandmaster. He was killed on 9th September 1943 during the 'bloody' landings at Salerno. His name is on a large memorial at Cassino (of which I have a photo), which means that, like thousands of others, he has no known grave. I obtained this information from the war graves commission together with photographs of the graves of other close friends of mine who were killed in the Italian Campaign.

I had run across Bert some time earlier in North Africa toward the end of the campaign in Tunisia at a place called 'Medjez-E1-Bab', or what was left of it. My unit had stop here at about midday for a brew up of tea and a snack of bully beef and biscuits (the normal fare in those days), and I spotted Bert with the Band of the Hampshire Regiment who were giving a short concert in the main square of the village for the troops in the area. This was quite an unusual treat in those days. We were able to meet for a brief chat and a handshake and then we were off in the general direction of Cap Bon where the remnants of Rommel's one time all conquering and invincible 'Afrika Korps', were trapped and finally surrendered on 12th May 1943. According to German propaganda they only surrendered after using up the very last bullet. This was far from the truth as the allies captured enough equipment, arms, ammunition, guns and tanks etc. to have started another war. That, of course, is nothing to do with the history of the Band. Just one or two of it's members.

J A Alder