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Original Citation

Etheridge, Stephen (2012) Brass Bands in the Southern Pennines, 1857-1914: The Ethos of Rational Recreation and Perceptions of Working-Class Respectability. In: *Class, Culture and Community: New Perspectives in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century British Labour History*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, pp. 37-54. ISBN 978-1-4438-4064-4

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Brass Bands in the Southern Pennines, 1857-1914: The Ethos of Rational Recreation and Perceptions of Working-Class Respectability

Stephen Etheridge

Opening on 5 May 1857, Manchester held the largest British fine-arts exhibition to date, the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition opened to the public and by the end of May visitors had reached significant numbers. *John Bull and Britannia* reported that on the 28 May, 9,333 people attended the exhibition in the afternoon alone.¹ This exhibition caught the public's imagination: in all, one and a half million people visited the exhibition. As happened at the Great Exhibition, many employers arranged for their workers to visit. Titus Salt brought 2,500 workers from his Saltaire works, *The Art-Treasures Examiner*, the weekly exhibition's journal, wrote of their arrival:

All dressed in their Sunday best... in three special trains....The fine brass band belonging to the establishment accompanied the first two trains, and the Saltaire drum-and fife-band the last....They were accompanied, by their generous employer, Mr Titus Salt, who paid all expenses connected with the trip....²

Salt created a spectacle as he entered the gallery: striding in front of his brass band, who were leading the mill's employees into the exhibition.³ Salt used his band, seen by observers as his employees, as a declaration of his status within

¹ *John Bull and Britannia*, 30 May, 1857, p. 352.

² *Art-Treasures Examiner*, p. 252, cited in, Helen Rees Leahy, "Walking for Pleasure?" Bodies of Display at The Manchester Art Exhibition in 1857', *Art History*, 30/4, September 2007, p. 560.

³ *Art-Treasures Examiner*, p. 252.

the country. The reasons for, and thought processes, behind this theatrical act are the influences behind this chapter.

When examining working-class relationships with industrialists, such as Salt, for example, why should we use brass bands in the analysis? Brass bands often represented metonyms of working-class cultural life in the north of England, and, in particular, the Southern Pennines. In 1972, for example, David Clark, the Labour MP for the Colne Valley, asked why the Arts Council should give a grant to the National Youth Orchestra, and not the National Youth Brass Band. He accused the Arts Council of, 'being against working-class culture'.⁴ In 1974, writing in *The Times*, Peter Hennessy went further, reporting on the National Band Contest, at the Royal Albert Hall, he highlighted the image of working-class cultural history that brass bands were capable of producing, writing:

A roll call of the bands is like an evocation of industrial history From Wingates Temperance and Black Dyke Mills to more modern conglomerates like the far from poetic Williams...Grown men, old bandsmen say, have been known to cry at the beauty of it all..... Of all the manifestations of working-class culture, nothing is more certain than a brass band to bring on an attack of the George Orwells. Even the most hardened bourgeois cannot resist romanticising the proletariat a little when faced with one.⁵

One of the reasons for this regional association came from the density of brass bands in the Southern Pennines, starting from the mid-nineteenth century, to the 1920s, when brass bands began to decline, a decline beginning with the new media revolution influencing the way people spent their leisure time. Writing

⁴ *The Times*, 24 November 1972.

⁵ *The Times*, 11 October 1974.

in 1914, *The British Bandsman* reported that, 'it could not be denied that the cradle of the brass band was on the slopes of the Pennine Chain.'⁶ At their height, from around 1860-1914, in West Yorkshire alone, there were at least 241 brass bands.⁷ On the other side of the Southern Pennines, the brass band historian, Arthur Taylor, illustrated the density of brass bands by saying that the whole area of Saddleworth, 'could almost be designated a national park for brass bands, with Dobcross as the centrepiece.'⁸ Bands were composed entirely of working-class members. *Wright and Rounds Brass Band News* noticed that around Manchester, 'our amateur bands are composed of horny-handed working men exclusively....I mean factory-men, forge-men, colliers and so on.'⁹

Patrick Joyce argues that, 'the manufacturing districts of Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire were the cradle of factory production, and it is to them that posterity has turned to discern the nature of the class structure to which the new system of factory production gave rise.'¹⁰ Therefore, to analyse the relationships between the working-class brass bands and the people, largely

⁶ *The British Bandsman*, 18 April 1914, p. 349.

⁷ David Russell, *The Popular Musical Societies of The Yorkshire Textile District, 1850-1914: A Study of the Relationship between Music and Society* (PhD Thesis, University of York, 1979), pp. 326-333.

⁸ Arthur R. Taylor, *Brass Bands* (London, 1979), p. 211.

