Reepham Society

The Reepham Town Band

(now Matthews Norfolk Brass)

A tribute by Joyce Cox

Photograph taken August 1945

THE REEPHAM TOWN BAND

Origins

The Reepham Town Band began as part of a Reepham Band of Hope. The latter originated from a suggestion of John Walker who had brought to Reepham a branch of Wallace King the furniture store in what is now called the Bircham Centre. Launched in 1916, the Band of Hope's popularity led to the need for a larger building than that of the United Methodists in Fisher's Alley (later demolished). Jesse Bircham, the Reepham chemist, bought a site in Sun Barn Yard for £70 from local builder, Harry Hawes. Prior to 1877 it was a pig and poultry market. In that year Ireland's Stock Market was set up on what is now Station Road car park. A hut was erected in 1922 (Fig. 1, area of car) and given to the United Methodist Society to be used chiefly by the Band of Hope. Membership increased to several hundreds and included much musical talent. A brass band was formed under the Chairmanship of carpenter Charles Guyton. Sam Barrett, farmer of Whitwell, was President.

Fig. 1. School Road - Sign reads WALKERS FURNITURE STORES. Mr John Walker had previously worked for the Wallace King store in Reepham. On its closure he opened his own store.

Excerpt from a booklet celebrating ten years of Reepham Band of Hope 1916-1926

An acceptable and well-balanced choir has been formed, and indirectly a wind and string orchestra, also a male voice choir, whilst above all a band has been organised of some 24 brass and woodwind instruments, which under the guidance of E.C. Green as bandmaster, and our President, S.C. Barrett, remarkably rapid progress has been made. This band has already been in great demand for big religious gatherings, serving camp meetings, Sunday school anniversaries, special efforts and the like, from time to time helping in our meetings, including a big attraction at the summer sports, and recently hugely helping band funds as Christmas waits.

Brass bands had the equivalent popularity of today's pop culture and had been adopted by the Salvation Army to attract attention. They provided a source of culture and achievement to many of the working class whose prospects were not attractive. The coming of the railways in the 19th century enabled a network of brass bands to be formed. National competitions started in 1840, at Belle Vue Manchester and Crystal Palace. The competitions were strictly standardised using the same number of players and types of instruments. Rigid rules of judging applied, enabling bands to improve their performance. At the beginning of the 20th century it was estimated that about 10,000 brass bands were active, some touring the world. When King George V and Queen Mary toured England, brass bands were always booked for the civic receptions and at the outbreak of the First World War accompanied troops to railway stations.

The band's name while connected to the Methodist chapel was The Reepham Temperance Band. Temperance Societies had been formed in the19th century

in an attempt to curb drunkenness, and, as with the formation of football clubs, to provide stimuli for the working classes. Being a member of a brass band became a source of pride and was eagerly sought.

Fig. 2. Band of Hope 1930, pre-uniform days. ***Back:*** *left to right names include Jack Alford, Gordon Frankland, Vic Bishop, Fred Egmore, Billy Alford, Sidney Frost, Archie Guyton, Sidney Hardiment, Ted Hardiment, Arthur Hardiment* ***Front:*** *names include Rex Hunt, George Harrison, Herbert Gaskin, Walter Rudd (senior), Walter Rudd (junior).*

The movement had the support of various religious denominations and others in society who were concerned at the poverty of women and children when the breadwinner spent most of his weekly wage on alcohol in the nearest inns and public houses. In 1934 one of the reasons for the Reepham band's deferment of a proposed dinner at the Sun Inn was: *the objection that might be raised by Temperance advocates or opponents by the indulgence or otherwise of drink, an issue which will be settled at the AGM by the resolution to drop the word Temperance from the name of the band.* (Minutes, 27th April, 1934.)

There is no further reference to this proposal in the 1934 AGM and a band photograph, taken in 1936 after becoming Crystal Palace prize winner, includes the word Temperance. The story goes that at a later date, excusable celebrations in a beer tent on some festive occasion at Sennowe Park, Guist, were discovered by MP Sir Thomas Cook. Henceforth, it was thought best to omit the word.

Names associated with the band in the 1930s were Barrett, Guyton, Ruffles, conductor, Harrison, deputy, Frankland, Eglington, Reeve, Gaskin, Hardiment, Hunt, Roberts and Cocking. A Ladies' committee consisted of Mesdames Frankland, Guyton, Watson and Hardiment. Rules were drawn up in 1933, officially naming the band The Reepham Town Temperance Band with ownership of all band property invested in the hands of six trustees, three of whom to be band members and three *shall be outside subscribers (or gentlemen interested in the band.)* A committee of twelve members to be appointed at each AGM with power to co-opt two additional members who might be useful. Entrance fee to be two shillings and six pence and weekly subscription three pence. Unemployed members to be exempt during the period of unemployment. Fees from all engagements to be paid into band funds after members' loss of time and transport had been paid. Members to play only for the Reepham band. It ran on a shoestring and in some cases belonging was quite a monetary sacrifice. Conductor Tommy Ruffles, a fine musician, was already well established in the musical world. He was manager of a flour mill in Bridge Street, Fakenham, his home town. The Minutes show his struggles in assembling together a band worthy of Reepham. There were times when he almost despaired due to players' lack of effort. On one occasion he gave notice of resignation unless attitudes improved. A friend of his, Harry Mortimer, of brass band fame, gave much needed encouragement and appeared in a concert

