

# BRASS BAND CONTEST AT SHEPLEY

25th. July 1896

Probably one of the most extraordinary brass band contests ever held in the neighbourhood of Huddersfield, or anywhere else for that matter, took place at Shepley, under the auspices of the brass band of the locality, on Saturday last. In addition to the committee there were three contest managers, Messrs. Willie Kaye, Ben Bnerley and H.H.Holden, with Mr.H.Tyas as secretary, and there were certain rules for the regulation of the contest. The contest was divided into two sections, one for the best performance of a quickstep, for which the prizes were £1 and 10s.; and the other a selection contest, in which the bands who entered were allowed to make their own selection, and the prizes here were 1st. £8, 2nd. £5, 3rd. £3; and 4th. £2. The judge was Mr. Edward Hales, of Derby, who occupied a tent a little distance away from the platform on which the bands had to perform their selections. The enclosure was roped off, and around it there would be from 700 to 800 people. The bands which entered were as follows:-

Sheffield Temperance	John.R Davison
Farnley Ironworks	A. Blackburn
Ovenden Subscription	T.E. Hooson
Skelmanthorpe	Angus Holden
Halifax Central	Robert Halstead
Denby Dale	Fenton Renshaw
King Cross Halifax	J Wilkinson
Meltham Mills	W.Sharpe
in the absence of	John Gladney
Huddersfield Fire Brigade	Joe Taylor
Horbury	Angus Holden

The contest was timed to commence at 2-30, but it was not until about a quarter to four that the quickstep contest began, and then two bands did not make their appearance, namely Horbury and Skelmanthorpe, the bands were drawn as follows for the quickstep contest, which was taken first :-

Ovenden, Sheffield, Farnley, King Cross, Halifax Central, Denby Dale, Huddersfield Fire Brigade, and Meltham Mills, and each band had choice of its own selection. The pieces played by the bands which were ultimately found to be the winners were :-

Sheffield Temperance	"Collingwood"
Farnley Ironworks	"Washington Grays"
Meltham Mills	"March Glogoso"

The eight bands went through the performance with more or less success, contending as they had to do with a high wind, the decision was not given till afterwards. The playing had occupied a considerable time, but now commenced the real work of the afternoon, and also a good deal of delay.

The bands had been drawn in the following order :-

1. Denby Dale
2. Horbury
3. King Cross
4. Farnley Ironworks
5. Skelmanthorpe
6. Meltham Mills
7. Huddersfield Fire Brigade
8. Ovenden Subscription
9. Halifax Central
10. Sheffield Temperance

Instead of numbers a letter was hoisted for each band. The first band called on to play was Denby Dale, but it was discovered that, for some reason, the band was not ready, and the committee, carrying out a proviso in the regulations for the contest, called on the band to pay a fine of 5s. The band nominally assented to this, but did not really pay the money, the next band was Horbury, but it did not put in an appearance, so the letter of King Cross was hoisted. This band declined to play because Denby Dale had not played. The committee told the band that they would have to pay a fine of 5s. and the same thing occurred as in the case of Denby Dale; and so it went through the whole of the bands drawn to play, except as regards Skelmanthorpe, which had not put in an appearance, owing, we believe, to the unavoidable absence of the conductor, but they had telegraphed, asking to change places in the draw for the order of playing, so that they might come on latter in the programme, and Sheffield Temperance exchanged with them. All the bands following Denby Dale refused to play until that band had gone on, and each band

was fined. The same farce occurred right through once more, and as each letter in place of number was allowed to remain up five minutes, in order to give the bands time for reflection and possible repentance, it will be seen that a great deal of time was thus needlessly wasted.

