

Hello

Swinging Safari – a blast from the past – first piece of music the band ever learned and they played it on parade for a few years

I was a cub leader when the idea of a band at Queensbury was first considered – 40 years ago in 1980.

How did the notion of a band first come about, well,

A number of older band members of Bellraven Scouts (Southfield Lane area) approached Roger Hyde, the GSL of Queensbury with a view to starting a band at Queensbury. (They were looking for a more challenging form of banding than just a parade band)

Roger put it to the leaders and executive committee within the group who overwhelmingly supported the idea.

So, the band was born, second hand instruments were purchased, band members recruited from within the group and rehearsals began in earnest. The band even turned out for the first time at the West Yorkshire Scout Band Contest and then led the Scout Group at the Remembrance Day parade in the village. They actually brought up the rear as the Church Lads Brigade band from Holy Trinity led the parade as they had done for many years previously.

Unfortunately, it didn't last and the ex-Bellraven people began to realise that with a totally novice band they weren't going to realise their dreams anytime soon.

At this time down in deepest Brighouse something was stirring – The Brighouse British Legion Band and the Brighouse St Johns Ambulance Band were reforming together to create a bigger band and was going to be Drum Corps style – Northern Skyriders (later to become Conquest Alliance).

This new band appealed to the Queensbury instructors so along with a number of the older Venture Scout members of Queensbury they left us and went to Brighouse.

This left us with a problem as we had quite a few very, very keen novice band members and no instructors.

Step in Roger again. He approached a friend of his, Mick Lane, who was band master at 39th Bradford South Scout & Guide from Great Horton, which was a Fife and Drum band and persuaded him to help us out.

Mick did just that, he brought some instructors with him Simon Ainge (drum major and drill), Dave Gregson (percussion), Alec and Carol Pratt (display and show) and

also through Roger recruited Peter Bebb (who played in the Clifton and Lightcliffe brass band) as brass instructor, succeeded a couple of years later by Alan Holdsworth a former Black Dyke member.

From this point the band survived, grew in size, grew in confidence and enlarged its repertoire.

In 1983 Queensbury joined BYBA and started to compete in Novice Class, with their first and only BYBA contest that year in York.

The following year, 1984, they were invited to play at the British Marching Band Championships at Wembley Arena – an invitation only event in the time before BYBA ran its own Championships.

Once the band was established and becoming successful Mick decided it was time to step back and let a home-grown Queensbury Band Master take over. This was David Wray.

By 1985 the band was on the up, playing in Contest Class and winning 9 out of 9 contests that season.

It was under David's guidance that the band grew in stature and transitioned into the quality of band that you see here tonight. He brought new types and styles of music, innovative displays, had the band members learn to read music instead of learning by rote or by numbers as was typical throughout the banding world. He and his corps of instructors transformed the band which meant that it had the capability to survive for a long time.

I believe this is the reason we are here tonight celebrating 40 years as David and his team laid the foundations and gave Queensbury its individuality and unique sound.

Being Band Master is extremely hard work and needs a lot of dedication and enthusiasm, which David had by the bucket load.

David eventually retired and Trevor Biggs took over and ran the band successfully for a couple of years and then due to various reasons, in 1996, history repeated itself and we lost most of our older members and found ourselves depleted and without a band master.

At this point I ended up as caretaker bandmaster for 2 years. Now, I am not musically or artistically qualified to make much of a difference but for a few months I was helped out by members of the City of York Scout Band in the guise of Dean and Daryll Raynor and Adrian Dawes who used to come over every week for band practice and also turned their band out to combine with Queensbury at some long-standing gala bookings and also at Remembrance Day. We were also helped out by Paul and Christine Cartwright and their sons Andrew (brass) and Richard

(percussion) who travelled from Pontefract for practices. I will always be grateful for the help that all these individuals and groups gave us.

We then saw the return of Trevor and Joanne and Andrew Mitchell and they got the band growing again and I was able to hand over to Simon Ainge. Eventually Oliver took over and is still in post and is responsible for tonight's event.

Over the years we have always tried to make banding fun so along with the hard work of being a band member and instructor we organised different things like trips to Holland to the flower festivals, trips to Alton Towers etc and other social events, a tradition that I am pleased to see continues on Oliver's watch.

Just to give you some statistics – when Queensbury joined BYBA there were approximately 350 bands in membership over the four classes with contests being held every weekend from 1st May to end of September. There were waiting lists for the 20+ contests and a contest could have 24 bands in. They were long days.

At present BYBA has around 20 bands in membership and only around 3 contests plus the Championships each year.

So how has Queensbury lasted 40 years?

Well, I believe that it is a combination of several factors and not in any order of importance as I think they are all important:

A keen nucleus of band members of all ages and abilities;

Growing your own so that you always have new young learners;

Older members looking after the younger ones;

A dedicated corps of skilled instructors;

A bandmaster who is dedicated, tenacious, creative and visionary and who upholds the aims of the band;

A dedicated and flexible service team in the background keeping the finances in order, providing uniforms, arranging bookings, trips and transport;

Fostering friendships throughout the activity so that there can be help in the hour of need for both ours and other bands.

And finally, a factor that I believe is very important:

Since its creation, under all of the bandmasters that have had responsibility for Queensbury, there has been a determination to remain a section of 18th Bradford

South (Queensbury Tryhards) Scout Group, sometimes in spite of the Scout Association. I say that because there was a time before the Scouts became enlightened when they didn't regard Banding as a scouting activity – the paradox here being that they did provide a badge that could be earned by both cubs and scouts which was the Musician's badge.

I have seen so many good bands that have broken away from their organisations, be it Scouts, BB or CLB because they thought that they were being held back by their organisations only to last for a few years and then disappear all together

I believe that by remaining within your organisation you have the roots that allow you to grow and flourish and in the event of problems there is someone there who can and will help out. Without those roots you are in danger of dying

I have thoroughly enjoyed my many years, both with the Scout group and the band and I'm pleased to see that it's still giving young people an enjoyable and worthwhile hobby.

In making this speech, if I have left out anybody and haven't mentioned them, I apologise, the grey cells aren't what they used to be.

I thank you for your time and hope that I have been able to give you a potted history of the band and also my thoughts as to why we are able to be here tonight celebrating our fantastic 40 years.

Thank you