with them. So it was touch and go in those early years of the 30s. Between 1932/33, twenty two concerts, four parades, three contests and eight fêtes were on the agenda. In 1933 Mr Ruffles suggested a Boys' Band be formed. Forty nine engagements took place during 1933/34 made up of twenty one concerts, six parades, four contests, nine fêtes and nine events for charitable purposes. Attitudes and attendance at practices greatly improved and in 1934 the band won the Heacham Challenge Cup, winning four special prizes and twenty medals. In addition cups were won at Cawston and Reepham contests, and the band was placed fourteen out of thirty two at the major national Crystal Palace contest. The newly formed Boys' Band won first prize in the boys' section at the Reepham contest. 1934 was a turning point.

In 1935 players signed an agreement with their committee to purchase a complete set of uniform, costing £4 12s 0d, from Messrs. Boosey and Hawkes Ltd. of 295, Regent St., London *such uniform to become the absolute property of the band trustees at completion of purchase*. The bandsmen would be repayed in instalments. Those involved were conductor Mr. Ruffles, Gordon Frankland, Victor Bishop, Walter Hunt, Harold Alford, Cecil Allen, Ernest Allen, Reginald Seals, Cecil Voutt, George Lambert, Bernard Barsted, William Hatley, Stanley Alford, James McCarter, George Cocking, George Harrison, Herbert Gaskins and Sidney Hardiment. A one penny a week fund was started for new uniforms.

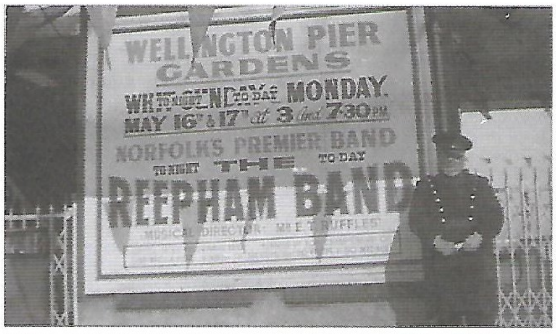


Fig. 3. Norfolk's Premier Band 1937 Wellington Pier Gardens

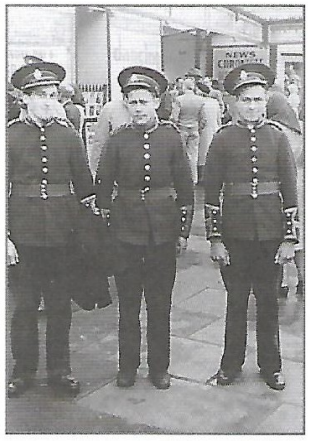


Fig. 4. Left to right: on Wellington Pier Leslie Moy, Jimmy Secker, Eric Barrett

The band made headlines and was particularly proud of being the 1936 Crystal Palace prize winner. Easter Sunday, 1937, saw it playing at Cromer Pier. The Great Yarmouth Corporation invited it to play at the Wellington Pier on Coronation Day, 12th May, 1937. This was the start of a very strong connection with Great Yarmouth. The band quickly took advantage of these accolades and labelled itself Norfolk's Premier Band on the 1937 programmes for its three Whitsuntide performances at Wellington Pier Gardens. (See Fig. 3). In 1939 it reached the All England National finals at Crystal Palace but these were cancelled due to the outbreak of war. Mr Ruffles's connections in the brass band world resulted in many very well-known conductors tutoring his players.

The Band of Hope Hall was bought by the committee in the early 1940s with money loaned by bandsman George Cocking, shoemaker, whose workshop was in what is now the Bridal Shop, Reepham. George and his wife gave generous financial support. A brass tablet was placed in the Hall to commemorate their kindness. There are amusing, affectionate stories about

George. At an advanced age, too old to play a wind instrument, he played a bass drum instead. At an outdoor contest at Leverington, the band had to march to the meadow. George was carrying the drum at the back but his legs were unable to keep up and the band arrived at the field way ahead of him. On another occasion, leading a Remembrance Day parade through Salle Street to Salle Church, poor George fell over into a hedge. Another player grabbed the drum and carried on the drumbeat to the church.

World War Two

The minutes of the AGM, 5th November, 1939, state *Mr Ruffles commented on the fact that although there was a war raging, he was glad to see the band could still put 20 members upon a bandstand and give a good account of themselves.*

He also mentioned the fact that *on the day that war was declared the band had met and had decided that whatever the future held, the band committee would continue to meet while there were two members left.*

GRAND EVENING CONCERT

FIRST WITH THE NEWS! READ THE EVENING TELEGRAPH AND BE WELL INFORMED 1½d. DAILY 1½d.

To ensure receiving your copy regularly place an order with your newsagent.

