



*Founder member of the Band, Arthur Main, wrote the following in 1994 on the occasion of the 21st Anniversary of DCB, with further additions in 1999...*

## TWENTY ONE YEARS A-BLOWING

We might add “and a-banging, too”, because the membership of Dunbartonshire Concert Band consists of wood-wind, brass and percussion players. We are not normally given to “blowing our own trumpets” or “banging our drums” metaphorically, but the Band’s 21st Anniversary Year has been an appropriate time for remembering with gratitude, satisfaction and pride the achievements of the Band since its inception.

Dunbartonshire County\* Concert Band owes its formation to the initiative, vision and enthusiasm of two members of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Geoffrey Haydock, clarinettist, and Glyn Bragg, timpanist. The first rehearsal was held in January 1973 in Bearsden Primary School, which was to be the Band’s “home” for over eighteen years. The inaugural concert was held in May 1973 in Douglas Academy, Milngavie. In the early years the Band was fortunate to have the assistance of other professional musicians, mostly from the BBCSSO, both in rehearsals and in concerts. Because of the rapid increase in the membership of the Band and the wide range of age, ability and experience, in April 1974 Dunbartonshire County\* Wind Ensemble was formed to cater for the less experienced and mostly, though by no means exclusively, younger players. The first Conductor of DCWE was Trevor Green, who was then a trumpet player in the BBCSSO. Although since then the two bands have been independent of each other, for the first few years both bands participated in a joint annual “Festive Fanfare” concert in the City Hall, Glasgow, in the last week of the year. Over the years some players have been regular members of both bands.

When the Band was started, many pupils were learning to play an instrument at school, but their opportunities of ensemble playing were restricted to the somewhat limited vacancies in school orchestras. The Band offered young instrumentalists the experience of playing in a large ensemble along with adults, some of considerable ability. In the early years many of the members of the Band were Senior Secondary School pupils. Some of these have followed musical careers as professional orchestral players or as instrumental instructors or music teachers in schools, while others have continued to enjoy playing as amateurs. We were delighted that many of these former members were able to join us at our Anniversary Re-union Rehearsal on 29th January, 1994. Today in the educational system school pupils have opportunities to play in wind bands at Divisional and Regional level and, in some cases, in individual schools. Because of this, DCB now consists mainly of young and not so young adults, although we currently have, and always welcome, younger members. DCB is a “community” band. Its primary purpose is to give musical enjoyment, and also education, to its members and to its listening public. Although, for several obvious reasons, the word “Dunbartonshire” forms part of its title, the Band has never been exclusive either in its membership or in the places in which it performs. While many, sometimes a majority, of our members have come from Dunbartonshire, others have come from Glasgow and the surrounding area, some travelling many miles to attend rehearsals and performances.

The logo for Dunbartonshire Concert Band features three stylized human figures in blue and orange, arranged in a circular pattern as if dancing or playing instruments. Below the logo, the text "Dunbartonshire Concert Band" is written in a bold, blue, sans-serif font.

# Dunbartonshire Concert Band

Over the years our services have been available to the community at large. While, inevitably, many of our performances are given near our base, we are by no means confined to Dunbartonshire. As well as participating in local events, such as Milngavie Week and school functions, we have played at the Burrell Collection and in Pollock Park, in Bellahouston Park and at Quarrier Homes, Bridge of Weir, the Glasgow Garden Festival and the Thistle Foundation, Edinburgh. We have participated in services and concerts not only in churches and church halls throughout Dunbartonshire, but also in Glasgow Cathedral, St. Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh, Paisley Abbey and Bothwell Parish Church. Many of our performances have been given at fund-raising events for charities or in hospitals, such as Erskine Hospital. From time to time we have shared in performances with local adult and children's choirs and other musical groups. On some occasions we have had the pleasure of performing with professionals such as Bill McCue, Helen MacArthur, Frances McCafferty, Mary Sandeman and Mary Marquis.

During our twenty one years we have benefited from the varied experience and expertise of our Musical Directors. In the first five years Glyn Bragg and Geoffrey Haydock laid the foundations and set the standards which have remained with us. Later during that period, Geoffrey Haydock, who is now the Principal Clarinettist in the BBCSSO, became our regular Conductor. Glyn Bragg, who until recently was Senior Music Producer, BBC Radio, Scotland, continued to take an active interest in the Band and wrote and conducted some excellent arrangements for the Band. In his further nine years with us, Glyn, as Conductor, extended our repertoire, widened our range of venues and performances and set our aims still higher. During this early period, Tony Swainson, the Tuba player in the BBCSSO, as well as leading our Bass section also assisted in the training and conducting of the Band.