⁹ *Wright and Round's Brass Band News*, May 1899, cited in, *Wright and Round's Amateur Band Teacher's Guide and Bandsman's Adviser* (Liverpool, 1889), p. 11.

¹⁰ Patrick Joyce, *Work Society and Politics, the culture of the factory in later Victorian England* (London, 1980,) p. xiii.

the bourgeoisie and middle class, who initially gave them most of their financial support is a new way of understanding industrial relationships in the Southern Pennines, brass bands, until recently, often being neglected in the construction of working-class identities.

This chapter, then, will explore two types of relationships that the brass bands had in the north: the first, the relationship between the brass bands and the industrialists, the relationship, for example, between the Fosters and Black Dyke Mills Band. The other relationship bands had was with the wider community in the form of the public subscription bands. Haworth Brass Band's relationship, for example, with the local community was remarkably similar to the relationship the industrialists had with their bands, only having to appeal to the wider community for finance, often invoking a wider set of positive moral values to receive the subscriptions. The questions that arise from these relationships are that clearly industrialists and local communities gave bands the financial support to form and begin running bands, nevertheless, in providing the means to pursue music as a rational recreation, seen by the middle class as a moral, ethical, physical and intellectually improving pastime, what resulted from this philanthropy? The top down middle-class rhetoric of rational recreation may have provided finance, guidance and figures of authority, however, what did the working-class bandsmen gain from these acts, were they reciprocal or one-sided relationships? What did industrialists, and sponsoring communities, expect from their bands, who were receiving money to represent their workplace and community, in terms of behaviour, education, morals and ethics? Did bands

reject, absorb, distort or contradict the financial support that was given with the caveat of moral, educational and ethical behaviour upon its receipt? The top-down proponents of rational recreation could, through finance, authority and moral pressure, subscribe to, and enforce, as many laws, ethical guidelines and codes of behaviour as they wished, nevertheless, it was the working class who consumed these codes of behaviour that were the final arbiters of how they were interpreted.¹¹ This chapter, then, explores the relationship between the bourgeoisie and the working class through cultural parameters, and, although I do not reject the influence of the factory and industry in the formation of class consciousness, it is, nevertheless, the working-class culture of brass band music that gives us an under-explored insight into the relationships that were forged alongside the power of the state and the discipline of factory based wage labour in the shaping of modern society.¹²

Without the development of leisure time, however, brass bands could not have thrived. From 1850-1914, the British developed the working week as we now recognise it. Leisure began to develop, because of the change in the daily hours of work and the nature of the work carried out. Employers understood that productivity would increase, if hours were shorter, wages higher, and the pace of work increased.¹³ It was technological innovation, together with the introduction

¹¹ F.M.L. Thompson, 'Social Control in Victorian Britain', *The Economic History Review*, 34/2, May, 1981, p. 195.

¹² Thompson, p.189.

¹³ Hugh Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution* (London, 1980), p. 147.

of production line techniques that achieved higher production.¹⁴The Factory Act of 1850, changed textile workers' working day to ten and a half hours, and they were also assured a Saturday half-holiday. By 1877, this practice had spread to most of industry: partly because in 1867, the Factory Act defined a 'factory' as to encompass most of the industries in England and Wales, ranging from small workshops to large enterprises. By 1874, an act had reduced the hours of work in textile factories to ten hours in a weekday, and six and a half on a Saturday. It was the actions of organised labour, however, which helped reduce the hours in the working day even more. In the 1850s, the builders began the campaign for a nine-hour day, and this met with some success in the north of England and the building boom of the 1870s helped bring success for this campaign, establishing a nine-hour day for most unionised workers. Nevertheless, service, agricultural and retail workers continued to work very long and unsociable hours, however, for the industrial working class, there was now time to pursue leisure activities.¹⁵

This increased leisure time inevitably attracted the attention of philanthropists and social reformers. In the mid-nineteenth-century the rural and urban elite founded clubs, associations, and societies keen to provide civilising pastimes for the masses. They were keen to divert the attention of the working-class away from the ennui of factory work, and, what Ross McKibbin argues was,

¹⁴ Cunningham, p. 147.

¹⁵ Cunningham, p. 148.