GUEST CONDUCTORS
Dr. H. C. HIND, Mus. Doc., L.R.A.M., A.R.C.M., L.Mus., T.C.L.
HARRY HEYES, Esq., Musical Dir.
E. T. RUFFLES, Esq., General Secretary N.L.E. Ass.
OWEN PENTELOW, Esq., Chairman Northamptonshire Brass Band Assocn.
Concert produced and directed by W. ROWE, Jun.

ALSO
MASSED BRASS BANDS
J. HENRY ILES, Esq., O.B.E.
ARTHUR TURNER, L.L.C.M.
JEAN WRIGHT, Soprano
and
I. T. M. A.
Musical Director and Adviser: W. H. ROWE, Son.

THE MOST RELIABLE WEEKLY PAPER for AUTHENTIC NEWS AND VIEWS of LOCAL and WORLD EVENTS
THE KETTERING LEADER & GUARDIAN
2d. EVERY FRIDAY 2d.

GUEST BAND:
REEPHAM JUNIORS
Bandmaster: S. S. FRANKLAND, Esq. Conductor: E. T. RUFFLES, Esq.

MASSED BANDS

1 March .. "Pinchinello" .. .. *Tommer*
2 Overture .. .. "Carnival" .. .. *Suppe*
3 Waltz .. .. "Felicity" .. .. *Greenwood*
4 Selection .. "Pirates of Penzance" *Gilbert & Sullivan*
5 Grand March "Pomp and Circumstance No. 4" .. *Elgar*
6 Musical Comedy "Student Prince" .. *Romberg*
7 Chorus .. "Hallelujah Chorus" .. *Handel*

INTERVAL (5 mins.)

8 .. Adjudicators Awards and Presentation of Prizes by JOHN HENRY ILES, Esq., O.B.E.
9 Duet .. "Winter Rose" *Browne-Turner*
Mr. ARTHUR TURNER and Miss JEAN WRIGHT
10 .. .. THE REEPHAM BAND
March "The Jamboree" .. .. *Ord Hume*
Galop "Orpheus in the Underworld" .. *Offenbach*
11 Duet .. .. "Ave Maria" *Gounod*
Mr. ARTHUR TURNER and Miss JEAN WRIGHT
12 Fantasia .. "Poetic Fancies" .. .. *Laurent*
13 Cornet Solo .. "The Rosary" .. .. *Nevin*
Miss PAM BARSTED
14 Selection .. "The Desert Song" .. .. *Romberg*
15 .. .. I.T.M.A.
with TOMMY HANDLEY and CLARENCE WRIGHT
16 Finale .. "Land of Hope and Glory" .. .. *Elgar*
GOD SAVE THE KING

Fig. 5. Concert at Kettering, Dec. 1945 featuring item 10 Reepham Junior Band conductor Gordon Frankland, Item 13 soloist Pam Barsted, cornet solo Item 15 ITMA with Tommy Handley and Clarence Wright

At the 1942 AGM, on behalf of senior members, Mr Ruffles expressed pleasure at the presence of young faces. He said *it was hoped that from this meeting they would feel themselves part and parcel of the band which had become so famous in the days before the war. You lads have a very high reputation to maintain musically and as citizens of this town of Reepham.*

Tribute was paid to the exceptionally hard work and love which Gordon Frankland had put into the encouragement of a Junior Band. In reply the latter *trusted that the time would soon be when all his boys, as he called them, would be back again safe and well and the band which they loved once more hitting the high spots of East Anglian brass banding.*

The Chairman at this time was Bernard Barsted. Bands often included family connections such as the Barsteds. Daughter Pam (now Swayze) says *It was very much a family band in those days with parents and children, brothers and sisters - even an uncle and niece – playing together.*

Pam's father taught her how to blow the cornet and she was taught music at the Notre Dame High School for Girls. Her father had joined the band in 1934, becoming Chairman in 1936, a post he occupied for much of the band's life. He had previously played with Hindolveston Band but on moving to Reepham, Bernard, his daughter Pam and son Godfrey became very active members.

All three Barsteds played solo cornet. Mrs. Barsted was on the Band Hall committee. Pam and Godfrey still live in Reepham.

Pam joined in 1940, aged fifteen, becoming the first female member, and one of very few Norfolk females to play in a band. During World War Two players were either under or over conscription age. Two practices were held weekly in the Band Hall, usually followed by visits to the local fish and chip shop. The accompanying camaraderie is very warmly recalled. Other young women and boys joined, including Pam's brother Godfrey, at age eleven.