Glyn Bragg was succeeded briefly by Adrian Drover, a versatile and accomplished instrumentalist, arranger and conductor. H. C. R. (Ben) Bently brought to us his wealth of experience of music in the Army, from which he had retired as Director of Music of the Brigade of Gurkhas. When he had to leave us because of ill health, he was succeeded by James G. (Gerry) McColl, another Army musician, who had completed his military service as Director of Music of The Life Guards. Alan J. Bell had played in the flute sections of the National Wind Band of Scotland and the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland and brought to us his experience as an instrumental instructor in schools in Central Region and the Conductor of the Regional Wind Band. In our present Musical Director, Peter Shand, an accomplished pianist and accompanist and an experienced choral, orchestral and band conductor, we have welcomed back "one of ourselves". Peter played timpani in the Band when he was at school and he also performed with the Band as piano soloist

We have never regarded ourselves as a competitive band. However, on several occasions we have participated in festivals, partly to give ourselves goals at which to aim and partly to benefit from the learning experience of listening to other bands. In the first Scottish Festival of Wind Bands organised by the British Association of Symphonic Bands and Wind Ensembles, held in Govan Town Hall in 1983, we won the prize for the best Entertainment Item with our playing of "Beguine Festival". We also played at the BASBWE Scottish Festival in 1986 and again in 1993. For the last three years we have taken part in the Glasgow Music Festival, being placed first in our section and in 1994 being awarded the Southside Brass Trophy.



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During its lifetime the Band has encountered problems which are common to many voluntary, amateur organisations, particularly those of finance and fluctuating membership. From the formation of the Band our Musical Director's rehearsal fees and travelling expenses were paid by the local authority Education Department and we were charged only a small nominal fee for our rehearsal accommodation in Bearsden Primary School. In 1990, because of cut-backs in educational spending, the Education Department ceased to pay the cost of our Conductor's rehearsal fees and travelling expenses. The cost of our school let was later increased. In 1991 the Education Department required us to move from Bearsden Primary School to Boclair Academy, Bearsden. For a number of reasons this arrangement was not entirely satisfactory. Since the autumn of 1993 we have been rehearsing in Cairns Church Halls, Milngavie, and we hope to be there for some time to come. The cost of running the Band is now met mainly from members' subscriptions, local authority grants and donations received from performances.

The fact that after twenty one years the Band continues to fulfil its function in the community and that it is at present experiencing an encouraging increase in its membership is due largely to the enthusiasm and commitment of successive Musical Directors, Office-bearers, Committee Members and Band members, who over the years have faithfully and effectively 'played their part' not only in the rehearsal room and on the concert platform, but also in the administration and organisation of the Band.

\*(The word "County" was dropped from the title of both bands after Regionalisation.)

ARTHUR W. A. MAIN  
November 1994

*Arthur appended these reminiscences in 1999...*

### THE 21st ANNIVERSARY YEAR

During its 21st Anniversary Year Dunbartonshire Concert Band participated in a wide variety of interesting and exciting events which reflected the life and purpose of the Band during its history and the developing role it had fulfilled in the local and wider community. In the pattern of the year's activities there was an appropriate blend of grateful recollection of the past, continuation of traditional commitments and undertaking of new ventures.

#### THE BEGINNING

The beginning of the year was marked by the holding of an Anniversary Re-union Rehearsal in Milngavie Town Hall on Saturday 29 January 1994. The venue was a very suitable and appropriate one, because of the facilities it offered for the event and because over the years members of the Band had become accustomed to performing there during Milngavie Week and on other occasions. The programme involved a forenoon rehearsal, a lunch on the premises and a further rehearsal in the afternoon.

Invitations were sent to all the former Musical Directors of the Band, to as many former members as could be contacted directly or indirectly and to some friends of the Band who had helped us in various ways. Much careful and detailed planning was made regarding the arrangements and the response was very encouraging. About 40 former members came with

their instruments to sit and play alongside the current members of the Band, with the result that we had around 70 players in total taking part in the rehearsals. Some former members, who were no longer playing regularly, and some friends of the Band sat as an audience and enjoyed listening to our music-making. Those present were cordially welcomed by Band Chairman David Welsh. As we had anticipated, there were former members who, because of distance or other commitments, were not able to be with us. Many of these sent their greetings and good wishes, some from far afield in this country and abroad.

We had asked our present Musical Director, Peter Shand, and our first two Musical Directors, Geoffrey Haydock and Glyn Bragg, to conduct the rehearsal sessions. We enjoyed their different styles of conducting and they seemed to appreciate the opportunity of conducting a large band which included members with whom they had worked in the Band's earlier years. Our conductors took us through music which the Band had played over the years, some of it from early times, including the march, "Father Rhine", "The Beatles: Echoes of an Era", Holst's "First Suite in E Flat" and Gordon Langford's "Fantasy on British Sea Songs".