'the inevitable solution to this tedium: the bottle.'¹⁶ The reaction of the left to the problem of drinking embraced the principals of rational recreation, but also an acceptance that the rougher elements of life in public houses could never be completely controlled. The Fabian Society surveyed the drinks trade with a view to finding an answer. The society's secretary, Edward Pease, acknowledged that the very poor working class would be drawn to drink, but needed education in how to drink with moderation, writing, 'the slum-dweller must have his liquor, but there is no reason why the state should not see that he is given a lesson in decency and comfort every time he takes his glass.'¹⁷ This ethos, however, could not be separated from the wider socialist aspiration to control working-class leisure and pleasure, thereby encouraging more rational recreations.¹⁸

This desire to provide rational recreation grew from a number of mainly masculine and plebeian influences. Historians have always been able to recognise a lower level in the social order. Peter Borsay argues that the lower orders were, 'labelled in various ways, for example: as the common people, the mobility, the plebs, the populace, the rabble, the masses, the lower orders, the labouring class, the working class, and the workers; and historians have felt able

¹⁶ Ross Mckibbin, 'Work and Hobbies in Britain, 1880-1950', from, Ross Mckibbin, *The Ideologies of Class, Social Relations in Britain 1880-1950* (Oxford, 1990), p.140.

¹⁷ E.R. Pease, *The Case for the Municipal Drinks Trade* (London, 1904), p. 8, cited in, Chris Waters, *British Socialists and the Politics of Popular Culture* (Manchester, 1990), p. 138.

¹⁸ Waters, p. 138.

to identify a particular type of recreational life for this group'.¹⁹ Working-class leisure, after the mid nineteenth-century, was fiercely competitive, and activities such as fishing, football and brass band contests developed strong communal rivalries. Heavy drinking was associated with the lower orders, drunkenness, and the violence it caused, became tools to stigmatise this group. Drinking, and making noise, seemed natural accompaniments to popular recreation, however, they were not just reactions to the grinding monotony of work, these features showed the sociability, and public nature, of working-class recreation.²⁰ The pub was an attractive place to be: it offered a range of activities for the working classes. From the 1830s, *The Bolton Press* showed the wide range of activities on offer, Peter Bailey highlighting activities that encouraged communal bonding, such as, bowling, quoiting, glee clubs and free and easies, amateur and professional dramatics, fruit and vegetable shows, flower shows, sweepstake clubs, and the meetings of friendly societies.²¹ Before the large scale building of dedicated bandrooms brass bands used rooms in pubs as places to rehearse and socialise. In these acts lied the irony that bands were carrying out rational recreation in a place that served alcohol, in short, rational recreation and the consumption of alcohol could coexist. Bacup band, for example, held members' birthdays and competition celebrations at the New Inn, in Bacup, for many

¹⁹ Peter Borsay, *A History of Leisure* (Basingstoke, 2006), pp. 85-86.

²⁰ Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England, rational recreation and the contest for control, 1830-1885* (London, 1978), p. 9.

²¹ Bailey, p. 9.

years.²² These social gatherings were opportunities to celebrate the year's achievements and to plan the next year's activity: these spaces were where brass bands played out and invented their rules, rituals and customs. When for, example, in 1900, the band reporter, 'Shoddythorpe' was in the West Yorkshire town of Batley he, 'saw a lot of men running up the street, so [he] said to a little man, with crooked legs, "What is up?" He said, "Band supper.... And a clinker it is too."²³ He then followed the man to the Bath Hotel, after many toasts and salutations to the success of the band: Shoddythorpe concluded that, 'of all the happy evenings in my life, this was the best. Batley band can play, and they also know how to hold an annual supper.'²⁴ For brass bands, then, as well as other social groups, the pub was not just a place to drink to excess, but a place where working-class groups could cement rituals and tradition. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, the social and economic role of the pub shrank. By 1871, there was an increase in the number of parks, museums, art galleries and mechanics' institutes, all promoting a more innocuous use of free time. Brass bands were also beginning to establish bandrooms that had the dual purpose of educational and social centres. In 1909, for example, Hebden Bridge Band's new bandroom not only had a large rehearsal space, which could double for entertainment, but also, a room that held two billiard tables, a reading room and

²² See, for example, an account of an annual supper in *The Bacup Times*, 5 September, 1870.

²³ *The Cornet*, 15 February 1900, p. 4.

²⁴ *The Cornet*

a kitchen.²⁵ There were now dedicated social spaces where bands, and other groups, could carry out rational recreations.