Fig. 6.Bernard Barsted

Fig. 7.Pam Barsted

Fig. 8. Godfrey Barsted (right) with Jack Barber and Eric Barrett at Yarmouth

*Fig. 9. 1940 Left to right – **front** Paul Stearman, Derek Woods, Gordon Frankland, Pam Barsted, E. Ruffles, John Denny and George Banham, **centre** Terry Arthurton, Derek Youngman, Dennis Savage, Godfrey Barsted, Reggie Seales, Geoffrey Claxton, Eddie Reynolds, Derek Ransome, Albert Reader and Leslie Moy, **back** names include Jack Barrett, Jack Barber, Colin Morley, Ernie Moy, Norman Tuddenham and John Hall*

Pam recalls the rivalry between bands. Drayton was Reepham's greatest rival and she recalls how the first appearance of Reepham's bandswomen was met by calls of "Luton Girls Choir!" from the Drayton performers. During World War Two, operating as a Junior Band, Reepham reached high enough standards to broadcast twice and take fourth place in the all-England *Daily Herald* junior contest in Manchester. In 1943 special permission had to be obtained to visit the BBC and Maida Vale recording studios in London for the first broadcast. One recording was played overseas and another in a programme called *Bandsmen of Tomorrow* under the aegis of the famous conductor Harry Mortimer. Cornet players in the broadcast were Pam and Godfrey, Norman Tuddenham, Thomas Sneddon, Eddie Reynolds, Jack Barber, Jack Barrett, Albert Reeder and John Hall; horns: Derek Ransome, Leslie Moy, Terry Arthurton; baritones: John Denny, Dennis Savage; euphonium Derek Woods; trombones: Colin Morley, Ernest Moy; basses: George Banham and Paul Stearman; conductor Mr Ruffles. The broadcast programme contained four items, the hymn tune *Rimington*, a cornet solo *Somewhere a Voice,* played by Pam, a march *Home Again* and a selection from *The Pirates of Penzance.* A repeat performance took place in a very proud Reepham on the following day. As the band's war effort, ENSA concerts were performed for Army, RAF and Navy personnel, the Motor Torpedo Boat base at Yarmouth, the Windmill Theatre and Sparrow's Nest, Lowestoft.

Gordon Frankland, the father of Bernard, present director of the Reepham Singers, taught his Junior Band how to play. He gave them half an hour's theory then half an hour learning to blow an instrument. About twenty five boys and girls (mainly boys) from the Primary School were interested enough to attend lessons. At about the age of sixteen players graduated to the Reepham Town Band. As well as taking part in the Daily Herald Junior Brass Band Concert it came first in the East Anglian contest at Leicester, then went on to the National finals at Belle Vue Manchester, becoming runners up to the champions,

the City of Coventry ATC Band. Dances were held three times a week in the Band Hall with Smith's Dance Band. Stationmaster's wife, Connie Smith, sang and played the piano and husband Bob played the drums. Connie also accompanied at ENSA concerts.

TALENTED GIRLS OF REEPHAM BAND

THESE nine young women came into Reepham Junior Band in 1943-4 when war service calls upon men seriously threatened to deplete its ranks. Since that time the girls have certainly made a name for themselves, and have fully upheld the reputation of this talented Band. They are extremely keen and very rarely absent from rehearsals. The Band has recently bought uniforms for them as a mark of appreciation. During the recent war these girls took part in well over 100 Norfolk and Suffolk shows for the troops. Their ages range from 14 to 17.

Back row (left to right)—Norma Hubbard, Hazel Freeston, Valerie Allen (cornet players), Pam Reeder (replaces cornet). Front—Nancy Woods (baritone), Daphne Barrow (tenor horn), Margaret Mason (flugel horn), Stella Riseborough and Enid Pask (tenor horn players). Miss Barrow and Miss Mason have won silver medals as solo instrumentalists in open contests, and, playing as a quartet and Mr. G. G. Frankland the Misses Reeder, Mason, Barrow and Woods have gained a first prize and two seconds.

Fig. 10. NB bottom line - after the word " gained" the last six words read "a first prize and two seconds"

Finances were greatly enhanced by these frequent lettings and the very hard work of the Ladies' committee. At a joint meeting of the trustees and senior bandsmen on 30th May, 1945 the *amazing figure of £1,278.6s.8d* was in hand. It was agreed to separate the accounts into two parts, one for the hall and the other for the band. £500 was invested in Boosey & Hawkes, an advert for two hundred and fifty chairs placed in the EDP and band members were to pay a subscription to increase band funds. A vote of thanks was proposed to George Cocking and Gordon Frankland for all their work during the war. From the late

1940s lettings were extended to include a mobile cinema which ran films once weekly, adding further income to the accounts.

Figs. 11 & 12. Still very talented girls! And still living in Reepham. Left Pam Swayze (née Barsted). Right Stella Ellis (née Riseborough), front row second from right in picture previous page. Photos taken at the Town Band display Reepham Society History Exhibition May, 2001.

Fig. 13. Margaret Vincent (née Mason), front row centre in picture previous page, at home, holding certificates gained while a member of the Band