The committee, through the intervention of a gentleman who had been a witness of these interesting proceedings, found that at this rate the contest would never end, not to say begin; so they declared the whole matter closed, and on the spot they made a fresh "gamut" so to speak, or rule. They waived all the fines they had previously inflicted, and decided to re-open the contest, and charge a fresh entrance fee of 5s., a reduction of 2s.6d. on the entrance fee originally charged, and to disqualify any band which did not appear when called upon to play. The letter F was again hoisted (Denby Dale), but again they refused to play, so the band was at once disqualified. The next band was King Cross, and when the players ascended the platform they were received with loud cheers. By this time 6-30 had arrived, and through a variety of causes, chief of which was the long wait in the cold atmosphere, the bandsmen did not seem altogether at home, and in their playing of their selection, "Halevy", the trombones were weak, the euphonium somewhat shaky, and the cornet was unsteady. The Farnley Band, who had chosen a selection from Meyerbeer's works, started well, but fell off towards the finish, the attack going and the solo cornet was rather tinny. Skelmanthorpe, with the same selection as Farnley, should have played next, but for the reason given above, their place on the stand was taken by Sheffield Temperance, whose selection was Berioz's "Faust". The band played well throughout with the exception of the trombones, which were rather lacking in tone. Meltham Mills followed with the same selection as the Sheffielder's, and a marked difference was at once discernible between this and the other bands. The cornet was specially mellow, and the selection was splendidly played throughout. It should be said that quite one half of the selection was played in the dark, showing that the band had great confidence in their powers, and a thorough acquaintance with the piece they were

playing. Their attack was fine and it was well sustained from start to finish, and a long way ahead of anything which had been heard up to now, and the crowd applauded well at the finish. The Huddersfield Fire Brigade Band had chosen the selection "Stiffelio" for their piece - rather an ambitious selection, but they played it very creditably, especially considering the conditions under which they were labouring. After Meltham Mills Band had ceased playing, some kerosene lamps, like those used at fairs, were hoisted on poles at the corners of the platform, and during the playing of the euphonium solo one of the lamps began to be a trifle "obstreperous", and the light difficult to manage, and the players particularly the euphonium, were greatly inconvenienced, so that every allowance must be made for the players. Ovenden was the next band, with the selection "Halevy", and they were just as badly off as the band immediately preceding them. While they were playing three of the lights went out, but they were re-lit. The band soon showed itself out of the running, and its place was taken by Halifax Central, the members of which had chosen as their selection "Weber". The playing of this band was generally poor, but the band had the disadvantage of playing in a very strong wind. They finished their selection at 10.30. Skelmanthorpe was the last band to mount the platform, which they did at twenty-five minutes to eleven, and as the selection took twenty-five minutes to play it will be seen that the actual playing (Inclusive of the necessary intervals for band to leave and ascend the platform) had lasted from 6.30 till eleven o'clock, the writer had to leave in order to catch the last train to Huddersfield, which had fortunately been delayed at Stockmoor for a period of about forty minutes on its way to Penistone, so that he did not hear Skelmanthorpe play. Up to 10.30 he was of the opinion that Meltham Mills was entitled to the first prize.

About 11.15 the judge announced the result of the contest as follows :-

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|------|---------------------------|
| 1st. | Skelmanthorpe             |
| 2nd. | Meltham Mills             |
| 3rd. | Huddersfield Fire Brigade |
| 4th. | Sheffield Temperance.     |

The remainder of the crowd which had not previously left the ground, rapidly dispersed, and the proceedings which had throughout been of an eventful character, were brought to a conclusion.

The result of the quickstep contest:-

- 1 st. Sheffield Temperance
- 2nd. Farnley Ironworks & Meltham Mills tied.

Many of the bands who had come from places beyond Huddersfield had left the enclosure in order to catch their train, and they proceeded to Huddersfield on the delayed train. On arriving at Huddersfield, the Halifax bandsmen found that they could not get forward, so they serenaded those on duty at the railway station by playing hymns and tunes, and subsequently they went and rested on seats on the former site of Peel Park, prior to commencing their march homewards.. Altogether it was a remarkable contest, and one to be remembered. We were informed that the last contest at Shepley was about twenty-four years ago, and that was a memorable one also, for on that occasion the judge is said to have been dragged out of his judging test by the crowd.