Music was arguably the best of all rational recreations. It was believed that the performance and appreciation of music could lead to social harmony and have a refining influence upon people. In the Rossendale Valley, in Lancashire, for example, despite what they wrongly thought was a lack of musical activity in the area, one commentator was in no doubt about the influence of music in helping the working person avoid the attractions of Saturnalia, writing:

I have every sympathy with all bodies that seek to enlighten their fellows, and often I have thought it a shame that so little notice is taken of music, and so little support given towards its full development. The tired man coming home from work is blamed if he goes to a public house to get a glass of beer, but he must do something, and the sooner society provides him with better inducements for spending the evenings beneficially, the sooner shall we see less of those disgraceful sights that meet us when out late on Saturday evenings.²⁶

This ethos was reflected in more structured working-class arenas. In 1912, when Sam Midgley gave a lecture to the Bradford Branch of the Independent Labour Party, he argued that music assisted in building emotional bonds between individuals, eventually influencing social harmony and municipal pride.²⁷

The clergy was also influential in deciding how people should spend their free time; nevertheless, Peter Bailey argues that the clergy entered the debate around rational recreation gingerly. In Sheffield, in 1860, for example, the

²⁵ *Hebden Bridge News*, 3 December, 1909.

²⁶ *The Rossendale Free Press*, 1 October, 1885.

²⁷ S. Midgley, *Music and Municipality*, Bradford 1912, cited in, Chris Waters, *British Socialists and the Politics of Popular Culture*, p. 99.

Reverend Greville J. Chester said, 'that the subject of amusement is of such importance and involves such tremendous interests that I may well shrink from bringing it before you'.²⁸ Nevertheless, enter it they did. In terms of using music as a rational recreation, the work of one preacher stands out, that of the Reverend Hugh Reginald Haweis (1838-1901). Haweis developed a love of music as a child when he showed a talent for the violin, enrolling at Trinity College Cambridge in 1856 and becoming principal violinist in the Cambridge Musical Society. His early preaching career, therefore, led to him using music as a means of keeping people away from the public house. He used his church to give 'Sunday evenings for the people', at which orchestral music, oratorio performances and even exhibitions of sacred pictures were used to form parts of ordinary church services. Haweis became an enthusiastic campaigner for the provision of rational recreations in the community, he was an early advocate for the Sunday opening of museums and art galleries, he occupied himself with the provision of open spaces in London, and laying out disused churchyards as gardens.²⁹ His main success, however, were his lectures based upon his belief

²⁸ Greville J. Chester, 'The Young Man at Work and Play' (Sheffield, 1860), cited in, Peter Bailey, *The Victorian middle class and the problem of leisure*, p. 22.

²⁹ Elizabeth Bagnet, 'Hugh Reginald Haweis (1838-1901)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004), <<http://www.oxford.dnb.com/view/article/33763>>, 1 January 2009, pp.1-3.

that music imitated the natural world. In his influential book, *Music and Morals* (1871), he wrote that music was found everywhere in the natural world, writing:

The wailing of the wind at night, the hum of insect life, the nightingale's note, the scream of the eagle, the cries of animals, and, above all, the natural inflections of the human voice- such are the rough elements of music....³⁰

He argued that even though music was not an ancient art as painting or sculpture, it was still valid in expressing human emotions. He noted that, 'already the names of Beethoven and Mozart are whispered through the civilised word in the same breath with those as Phidas and Michael Angelo, and the time is probably not far distant when music will stand... as the mightiest of the arts'.³¹

Music to Haweis was pure, it was linked with nature. It only became tainted with the intervention of external personalities. Music became evil when the intentions of the composer, or the lyrics used in music, were impure.³² In the Southern Pennines, *The Yorkshire Musician*, for example, reinforced Haweis's message, writing:

Music can neither be satirical, witty, nor personal, hence she is innocent as a companion. She is therefore, pure, holy and harmless to all her votaries, and convincingly a universal factor of unselfish love.... Music can only form an adjunct to debauchery when wedded to words.... An instrument, which is really music, cannot express a vicious idea, or inspire a corrupt thought.³³

³⁰ Hugh Reginald Haweis, *Music and Morals* (London, 1917, first published, 1871), pp. 4-5.

³¹ Haweis, pp. 9-10.

³² Haweis, pp.18-21.

³³ *The Yorkshire Musician*, January 1, 1887, p. 81.

Brass bands, then, developed at the ideal time when music was seen as a pure activity that encouraged social harmony. How did the rational recreation ethos spread through the band movement? .The rational recreation ethos spread quickly through bands using brass band journals, they had a high circulation and were inexpensive, many bandsmen using journals to learn music when music lessons could be expensive and of poor quality.³⁴ The first edition of *The British Bandsman*, for example, wrote, ‘our aims are to stimulate, and...to create and foster in bandsmen a desire for, and a love of, good and high-class music; to provide recreative and instructive literature for master and pupil.’³⁵ In 1895, Algernon S. Rose further reinforced the rational recreation ethos when he published, *Talks with bandsmen: A Popular Handbook for Brass Instrumentalists*. Rose wanted a book that would give the bandsman information that, ‘neither his shilling “Music-Tutor” explains nor his “trainer” has time to discuss.’³⁶ The book developed from a series of eight lectures given to workers in a London factory. Reflecting the practical, theoretical and educational content of journals, he wanted to provide information about the origin, history and development of brass instruments, to the bandsman he said, ‘take your nourishment in at your eyes,

³⁴ In 1887, Algernon Rose listed thirteen band journals in circulation, many published in the north of England, Algernon S. Rose, *Talks with bandsmen: A Popular Handbook for Brass Instrumentalists* (London, 1895), p. 359.