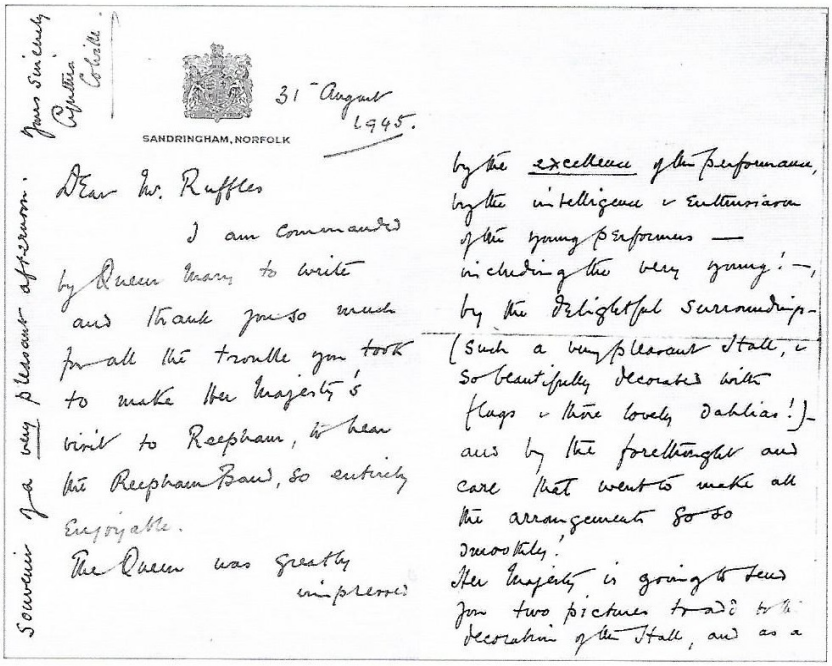
Royal Visit

A highlight of these memorable years took place in 1945 when the then Queen Mother, Queen Mary, wife of George V, attended a private concert in Reepham. Godfrey Barsted believes the visit was in recognition of the many ENSA concerts, including those for troops stationed in Reepham, and three BBC broadcasts. The band was also Champion of East Anglia in 1945/46. The royal performance took place on August 30th, 1945 in the Band Hall. Pam, then aged twenty, played the cornet solo *Alpine Echoes*. Mr Ruffles conducted and the Primary Band, consisting of new members, was led by Gordon Frankland. They played two items, a hymn tune *Old Earth* and a chorus *Oh Who Will O'Er the Downs* by Pearsall. Euphonium soloist, Derick Woods, played *The Old Rugged Cross,* in an arrangement by Mr Ruffles. Other items were Handel's *Largo*, Offenbach's *Gallop* from *Orpheus in the Underworld*, a selection *Recollections of Weber*, a march *The Jamboree* and an arrangement by Mr Ruffles of *The Lord's my Shepherd*. The Queen Mother was attended by two ladies-in-waiting and accompanied by members of the Ladies' committee. Pam Reeder presented a bouquet. A repeat performance was given for the town. Godfrey recalls the excitement, particularly over the royal car, a vintage Rolls Royce. The Queen Mother gave clear evidence of her enjoyment when, as a member of the audience

said, "*she tapped away with her feet and her parasol.*" A letter of thanks and two large framed royal photographs were sent to acknowledge the performance.

Fig. 14. Queen Mary with Messrs Ruffles and Frankland. Front left to right Pam and Godfrey Barsted, Jack Barber, Norman Tuddenham, Pam Reeder, Daphne Barrow, Nancy Woods, John Denny. Back (order unknown) Kenny Adcock, Paul Stearman, Mr Dack, Bernard Barsted, George Cocking, Fred Howman, Terry Arthurton, Reggie Seales, George Harrison

Fig. 15. Queen Mary with ladies in waiting, plus back row Mrs. Ruffles (beneath left hand flag), Mrs. Cocking far left, Mrs Frankland far right, Mrs. Smith next Mrs. Frankland



Yours Sincerely
Christian Colville.

SANDRINGHAM, NORFOLK

31st August 1945.

Dear Mr. Ruffles

I am Commanded by Queen Mary to write and thank you so much for all the trouble you took to make Her Majesty's visit to Reepham, & hear the Reepham Band, so entirely Enjoyable.

The Queen was greatly impressed by the excellence of the performance, by the intelligence & enthusiasm of the young performers — including the very young! —, by the delightful surroundings — (such a very pleasant Hall, & so beautifully decorated with flags & those lovely dahlias!) — and by the forethought and care that went to make all the arrangements so smoothly.

Her Majesty is going to have you two pictures framed for the decoration of the Hall, and as a Souvenir of a very pleasant afternoon.

Fig. 16.

Regular Venues

Summers were always busy times as on most Sundays the band gave two performances in Norwich or the seaside or on a Broads' bandstand. These were often family occasions travelling in the Smiths Brothers' coaches, with tea always included. Regular venues included Oulton Broad, Wellington Pier Gardens during the Whitsuntide holiday, Sennowe Park at Guist, The Sparrows Nest, Lowestoft, Stody Lodge (a military hospital), the Theatre Royal and St. Andrew's Hall in

Norwich. Other Norwich venues included Chapelfield Gardens, Earlham Park, Eaton Park, Waterloo Park and Mousehold Heath. At the annual Eastern Brass Bands' Association Rally Reepham Band joined massed bands, marching from Wellington Pier to Britannia Pier and back. This was followed by a concert, often inside the Winter Gardens. Performances were also given at Sheringham, Cromer and Mundesley, at local fêtes and at the opening of large houses such as Fleggburgh, Oxborough and Blickling.