At the end of the morning rehearsal a birthday cake was brought into the hall and was cut by Julie Kerr, a former member of our Flute section, who was celebrating her own birthday, accompanied by Band Chairman David Welsh. Then a gathering of around 90 sat down to a lunch which had been arranged by the Anniversary Committee. Over lunch, as during the forenoon and afternoon tea and coffee breaks, we enjoyed renewing former friendships and making new ones and reminiscing together about "the Band". All in all, the event was a most worthwhile and memorable occasion and made a fitting and encouraging start to our 21st Birthday Year.

## THE MIDDLE

In March we continued our practice of participating in the Glasgow Music Festival and we again won First Prize in the Concert Band Section and were awarded the Southside Trophy. This resulted in the Band being invited to take part in the Glasgow Music Festival Winners Concert in the Henry Wood Hall, Glasgow in December. In May we played at Cairns Church Fete and later gave a concert in Milngavie United Free Church Hall. At the beginning of June we traveled to Edinburgh to play at the Open Day of The Thistle Foundation, which was celebrating its 50th Anniversary. Later in the month, as part of the Milngavie Week activities, we held our Annual "Strawberries and Cream" Summer Concert in Milngavie Town Hall. Our special guests at the concert were Clydebank District Choir, directed by Cameron Murdoch, a friend of our Musical Director, Peter Shand.

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In August the Band provided music at the Pollock Park Open Day, as we had done several times in previous years. September was a busy month for us, with concerts at The Posthouse Hotel, Erskine, at Cadder Ladies' Circle, Bishopbriggs and at The Burrell Collection, Glasgow. As the end of the year approached, shortly after participating in the Glasgow Music Festival Winners Concert, we paid our annual pre-Christmas visit to the Erskine Hospital for ex-Service men and women. On the Sunday before Christmas we played at an Evening Service in New Kilpatrick Church, Bearsden.

## THE END

As the year drew to a close, Band members were already able to look back over an interesting and rewarding schedule of engagements which had involved us in playing at a wide range of



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events and venues, some of which were very familiar, while others were quite new. One final and most appropriate event, however, had still to be experienced. Geoffrey Haydock, one of our first Musical Directors, and his wife, Penny, who had played oboe in the Band when it began and who was responsible for organizing the sale of tickets for our early concerts, together planned a “Nostalgic Festive Fanfare” Concert, similar to those which had been held during the Band’s first few years. As for the Anniversary Re-union Rehearsal, invitations to take part were sent to former Band members. Just as had happened during the original series of concerts in the 1970s, we were joined by Dunbartonshire Wind Ensemble. During the weeks before Christmas the two bands and former players rehearsed together.

The event took place in the City Halls, Glasgow on Friday 30 December. Also participating in the concert were the Killermont Young Singers and the Westerton Male Voice Choir, two local musical groups, both of whom had performed with us on previous occasions. The music performed included items which had featured in the early “Festive Fanfare” Concerts, such as “At Christmastime”: John Cacavas, “Poet and Peasant” Overture: Franz von Suppé, “Father Rhine” March: Paul Lincke, “This Ole Man”: an. Glyn Bragg and “Auld Lang Syne”: arr. Glyn Bragg.

It was fitting that the three Musical Directors who had participated in the Re-union Rehearsal in January were again involved. Geoffrey Haydock was our Musical Director for the event and conducted most of the items. Peter Shand was Piano Soloist with Dunbartonshire Concert Band, a role he had filled in 1973 at our Inaugural Concert in Douglas Academy, Milngavie, when he was a pupil at that school and Timpanist in the Band. Accompanied by the Band he played an arrangement by Glyn Bragg of Henry Litolffs “Scherzo Symphonique”. Glyn conducted the two bands in the first performance of his own composition, “Mr. Macintyre’s March”, and, in the absence of their own conductor because of illness, he also conducted Westerton Male Voice Choir in their items. In their contributions Dunbartonshire Wind Ensemble were conducted by their Musical Director, Kevin Price.

Another interesting and appropriate feature of this “Nostalgic Festive Fanfare” was that our wind soloists were two of the several band members who later became professional orchestral musicians. We were delighted to welcome back Stewart McIlwham, our Piccolo Soloist, a former member of Dunbartonshire Concert Band, and Douglas Mitchell, our Clarinet Soloist, a former member of Dunbartonshire Wind Ensemble. At the time of the concert both were members of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, London. Stewart is the son of George McIlwham, former BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra flautist and well-known piper. George was one of several BBCSSO members who helped DCB in various ways during the early years. The Band had performed some of his own compositions, in one of which he played the part for Bagpipes.

“Nostalgic Festive Fanfare” was a fitting climax to Dunbartonshire Concert Band’s 21st Anniversary Year. We were very grateful for all the planning and preparation carried out by Geoffrey and Penny Haydock in order to bring together past and present Conductors and Band members for this memorable occasion. We appreciated very much the contributions of all who participated as conductors, soloists, players and singers and who supported us as members of the audience.

Written in retrospect

October 1999

ARTHUR W. A. MAIN