

RODBOROUGH JAZZ BAND

Its History and Record

Rodborough Jazz Band has a remarkable record and an equally remarkable history. It first started in May, 1937, in the back kitchen of a house in Dudbridge Hill. The house belonged to Mr. Shelley, now secretary of the band, and one day his young boy came running home with the story of how Butterrow had started a Jazz Band. "Why can't we start one too, Dad?" he asked. Mr. Shelley said he would consider the idea, and the children who heard it were so excited they promptly started marching round the kitchen regardless of furniture.

In their childish ignorance, they "went too far," and father had to put a stop to it. As far as Mr. Shelley was concerned the Jazz Band was forgotten.

It was a fortnight later when a young girl came to him and asked him "What about this Jazz Band you were going to start, Mr. Shelley?" "It was all forgotten, I thought," he replied. "Well, everyone in Dudbridge Hill is talking about it," answered the girl. Mr. Shelley gave in, and told the girl he would go through with it if she could collect two dozen boys and girls to meet him in the brickyard on the following Tuesday. When Tuesday came, the children instead of assembling at the brickyard gathered outside Mr. Shelley's house and instead of two dozen there were seventy!

That number had to be cut down somehow and Mr. Shelley inquired how much the costumes would cost. He was told about 3/- and so he sent the children home to ask their parents if they would give the children the necessary money. That cut the number down to 32, and they formed the nucleus of the present band, paying 1d. per week as a subscription.

The next thing was to start practicing and after the children had purchased their own instruments (kazoos from Woolworth's), with the help of Mr. Vick Hodges, Mr. Shelley started training them.

They soon obtained further assistance. Mr. Barnes, a friend of Mr. Hodges, and an ex-seaman, expressed the wish that he might help to train the children. His assistance was promptly welcomed. They did their practicing in the streets around Dudbridge and Lightpill and ample evidence was soon forthcoming that there was plenty of talent for the composition of a really successful band.

So far, however, they had no instruments but kazoos, but later they managed to borrow a side-drum from the Uplands Scouts. Then arose the need for a bass-drum. There was considerable difficulty in obtaining one, but eventually a friend of Mr. Hodges proffered to lend one to the band. Now all that remained to be done was the designing and making of the costumes. Their first costume was green and white and was designed by Miss L. Shelley, while two or three other ladies helped with the making.

Stroud Show was by this time drawing near and the band went into strict training. They entered the junior section of the Stroud Show and there gained their first success, when they won the premier prize.

There followed a number of competitions, the first being the Paganhill Fete, on August Monday, where they again took first prize.

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On August 27th, they went to a competition at Leonard Stanley and won first prize there. That ended their competitions that year.

As a result of their successful season they went for their first annual outing on September 11. After the outing a General Meeting was called in the Endowed Schools with the idea of forming a committee to run the band in a businesslike manner. It was reported that at the end of the year after all expenses were paid out they were left with a balance in hand of £22/17/3½d.

Officers were elected as follows: President, Rev. L. V. Miller; Secretary and Treasurer, Mr. G. H. W. Shelley; Chairman, Mr. V. Hodges. A working committee consisting of the following was elected: Mr. P. Frusher, Mr. Tom Barnfield, Mr. Harold Harris, Miss L. Shelley, Miss I. Chandler. A ladies social committee was formed consisting of Mrs. Ford, Mrs. Barnfield, Mrs. Herbert, Mrs. Weaving, Mrs. Holder, Mrs. Bufton, and these ladies ran a number of whist drives and other social events throughout the winter.

The band officers were: Marching—Mr. Barnes and Mr. Alan V. Browning; Drums and Music—Mr. T. Chapman and Mr. Roy Chandler assisted by Miss Ivy Chandler.

It was arranged at this meeting to hold a club night every week, where the children could have games and drill during the winter months. This club continued until Easter when they started out-door training. By this time the number of the band had increased to 41.

Since last year the band have purchased 7 drums (five side drums and two bass drums); two sets of costumes and two sets of instruments, and their expenditure up to date this year has been about £42.

This season two ladies were appointed to choose costumes and they decided on the "Red and White Star Band." Their first engagement was at the Cadets Fete, Scisley, when they took first prize without any competition. They later went to the Three Counties Show, where they entered for the Senior Contests and took 2nd prize. Their next contest was at Stonehouse Carnival where again they took first prize without any competition.

Then came the event of the year, the Stroud Show, and they went into strict training again and for the second time took the first prize. They had then changed their costume and name to the Premier Hussars.

They were given an engagement at Coleford where the people asked them to play for them. During the last season they have had several "march rounds" with Newman Henders Midshipmen, collecting for funds.

Their most recent success was at Newman Henders Sports last month when they again took first prize in the junior section. To wind up the season the band are going for their annual outing on September 17.

They hope to continue with the club again this winter and to once again compete next year when they may also run a senior band.

Last Friday the band lost two of their members, Beryl and Eddie Barker (drummer), who went to Canada to join their father. The band paraded to wish them bon voyage and God's Speed. The two children have taken their Red and White Star costumes with them as a memento, and the band hope to send a photograph of the band and a small gift in recognition of their services.

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