Godfrey Barsted remembers the Oulton Broad concerts in Nicholas Everett Park as providing the opportunity, after the two performances, of watching the speedboat racing. Every Easter Monday the Festival concerts of The East Anglian Brass Band Association (EABBA), were held in St. Andrew's Hall. Mr Ruffles was its founder member, President, and Secretary for twenty five years. These Easter concerts were attended by the big names in brass bands such as Black Dyke Mills and Fodens Motor Works. Reepham band provided trophies for second and third prizes, the Reepham Challenge goblet and certificate, the Reepham Bandsmen's cup and certificate, the Reepham Tradesmen's Challenge cup and certificate. These are all still used by the EABBA. The annual festivals were divided into various sections from the innumerable bands in the area including Aylsham, Drayton, Cawston, Dereham, Fakenham and Hindolveston. Reepham were runners up in 1937 and 1955 in the Championship category, runners up in 1949 and winners in 1954 of Class A which was a hymn tune contest, and winners in 1934 of Class B which was for bands of twenty players maximum. Regular appearances in Reepham included leading the Remembrance Day Parade at which Eddie Reynolds played *The Last Post*. In 1950 the band played at the "opening" of Stimpson's Piece, land given by the Stimpson family as a war memorial; in 1952 on the occasion of the last train through Reepham and also at fêtes held at Ollands House (demolished in the 1970s).

Bookings were arranged well in advance. The Norfolk parks sent out booking slips at the beginning of the season. Monthly meetings and the AGM were held in the Band Hall. According to Pam, the busiest time was in the early 1950s, when there was public money available for Councils to pay players to perform. A bus was hired to transport the twenty six players and their instruments. A meal completed an enjoyable day's outing.

Mr Ruffles

In January, 1955, Mr Ruffles reported that too much exertion was affecting his health and suggested that a new conductor be found. As a diabetic, he was not afraid of losing his sight, but it is remembered that he had always said he could not face losing his hearing. Deputy conductor, George Harrison, took over. At the January, 1956 meeting, when some improvement had occurred in his health, Mr Ruffles was made a presentation for twenty five years' dedicated service. In the same year the EABBA presented him with an illuminated address and silver candlesticks. His wife became an Honorary Vice-President. At the band's request he agreed to conduct the Easter Monday concert, emergency arrangements for an outsider being brought in to be made *only in the extreme circumstance of bad luck.*

A month later Mr Ruffles was again unwell and suggested an alternative conductor. It was still the committee's wish to be led by him if at all possible. In December 1956, on the death of George Cocking, he took over as Treasurer, was appointed a trustee and negotiated terms for a Cinematography Licence. This was granted on the last day of 1956. Reading through the Minutes of those times it is very evident that the players' dependence on their leader was limitless. In 1957, amid this period of confidence and success, Mr Ruffles died, suddenly, on his way to a concert in Norwich.

Fig .18.

His great influence was sadly missed. Pam remembers an occasion at an open air concert at Aylsham. Some of the boys had wanted to put their instruments on the bus and cycle to Aylsham because they wanted to stay on afterwards to go to a dance or to the pictures. Mr Ruffles insisted they all went on the bus to ensure that they arrived together, in one piece and on time, while he and George Cocking went by car. The car left first, the bus followed picking up boys en route. At the crossroads, (now a roundabout), just beyond Cawston, was the car - upside down on the verge, two very shaken men beside it! They were picked up and went on to the contest. As their leader was still in shock one of the other band masters offered to conduct, but all the bandsmen felt that if Mr Ruffles was well enough to just stand in the middle they would do better. He did and they won a prize. He also fulfilled a commitment to conduct the Aylsham Band.

In June 1957 it was agreed to place a plaque to his memory beneath a photograph in the Band Hall along with certificates of merit won under his directorship. The plaque read:

In commemoration of Mr E.T. Ruffles for his devoted service as musical director to the Reepham Band from 1931-1957.

Fig .18. Mr Ruffles by cartoonist David Low

Fig. 19. In relaxed mood

Instability

A period of instability followed. In 1958 Mrs Ruffles became President of the Band on the resignation of Mrs Bircham, who had been President since 1940. Despite the efforts of the loyal Barsted family (Bernard in the triple capacity of Chairman, Deputy Bandmaster to George Harrison and Band Sergeant, with his son Godfrey as Secretary), average attendance at rehearsals was only four. At the February, 1959 meeting, the following words were minuted *Our worst season yet ... for Mr Ruffles's sake we must pull up our socks.*

In October, 1959, various suggestions were put forward including amalgamating with Fakenham Band, winding up and restarting as a lower graded organisation and running a series of tombola efforts to raise funds for much needed repairs to the Band Hall. Mr Ruffles's leadership was sadly missed. At the October, 1960 meeting, it was proposed by Gordon Frankland and seconded by Bernard Barsted to wind up the band, and restart as a lower graded organisation. This was carried by ten votes to one. Bingo drives were to be run and membership of the EABBA to continue. In consequence the 1960s were a period of some uncertainty, but not without some success. In April, 1962, Reepham scored the highest marks in the class C contest of the EABBA festival in Norwich, under conductor Gordon Frankland. Ann Chilman (née Howard) joined in the late 50s, when a teenager, again following a family tradition. Her uncle, Jack Alford, and two cousins, John Denny and Paul Stearman had played previously. Ann learned music theory at the local Primary School and, like other junior members, was taught to play by Gordon Frankland - in her case the tenor horn and cornet. She continued to play until 1974 and now plays for St. Mary's Church, Reepham.

