



A Brief History

In 1816 Peter Wharton founded a brass and reed band in the Yorkshire village of Queenshead - later to become Queensbury. John Foster, apart from being the founder of Black Dyke Mills, played French Horn in this band. It has been said on many occasions that Black Dyke was formed from it, however this is not strictly true, as "Peter Whartons band went out of existence through loss of members". In 1833 a new band was formed named 'Queenshead Band', which may well have contained players from the former band. It is reported that this Band reached its Zenith from 1838 to 1843, at which time it consisted of 18 musicians". However it is recorded in the Halifax Courier of the 15th September 1855 that:

"Queenshead Band formed early in the century by residents came into difficulties. John Foster & Son, having lately become acquainted with the depressed state of the band determined to make an effort themselves to raise it up again. Accordingly they have purchased from that eminent maker, Mr. Joseph Higham, of Manchester, a new set of instruments which have this week been delivered to the band, which in future is to be denominated Black Dyke Mills Band. A new and talented leader, as well as several performers, have been added to the band which now comprises 18 musicians. Messrs. Fosters have provided for them a comfortable room in which they will meet for practising".

Thus the Black Dyke Band was formed. Most of its musicians both lived in Queensbury and worked at the mill, so a close link between the band and the community was formed which remains to this day. The Band has always been at the forefront of Brass Band activity, making one of the earliest Brass Band recordings in 1904 and embarking on a five month tour of Canada and the United States in 1906, on which it played in over 200 concerts and travelled over 13,000 miles. Since then the band has toured many different countries, including Germany, Austria, Italy, Switzerland, Russia, Belgium, Sierra Leone, and Spain, returning to Canada in 1972. In 1988 the Band took part in the Bi-centennial Celebrations in Australia, they also had a sell-out tour in Japan. As well as returning to Weisbaden in Germany to play at the Rheingau Music Festival the band have had successful concert and master class tours in Denmark, Northern Ireland, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland.

The Band has made over 120 recordings. Former Prime Minister Edward Heath was guest conductor on one, whilst Paul McCartney and Wings broke new ground with the Band with another. In 1996 they won The Music

Industries Association Award for the Best CD in the Orchestral category, with their recording of Sir William Walton's Music, featuring the Shakespearean actor Robert Portal.

In February 1999 the album that the Band recorded with Evelyn Glennie was nominated in the 'Crossover Classical Section' for a 'Grammy Award' in Los Angeles, this was followed in March 1999 with an Oscar nomination for the best song in a film, "That'll Do" from the film "Babe 2" the vocalist was Peter Gabriel with backing by Black Dyke. The Band has enjoyed success with other recording artists including 'Torry Amos' and the well-known group 'Beautiful South'. Decades earlier they were chosen to appear on the Beatles hit record 'Yellow Submarine'. Black Dyke Band also provide the background music written by Jim Parker for the popular UK Television series of programmes 'Ground Force' and in co-operation with BBC Worldwide have released their CD 'Ground Force' featuring the music from the series.

Lady Walton and Richard Baker feature in the Band's CD release of 'Façade', Edith Sitwell's poems set to music by Sir William Walton. The recording also presents excellent arrangements by Edward Watson of Sir William's much loved film music, 'Richard III' and 'Battle of Britain Suite'.

Furthering its connections with all aspect of music making, Black Dyke Band and Halifax Choral Society have recorded the complete 'Messiah' by George Frederick Handel, the Band are proud to be connected with the world's oldest choral society.

In addition to touring and recording, the musical life of the band has included television shows, films, broadcasts, concerts at Music Festivals, Universities, The Proms, Fanfare into Europe, Songs of Praise for BBC, covering the whole musical spectrum, appearing with Lesley Garrett, Elton John, Evelyn Glennie, James Morrison, Rod Franks, Ian Bousfield, Phil Smith and many more.

Equally many famous and well known names have conducted the Band, including the legendary Alexander Owen, John Gladney, Arthur O. Pearce, Harry Mortimer, Alex Mortimer, Major George Willcocks, Major Cecil Jaeger, Geoffrey Brand, Roy Newsome, Major Peter Parkes, James Watson and many more. In October 1993 Black Dyke Band made an historic appearance as the first British Brass Band to perform at the Carnegie Hall, New York, also in October 1994 became the first Brass Band ever to perform at The Royal College of Music. They have subsequently appeared as guests of the LSO Brass ensemble at the Barbican, performed composer master class sessions for The Society of Promotion for New Music and have appeared before Her Majesty the Queen and His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh.