³⁵ *The British Bandsman*, September 1887, p. 1.

³⁶ Rose, *Talks with bandsmen* p. 1.

shut up your mouth, and chew the cud of understanding!³⁷ Rose understood the improving ethos behind the performance of music, and its benefit to working people, writing:

There is nowadays, scarcely a mill, a factory, or colliery throughout the Midlands, North of England, parts of Scotland, and, Wales, and, going further afield, throughout certain parts of New Zealand, Tasmania, Canada and the United States, which does not boast its contingent of instrumentalists. Of all amusements for a mechanic, after his daily toil, supposing him to have the least liking for music, there is nothing so suited as the study of a brass instrument. It is easily learnt, calls for little exertion, and, through the emulation it causes, begets habits of abstemiousness.... We have to thank music, no less than the Board School influence, for the suppression, in labouring centers, of many objectionable pastimes. The successful cultivation of art, in any form, by the masses, imperceptibly educates the general taste and makes politeness of manners keep pace with refinement of mind.³⁸

Rose wrote a chapter on how to form a brass band, this chapter gave guidance on how to approach employers for finance even supplying a form letter to use that highlighted how music could usefully fill a working person's leisure time , writing:

DEAR SIRs, - We, the undersigned, being desirous of employing our leisure time in practising music, request your permission to form a brass band in connection with this factory. We shall feel honoured if Mr. So-and-so (naming one of the partners likely to support the project) will consent to become President of the Band. Unfortunately, we are unable at the beginning to defray the entire cost of the purchase of the instruments. Messers, Red, White, and Blue, musical instrument manufacturers, of London, are, however, prepared to sell us the brass instruments

³⁷ Rose

³⁸ Rose, introduction, pp. xii-xiii.

required, provided that the firm, whose name we should take, will act as surety for the deferred payments....³⁹

Rose argued that when the band is able, they should make the band available to play at any charitable function that the President of the firm supports. In return the band should expect a practice room that has a free supply of utilities and some help with subscriptions. Rose said that the band should not approach the firm for finance until they had proved themselves: in the brass band world this meant contest success.⁴⁰ Some bands, however, never did achieve success, nevertheless, they still obtained support. One such band was Oats Royd's Mill's band, near Halifax: this band demonstrated the amount of finance needed to set up a band from the very beginning. What emerged is that the industrialist viewed the band as an extension of the mill's belongings, most purchases soon having corporate identification placed upon them, therefore, when the band took part in community events and competitions they were bringing the identity of the mill into the public arena.

Owned by John Murgatroyd, Oats Royd Mill reached completion in 1847.⁴¹ It was the only mill in Luddenden to have its power supplied by steam, rather than water, specialising in the production of worsted cloth for uniforms. The late 1800s saw several expansions to the site until it became one of the largest worsted mills in the country. At its height the mill employed two thousand people,

³⁹ Rose, p. 304.

⁴⁰ Rose, p. 304.

⁴¹ *Halifax and Huddersfield Mercantile Directory, 1863-1864* (London, 1863), p. 386.

with the decline in the textile trade the mill closed in 1982.⁴² John Murgatroyd began the band in 1864, with eight players and by 1865 the band had increased to twelve.⁴³ Murgatroyd supplied the band with the instruments they needed, the band signing an agreement to keep the instruments in good repair.⁴⁴ From 1869 - 1870, Murgatroyd reinforced the fact that this was his mill's band when he had the instruments engraved at Stott Brothers, of Halifax. The inscription read, 'John Murgatroyd Oats Royd Mills'.⁴⁵ However, it is when Murgatroyd purchased a band uniform that his ownership of the band is complete, embossed on the brass buttons for the tunics are the initials 'JM'.⁴⁶ From 1864 to 1874 the band grew from eight to thirty-three players, and, in 1881, with some influence from the bandmaster on what was purchased, they held a stock of Besson's first class instruments, worth £1,191.⁴⁷ The band was active for twenty-six years, by 1890, they had disbanded and by the time the mill closed no one had replaced them.⁴⁸ The band never competed in any of the national competitions, never winning any local competitions, rarely travelling outside the Southern Pennines. What they illustrated, however, was the willingness of an industrialist to support a band that represented not only the community but also the role of the factory within that

⁴² *Halifax Evening Courier*, 10 December, 2004.