Fig. 20. April 1962. Back row Pam Swayze, Gordon Frankland and Ann Howard. Front left to right Nancy Woods, Valerie Platten and Jenny Ward

Renaissance

At the beginning of the 70s a fortunate encounter occurred when musical enthusiast, Leslie Coe, spotted a brass band instrument in the back of a car at Fairways garage (now demolished) on the Cawston Road. The car owner was English teacher Trevor Machin who had recently moved to Salle. He was studying the baritone in the Hewett School Band. Between them they decided to resurrect the Reepham band. Old players were contacted, instruments collected and repaired. The first rehearsal was held in the Band Hall with about eight people. Bill Holden from Costessey became Chairman and John Sutton, also from Costessey, conductor. Over the next few months young players were incorporated from Norwich, Hellesdon, Costessey, Framlingham Earl and Dereham and transported by van to Reepham by Leslie. Leslie, who had first played with the band in 1940 and joined the committee in 1949, assisted greatly in its renaissance. From a musical background, he had his first (and last!), violin lesson from his

musical father[1] and then decided to learn brass. The re-formed contingent grew to seventeen, the youngest aged twelve, the oldest eighty. Gordon Frankland played drums. But more players were urgently needed. The heady heights of competition standards attained under Mr Ruffles were to be regained at a later date, but initially, due to the young nature of the players, lesser competition standards had to apply. However, public engagements were still undertaken as before, the first of these for the British Legion. Fund raising events, with the aim of re-entering contests, were held in the summer months. In 1971 the band joined the Remembrance Day Parade when the *Last Post* and *Reveille* were sounded by Eddie Reynolds. In 1973 Reepham was again represented at the EABBA annual contest. The band, one of twenty five bands from Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire, came second in the Class B contest piece.

Fig. 21. April 1973. A smiling Valerie Rose (now well-known Reepham PO counter employee) standing on Leslie Coe's right. Right of picture, wearing bow tie is Jonathan Sissons, currently member and organiser of Matthews Norfolk Brass.

Later in the year, at the annual competition of the EABBA, Reepham, in Class B, won three prizes. Eventually the logistics of transportation resulted in practices taking place in the Duke Street Centre, Norwich. Leslie and Ann Chilman provided transport. The Band Hall, regularly used as a cinema, was almost derelict and had to be sold to raise money. In the mid 1970s it was bought by local carpenter, builder and bandsman Leslie Moy, and pulled down. Two upstairs rooms of the Bircham Centre were then used, the larger for practices, a smaller one for storing music. In the second half of the 70s, despite all the difficulties, highly qualified musician Terry Norman, from the Drayton Band, took over from conductor John Sutton. An airman at Swanton Morley, Terry Norman had performed under Harry Mortimer in the Morris Motors Band. A very talented musician and natural leader, he instilled discipline into his players and produced a championship band good enough to qualify for the national contest, finals of which were held at the Royal Albert Hall. In 1978 Reepham came out top of the Class A Section at an EABBA competition at Thetford, collecting one hundred and seventy eight out of two hundred points for its interpretation of Sidney Herbert's arrangement of Gustav Holst's *Suite in E Flat*. Principal cornet player was Andrew Shreeve, aged sixteen. In 1979 the band came second in their group at the Pontins' National Brass Band Finals, only two points behind the winners. Reepham was the only Norfolk entry to qualify for the competition.

---

[1] Leslie's grandfather played the cornet for the Norfolk Yeomanry Band which had a drill hall in what is now the Banqueting suite in the Old Brewery Hotel. His father, who played the violin, was part of the Reepham Black Diamonds Minstrel troupe. This very successful group was formed in 1910. Rehearsals took place in The Kings Arms clubroom and in a barn (now part of Tylers Mead on Dereham Road), and included many well-known local names such as Gibbs, Eglington and Peck.

Fig. 22. Back left to right names include Pam Swayze, Leslie Coe, Gordon Kellett, Colin Failes, David Foulger, Terry Norman (conductor 4th from right), Nigel Wilson 3rd from right), Tina ? and David Dack. Centre names include Stephen Smythe left and Philip Muskett right. Front names include Bernie Horn, Andy Shreeve, Sandra Failes, Bill Movelly, Annette Coe, Gary Newark, Karen Bales and Jane Chettleburgh

Most of the twenty two players were between the ages of fourteen and twenty two and very few of them came from Reepham. The Chairman was Bill Holden from Costessey, later Honorary Secretary of Matthews Norfolk Brass.

