

The Rosehill Band.

Inevitably, instrumental music made early appearance at the Chief Office of The Salvation Army Assurance Society.

As brass bands became an integral part of Salvationist endeavor, and as the number of men employed by the Society increased, there was soon a host of players in hundreds of Corps whose week-day occupation was Salvation Army life assurance.

But the first Assurance Society Band, as such, came in 1928, at a heyday in Salvation Army musical history, when the Society put 500 musicians into one festival, presided over by the musically minded Lieut.-Colonel Haines.

The Assurance Band of fifty players took part under the baton of Bandmaster Fred Buckman, renowned cornetist with the International Staff Band.

Society employees in The Salvation Army Assurance Society's combination included Geoffrey Dalziel, Arthur Hook, Cyril Brisley and Bernard Adams, all of whom became members of the International Staff Band, the latter its Bandmaster.

This Salvation Army Assurance Society Band marched in the Lord Mayor's Show, the first time the Army took part in this annual event.

The Lord Mayor was Sir Kynaston Studd, one of the famous cricketing brothers, who, like the more famous C.T., displayed a warm interest in The Army.

The Chief Office Band gave way to the Assurance Headquarters Boy's Band, directed by Henry Nott. In time the word "Boys" was omitted from the title and, as the Assurance Headquarters Band, the section took part in the 1939 Associated Headquarters Festival at the Clapton Congress Hall.

The second world was extinguished of the headquarters bands, as it did so much else.

But it called another band into being, the most notable Salvation Army Assurance Society Band.

When the bombing of London caused business houses to evacuate the city, the Society took refuge in "Rosehill", a large country house near Reading, that had been, among other things, a Roman Catholic School.

Down there men employees and officers were cut off from their own Corps activity, which, for many, meant a place in the Band.

So a Band was formed, called "Rosehill", with Major Walter Ward as its first Bandmaster.

Ward was a first-class conductor, Bandmaster of the Cambridge Heath Band and solo cornetist with the International Staff Band.

For the new Salvation Army Assurance Society unit he had excellent material before him.

Proof of this came in about six months, when the B.B.C. invited the Band to an audition, which was soon followed by an engagement to broadcast.

Throughout the war, despite the loss of men to military service, the Band maintained a high standard, alternating with the International Staff Band in presenting manuscript music for the International Music Board.

For a short while, in 1942, the incomparable Eric Ball was Bandmaster, passing on, after only a few months, to become International Staff Bandmaster.

Colonel Albert Jakeway succeeded him, and nowadays this name, more than any other, is conjured up when Rosehill is mentioned.

Colonel Jakeway took the Band to high standards of performance, enriched as it was by the return of Service men who were highly gifted instrumentalists.

Indeed, from the first, Rosehill's high standards of performance owed much to its ability to recruit men who were virtuosos.

But like other Headquarters Bands, and the Assurance Songsters, Rosehill Band passed into history, ceasing to function in 1951.

This was a time of post-war reconstruction, and also a boom period in life assurance.

A famine of staff, and extreme pressure of work, made it more and more difficult to find time and manpower. (A unique Society, a history of the Salvation Army Assurance Society Limited, by Bernard Watson, 1968)