⁴³ West Yorkshire Archive Service, Calderdale, Catalogue Ref, JM857

⁴⁴ JM857

⁴⁵ Engraving receipt 253a, 31 December 1869, receipt, 254a, 31 December 1870, JM857

⁴⁶ Brass tunic buttons, JM857

⁴⁷ Instrument, and band membership lists 1864-1884, JM857

⁴⁸ Settled accounts in the winding up of Oats Royd Mill Brass Band, November 11, 1890, JM857

community. If a band became successful then the industrialist could enjoy the benefits of the band being in the public eye and the local press. The success of the band reflected the success of the factory and the generosity of the employer, therefore, the more successful the band was the more they advertised the factory, and this was illustrated when *The Yorkshire Musician* wrote about the success of The Leeds Forge Band in 1889:

Samson Fox, the Managing Director of the Leeds Forge Company, presented the band with a complete set of electroplated instruments at the commencement of the year. This valuable gift was followed by another from two other directors: Colonel John Scott, and Mr. Robert Scott, of Greenock, who ordered a very handsome uniform for the band -this is purely an amateur band made up of employees of the Leeds Forge Company.... Since the band commenced contesting in 1886, it has won seventeen first prizes, fifteen second prizes, fourteen third prizes, nine fourth prizes and seven fifth prizes-total prize money £678 pounds, 11 shillings.⁴⁹

Bands, therefore, could obtain significant finance from employers even if they were not successful. However, when they were successful the rewards for both employer and bands' members were considerable. This was illustrated best by the relationship between the Fosters and their mill's band, Black Dyke Mills Brass Band.

John Foster was the Director of John Foster and Sons Ltd, Black Dyke Mills, Queensbury, producer of alpaca, mohair and worsted woollens. He was an enthusiastic musician who enjoyed playing the French Horn in a brass and reed

⁴⁹ *The Yorkshire Musician*, September edition, 1889, p.18.

band, which was formed in 1816, by Peter Wharton, the publican of the Old Dolphin at Queensbury.⁵⁰ John Foster was not only a musician, he, and his sons, were philanthropists. The mill helped many local causes, throughout 1895, for example, they gave £100 to help extend Bradford's Deaf and Dumb Institute,⁵¹ £250 to help build an extension to Bradford Infirmary,⁵² together with £100 to help reduce the outstanding debt at Bradford Children's Hospice.⁵³ To give money to help a local band was a natural extension of this philanthropy. In 1833, a new band, called the Queenshead Band, formed in Queensbury and the Fosters gave the band some financial assistance. Nevertheless, in 1855, the band was close to falling apart. At this point the Fosters stepped in and joined the band with the mill. They gave the band a practice room in Wellington Mill, a new set of instruments and a set of uniforms.⁵⁴ The band's fame grew fast, in 1860; they won the first prize at the first Crystal Palace Contest.⁵⁵ The band was eighteen members strong, all employees of the mill.⁵⁶ This chapter does not have the space to chart the career of the band, nevertheless, the success of Black Dyke Brass Band was meteoritic. The British 'Open' Championship results

⁵⁰ John H. Clay, *Black Dyke, An Inside Story* (Stockport, 2005), p. 2.

⁵¹ West Yorkshire Archive Service, Bradford, *John Foster and Sons, Director's Minute Book, 1891-1920*, ref, 61D9521/1, August 28, 1895, p. 61.

⁵² *John Foster and Sons, Director's Minute Book*, November 26, 1895, p. 65.

⁵³ *John Foster and Sons, Director's Minute Book*

⁵⁴ John H. Clay, *Black Dyke*, p. 3, also see, *The Times*, 27 June, 1913

⁵⁵ *The Times*, 11 July, 1860.

⁵⁶ John H. Clay, *Black Dyke*, p. 5.

from 1856 to 1906 are an example of their ability. They were rarely out of the top three winners, and they came first twelve times.⁵⁷ Many people felt that they were the best band in the country. The fact is the mill did benefit from the success of the band.

In 1906, they undertook a Grand Tour of Canada and America; they were away for five months. The company paid for all travel, board, and lodging.⁵⁸ Well they were away the company also agreed to pay the band members' wages of two pounds a week. However, the band members received fifteen shillings a week, the balance, paid to the band members' wives or nominated persons.⁵⁹ Naturally, this tour created a lot of excitement in Queensbury and Bradford. 'To Messers John Foster and Sons Ltd, belongs the distinction of sending such a combination on a novel and successful venture'.⁶⁰ So opined the *Halifax Daily Guardian*, when the band returned: the band was part of the mill: they were John Foster and Son's band, made up of working-class mechanics: this was to be a common refrain throughout the tour.⁶¹

There was a large turnout to see the band set off. The band had lunch bought at the Great Northern Victoria Hotel, where Fredrick Foster warned them about the dangers of America, saying, 'be careful of what you eat, and also of

⁵⁷ Violet and Geoffrey Brand, *Brass Bands in The 20th Century* (Letchworth, 1979), pp. 224 -227.