The Eastern Evening News, 22nd January,1979 reported: *Top brass in take-over at Catholic Cathedral. Reepham Brass Band...showed a mastery of their instruments and a regard for their conductor's authority which was clearly the result of much practice .... unison and tempo and balance was admirably achieved under the musical director, Terry Norman. ... included were three soloists all of whom showed perfect control of their instruments and a sensitive awareness of the music. The euphonium soloist, Philip Muskett, played Henry Geehl's "Watching the Wheat" with charm and warmth and the cornet soloist, Bernard Horn, the lovely Victorian air "The Holy City" with just the right emphasis. David Dack played solo trombone, "Recitative" and "Romance", by Reg Heath, with due regard for the forte power of the instrument and was rewarded with long applause.*

In 1980 Reepham beat six other bands attaining the highest position possible in East Anglia to win the coveted title of Champions of East Anglia. The band's reputation had regained the heady heights of the 40s and 50s.

However, interest in brass band music was beginning to wane and tuition at the High School lost much of its impetus. From 1978 the need for a sponsor was recognised, preferably a local firm. At first players had used old instruments, then replaced many of the smaller ones, but by the end of the 1970s four new basses, costing more than £1000 each, were required. Players worked hard to increase funds, for example in December, 1978 they performed a programme of popular swing music at the Old Brewery House, with donations to the band instrument fund. The only regular income was the small weekly subscription of 20p for adult members and 15p for schoolchildren. As well as hiring a hall in the

Duke Street Centre for rehearsals twice a week, the players had to spend about £100-£150 a year on new music. Uniform jackets made by Harmers of Norwich, cloth provided by Courtaulds, cost £20 each. The quality of the instruments, supplied by Boosey and Hawkes, was obviously extremely important. Pam and Godfrey recall one band member buying a cheaper instrument and the different tone sounding dull. There were two practice evenings weekly and between twenty and twenty five engagements each season, including a couple of concerts for Reepham. A good social side existed and some members met and married each other.

Fig, 23. Left Mike Read; others Simon Fenn, David Brooks, Gary Fletcher, Ian Leonard, and Annette Coe.

In the early 1980s Reepham Band was included in an early morning Mike Read Radio One Christmas programme. Having been warned by his producer that Reepham was in "the back of beyond", Mike booked into Brewery House. At 7 o'clock the following morning he was sworn in as a temporary postman in order to deliver Christmas messages in the area. Sub postmaster George Johnson accompanied him to 5 Bircham Road and Manor Farm, Great Witchingham. Singers from Reepham Youth Club sang and members of the Reepham band, which always played carols in the Square, also performed.

The bands need for regular financial support was solved when Bernard Matthews came to the rescue. In 1984, in recognition of his support, Reepham Town Band became Matthews Norfolk Brass.

Annette Keeley (née Coe) who played from the age of six, has a delightful story of a video made to promote the *HAMWICH.* All green costumes were specially made, two days marching back and forth recorded, many hours playing in St. Andrew's Hall were borne heroically to ensure the exact quality of sound to dub the video. But players' hands were not up to the standard required for the photoshots of the eating of the HAMWICHES, therefore "professional" hands were superimposed.

Fig. 24.

Fig. 25.1979 Pam Swayzy, Leslie Coe and his daughter Annette, the last three Reepham members of the band

Matthews Norfolk Brass

Fig. 26. Matthews Norfolk Brass, whose leader is David Stowell, retains its connection with Reepham by playing on Remembrance Day and for the Reepham Society's Carols in the Square. Contact: Christian Stirling, telephone 07710 535816, web address www.matthewsnorfolkbrass.org.uk

---

Acknowledgements To my husband Ralph who shows great patience with my lack of technical ability. I have used the Reepham Society archives, Minutes of the Band (only available up to 1960) and articles donated to the archive by Pam Swayzy, Godfrey Barsted, Leslie Moy and Ann Chilman. My thanks to Wesley Piercy who unfailingly answers all my questions and supports me in all my projects. My very grateful thanks to them, to George Johnson, Leslie Coe and his daughter Annette who loaned me her beloved collection of band material, all carefully annotated. Her cheerful personality and enthusiasm helped me considerably. Research such as mine has been a great ambition of hers, but a young family and busy lifestyle put it on hold. I hope my efforts will gain her approval. Her first memory of the band, at age six, was going with her father to a march in Dereham and carrying the drummer's cornet. As a very young learner player she recalls what seemed "the magnificence of the Band Hall." Others players have chatted to me but I know there are many that I have not had the opportunity to meet. I have included many photographs that I hope will bring back memories of what were obviously very good times indeed. Apologies for any incorrect spelling of names but documentation was very haphazard and – dare I say - I've lived only eight years in Reepham so have no personal knowledge of those times. I feel that a record such as this of the esteem in which the band was held is long overdue. I do hope it is enjoyed. Cover and Fig. nos. 8, 10, 14, 15, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 and 25 have been reproduced by permission of Eastern Counties Newspapers Ltd. Fig. 26 by permission of Matthews Norfolk Brass, Figs. 4 and 5 by courtesy of Leslie Moy, Figs. 6 and 7 by courtesy of Pam Swayzy, Fig. 18 by courtesy of Leslie Coe. Other Fig. nos. courtesy of the Reepham Society archives.

The publishers would like to thank Matthews Norfolk Brass Band for their financial support in the production of this booklet

Published by The Reepham Society, Reepham, Norfolk. Charity number 270298.
ISBN 0-9539858-2-2

Catton Print, Norwich.