Over the years the Black Dyke Band has produced an abundance of famous instrumentalists, in the formative years players such as Ceres Jackson, John Paley and Harold Pinches, were recognised as the very best. In recent decades, Rowland Jones, the Euphonium player, who had a wonderful voice,

went on to become Principal Tenor at Sadlers Wells. It has to be said that his training in the brass band, particularly sight reading, was a tremendous advantage. Jack Pinches was Solo Trombone for Black Dyke at 16 years of age, he went on to become Principal Trombone in the BBC Symphony Orchestra. Two former Principal Cornets at Black Dyke, William Lang and Maurice Murphy achieved the position of Principal Trumpet with London Symphony Orchestra, William retired in 1995 and Maurice, said by many people to be the greatest cornet player ever, holds the position currently. Rod Franks a former cornet player with Black Dyke is also Principal Trumpet with the London Symphony Orchestra.

Peter Graham is the Associate Conductor of Black Dyke Band, his introduction to brass music came as a young cornet player with the Ayr Salvation Army Band in his native Scotland. Deciding to make music a career he studied at Edinburgh and London Universities (Goldsmiths College) and holds a doctorate in composition. He enjoys an international reputation as one of the leading composers of music for brass band with over 100 publications to his credit, which include, The Essence of Time, Montage and On Alderley Edge. His latest work, Harrison's Dream, was commissioned by Boosey & Hawkes for the prestigious Millenium National Championships of Great Britain. Increasingly active as a guest conductor, he has worked in that capacity in many European countries, in the USA with the Star Lake and New York Staff Bands and regularly in England.

The well-known composer, Philip Wilby is the Musical Associate to the Band, educated at Leeds Grammar School and Keeble College, Oxford. Philip attributes the awakening of his interest in composition to Herbert Howells, whose extra-curricular composition classes he attended whilst a violinist in the National Youth Orchestra. His commitment to composition developed further in Oxford and continued afterwards when working as a professional violinist. He joined the staff at Leeds University at the invitation of Alexander Goehr in 1972.

Philip's teaching activities have taken him to Dartington and Canford Summer Schools, Bavaria, Norway and USA. He has received commissions from California State University-Fresno, St. Paul's, Norwich and Liverpool Anglican Cathedrals, the BBC and English Northern Philharmonia.

In recognition of its continued success, services to music in general and the region in particular, the Band, was awarded the Honorary Freedom of the City by the City of Bradford in 1976. Black Dyke Band has always been recognised as one of the finest bands in the world and was granted charitable status in 1997. This will ensure a sound structure for years to come.

The Band are proud to be appointed the first ever 'Band in Residence' at the Royal Northern College of Music, many exciting projects are planned to further brass activities at the College, major concerts featuring soloists from

the RNCM, open rehearsals will be held which students will be encouraged to attend, new compositions and Gala Concerts.

For almost a century and a half the Band have received acclaim from music reviewers world wide. In concluding his report on a concert in Toronto William Littler the columnist and music critic of the well respected broadsheet 'Toronto Star' quoted; "But if the band had played no more than the fanfare from Strauss' Festmusik der Stadt Wien, it would have slackened my jaw. Virtuosity of this order takes the breath away". Following the Newbury Festival of 2003. Caroline Franklin's praiseworthy review of the Band's appearance at the 2003 Newbury Spring Festival "The audience had, like me, gone along to this return visit by the famous band simply from the love of the sound they produce", " An afternoon of great playing- surely Black Dyke will be back".

In October 2000 Lady Walton MBE very kindly accepted the invitation of the Band to become its first Honorary Patron, reflecting the Band's appreciation of successful and continued ventures with Lady Walton and the Walton Trust.

March 2001 saw the Trustees and Members of the Band present its first Honorary Life Member Award to Star of stage and screen, Russ Abbott, in recognition of his excellent contribution to the world of theatre and entertainment and as a supporter of the Band over many years.

At the National Championship contest in October 2001 Black Dyke Band became National Champions, although the Band have not entered the competition every year, this was the seventeenth time that they have won the title since 1947.

The double CD recording, 'The Heaton Collection' featuring Black Dyke Band and the International Staff Band of the Salvation Army was declared 'CD of the Year 2002' by 'British Bandsman' and Australia's 'Band World'.

As the recording industry has progressed and developed, from cylinders, to 78" records, to LP's, to cassettes and to the present day Compact Discs, Black Dyke Band have always been at the forefront, recording a wide range of music on all formats, confirmed by the release in 2003 of 'Spectacular Classics Volume III', 'Black Dyke Plays Beatles', 'Eric Ball-Festival Music' and ' Black Dyke Plays Greatest Movie Hits'.

The band logo of the stags head and Latin quotation are taken from the armorial bearings granted in 1857 to John Foster, founder of the band. The quotation translates to:

" A C T J U S T L Y A N D F E A R N O T H I N G "

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