⁵⁸ Queensbury Historical Society, legal agreement, re the Canadian and American tour of 1906, 1 June 1906, cited in, John H. Clay, *Black Dyke*, p.19

⁵⁹ Legal agreement, p. 20.

⁶⁰ *Halifax Daily Guardian*, 24 November, 1906.

⁶¹ See, for example, a report of the tour in, *The Montreal Daily Star*, 13 July, 1906.

what you drink, American cocktails are very nice and seductive, but they are not quite as innocent as you think they are. Americans are almost offended if you refuse to drink with them, but I think I can rely on you to use your own judgement'.⁶² Mr Foster emphasised that the company had spared no expense in equipping the band for this tour. He said, 'their instruments could not be better, and they had the best selection of music....'⁶³ Even before they have left Bradford it is being emphasised that this band is the public face of John Foster and Sons: their behaviour should reflect that this was a trip promoting the mill's business interests, Foster said:

'The firm felt certain they were doing the right thing in sending the band out, and they hoped the conduct of the men would be the same as it had always been, and they would remember they were the Black Dyke Band, and connected with the firm of John Foster and Sons.... I hope you will not forget that this firm is well known, not only in Canada and the States, but throughout the world'.⁶⁴

To the industrialists, then, the bands were an investment. They gave the bands: rehearsal space, music, uniforms, instruments and tuition, paid time of work, finance for travel, board and lodgings when the band was away. In return, they received advertising for their company, and its products, and, if like Black Dyke, they were a success, this exposure could be almost constant and global.

⁶² *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 29 June, 1906.

⁶³ *Bradford Daily Telegraph*

⁶⁴ *Bradford Daily Telegraph*

In many cases the finance was a philanthropic gesture, however, the rewards are clear. The bands were the public face of their employers. They were, as Patrick Joyce argues, part of a larger philanthropy, 'a church here, a school or canteen there, and always the stream of social life that characterised all factories.... these gestures shaping people's sense of neighbourhood after mid-century'.⁶⁵

Public Subscription bands also relied heavily upon the rational recreation ethos to gain finance. It was Rose who guided public subscription bands in how to convince the public to give the money. Rational recreation was a priority in the argument as to why the community should support a band: subscription bands were high profile groups that represented the community in the public arena. Rose wrote, first, call a public meeting, chaired by a person who had authority within the community, to add weight to the meeting. Rose recommended that MPs and the Clergy are not invited to chair the meetings, because if the band was to be a balanced representation of the town or neighbourhood, then political or denominational bias should be avoided. Rose suggested a local businessperson chair the meetings, not because of their education, but because of tact.⁶⁶ The meeting should have addressed the following points:

1. Why is a band desirable?
2. Why a *Brass Band*?
3. Why supported by subscriptions of honorary members as well as supporters?⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Patrick Joyce, *Work Society and Politics: the culture of the factory in later Victorian England*, p. 145.

⁶⁶ Rose, *Talks with bandsmen*, p. 304.

⁶⁷ Rose, p. 311.

Rose gave set answers to these questions. The answers stressed the value of rational recreation in performing music. The answers emphasised that the band belonged to, and was the public representation, of the town:

Why desirable?

- (a) Because there are a number of young men who wish to become musicians
- (b) Because there are many of our neighbours who would welcome outdoor music in this town
- (c) Because the existence of such a band would be invaluable by affording help at charitable and local entertainments

Why a Brass Band?

- (a) Because 'brass' are the easiest musical instruments to learn
- (b) Because the tone of 'brass' carries better in the open air than any other kind of music
- (c) Because the blowing of such instruments is in itself a healthy recreation

Why supported by subscriptions of honorary members as well as performers?

- (a) Because few Brass Bands are self supporting
- (b) Because honorary members generally feel in a sense that the band they subscribe to belongs, in a sense, to them

- (c) Because such support of honorary members puts the performers continually on their mettle, making them feel they are under a constant *moral* [my italics] obligation to show their friends they are worthy of such assistance⁶⁸

Rose concluded, ' the whole speech should culminate with a stirring peroration, pointing out that the want of a band has been felt long enough, that its absence is a dishonour to the town as much as its prosperity will be an honour to it, and that *now* is the time to establish it'.⁶⁹ Rose stressed the top down influence of rational recreation: it was a good activity for the youth, it was healthy and moral, and their friends and peers monitored their behaviour. The band's activities were the public face of the town. Subscription bands, then, had to show how they deserved this money, they did this by the writing rules that underscored the values of rational recreation, demanding good attendance, timekeeping, practice and sobriety.⁷⁰ The question of course is how much these rules were used by the band just to gain money, and how much they were ignored? I would argue that they were ignored often, and only enforced in extreme cases of misbehaviour.⁷¹ Bands were, after all, social centres, as we have seen with band celebrations, drinking

⁶⁸ Rose, *Talks with bandsmen*, pp. 311-312.

⁶⁹ Rose, p. 312.

⁷⁰ See, for example, *Howarth Public Band Agreement, 1876*, West Yorkshire Archive Service, Bradford, Catalogue Reference, 80/D/9/2

⁷¹ See, for example, the *Minute Book of Cleckheaton Christian Brethren Temperance Brass Band*, West Yorkshire Archive Service, Kirklees, Catalogue Reference, KC131, 26 November, 1897 and 9 February, 1899.

and socialisation with other people was part of everyday life. This aspect is perhaps best illustrated by one trombone player's experience with Shipley band, when his trombone was stolen, the band wrote to the journal, *The Yorkshireman*, writing:

One of our band chaps got fresh on Saturday night, and while he wor doing a bit of sly courting, he put his trombone on a wall, and a chap wor peeping, and when he wor telling woman how hard he loved her, this other chap ran off with his play. Please warn all pop shops not to pop it.⁷²

This trombonist, then, expressed the duality of brass bands in leisure and community affairs. Shipley band were the face of the community, nevertheless, band contests and concerts were social events that cemented personal and communal relationships in the region. In 1857, when Titus Salt strode into Manchester Fine Arts Exhibition, with the mill's band leading his 2,500 employees, onlookers saw a successful industrialist leading a band, raised on the ethos of rational recreation, into an exhibition that was an ethical, moral, improving and justifiable use of working-class leisure time. To the industrialists' mind the bands' respectability in these civic spaces would have been their doing. In terms of finance and support, this was true. Nevertheless, to the industrialists' way of thinking, the idea that brass band members' activities led in other directions or conformed to different patterns of behaviour that would lead to cultural and social independence was something that the middle-class outsider

⁷² *The Yorkshireman*, 113/268, January 7, 1882

could not have easily known.⁷³ The working-class respectability of the brass band, with their: shiny buttons, gold and silver braid, horsehair shakos, Italian opera, Wagnerian selections, and gleaming instruments, were a prop to boost industrialists own self-esteem.⁷⁴ Wherever the bands travelled-public subscription or factory- their main role was to boost the image of the community or factory they came from, and so boosting the egos of the individuals who led those communities and factories.

In exchange, the working-class membership of the bands accepted their role, and acted it out enthusiastically. They were heading in a different direction. They accepted the benefits of band membership: status within the community, income supplements, time off work, travel, an excellent social life and so on. The communities and the Industrialists had a mutually beneficial relationship with the bands; they received as much as the bands gave. Nevertheless, top down control had been diluted, and customised, to suit the bands own activities, and needs, every rehearsal, contest, park concert, or charity event strengthened their group identity. Traditional celebrations, associated with the trades' and built into the calendar year, St. Clement for the blacksmiths, St. Crispin for the shoemakers, for example, had quickly faded; only celebrated occasionally in the nineteenth century.⁷⁵ They had lost their trade endorsement, and these celebrations became infrequent events held in clubs or pubs.⁷⁶

⁷³ Peter Bailey, *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City*, p. 44.

⁷⁴ Bailey, p. 44.

⁷⁵ E.P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (London, 1991, this edition, 1993), p. 5.

Brass Bands, however, created their own calendar of festive events, and their own trade identity, through musical performance practice, that emerged out of traditions they were inventing: contests at Belle Vue in Manchester and National Finals at the Crystal Palace in London, the Whit Friday Contest, Christmas carolling, annual fetes, agricultural shows and so on. Industrialists, and communities, had helped the bands and had gained benefits, but top down control had been lost, or at best misplaced, the bands, through their own rules, rituals and custom, largely controlled their own actions. The calendar events they created were a justifiable, moral and educational use of their leisure time, nevertheless, within this space, they had created their own recognisable art form that gave them individuality within a structured model, a model they eventually used to take control of their own leisure time. These elements contributed to a cliché of working-class culture that is still with us today.

⁷⁶ Thompson, p. 5.

