



Xpressions



the Newsletter for the Pals of PolySteel

Issue 4 November 2007

POLYSTEEL RETURN TO THE OPEN



The PolySteel Band conducted by Philip Harper made a return to the British Open Championships after six years away by winning the Grand Shield Qualifying Contest in Blackpool and in doing so became one of only a handful of bands to win the famous old shield twice. Full report inside.

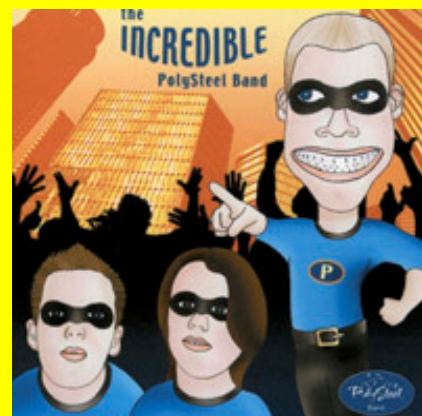
Come Follow the Band!!
(Your essential concert diary)

Sunday 16th Dec.
St. Georges - Bristol Xmas
Concert

Saturday 22nd Dec.
Bacon Theatre Matinee &
Evening

Event details available through the website
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Xpressions

Autumn/Winter 2007

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Concert Feature

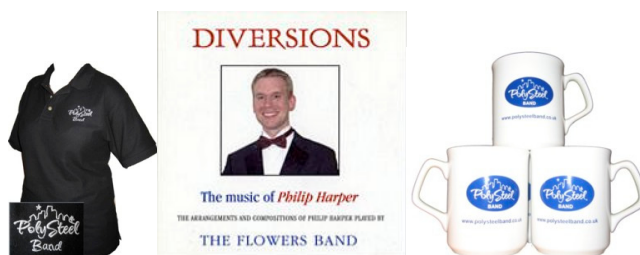
Haylfest Festival
28th/29th July 2007

The PolySteel Band were this year delighted to be asked to make the long trip to Cornwall to take part in the annual Haylfest Festival organised by the Hayle Town Band on the 28th & 29th of July. The band left Gloucester at 9.30 on the Saturday morning and eventually arrived in Hayle at 5.00pm just in time for a Cornish cream tea at the local hostelry which was organised by the ladies of Hayle Town Band, then it was off to rehearsal at the concert venue (a huge marquee complete with bar!) situated on the playing fields in the village.

The band played to a large capacity audience which included many local bandsmen and women. Music played included the theme from the film 'The Mission' in the shape of 'Gabriel's Oboe', some wonderfully controlled playing from Flugel soloist Danny Winder in 'Misty', Andy Hicks' spellbinding technique in Herman Belstedts 'Napoli' and Principal Cornet Chris Howley's cracking rendition of Kenny Baker's jazzy 'Virtuosity'. It was clear by the end that the audience were eager for more so the obligatory encore was imminent in the shape of Philip Harper's arrangement of 'It's Raining Men' which brought the house down. *Contd. on page 3.*

Ideal stocking fillers for Christmas.....

The PolySteel Band has an extensive range of high quality merchandise. Why not visit our website or CD stand at any of our concerts to see what's on offer.



You can buy the band's CDs as well as **PolySteel Band** Polo Shirts, Pens & Pencils, Bookmarks, Diaries and even Coffee Mugs!!

In profile...

John Moss

Second Euphonium



John started playing at the tender age of nine when his local scout band recruited him into the ranks. He joined his first brass band, the Loughborough Band at the age of twelve where he not only developed as a young player but also forged friendships that to this day remain strong. During his spell there, he also enjoyed three years with the National Youth Brass Band of Great Britain.

In 1972 John was asked to join the William Davis Band where he remained for the next fifteen years before his work asked him to relocate to the South West. During his spell with Davis's he was fortunate enough to experience many successes in all major competitions including the legendary Open at Belle Vue. Once settled in the South West he joined the Thornbury Band in 1988 before joining Flowers in early 2005.

Most admired musician?

From the banding world, Trevor Groom, Euphonium player for GUS when they were at their best. He was a great help to me when I was younger.

Greatest banding moment?

In 1978 whilst playing with William Davis Band when we got our first invite to the British Open at the old Belle Vue. We played no.9 just in front of 'Dyke' and came away with 6th prize.

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www.polysteelband.co.uk

Contd. from page 2.

After the concert the band were treated to a late night supper of Cornish pasties again provided by the ladies of Hayle Band before making their way to the local watering hole 'The Cornish Arms' where the players of PolySteel and Hayle Town mingled until the small hours. (the PolySteel players even managed to discover a rather addictive local brew by the name of 'Proper Job' which seemed to give the desired effect!)

Sunday afternoon's concert was set in the beautiful surroundings of the bandstand at Pavilion Gardens in Falmouth where yet another packed crowd enjoyed the music on what was a glorious summers afternoon, with the programme being a repeat of the previous evening's music. There was time at the end of the concert for the players to relax with a small tippie before making the long journey back home to (a rather flooded) Gloucester. The management and players of PolySteel would like to pass on their thanks to all the members and staff of Hayle Town Band for their wonderful hospitality over the weekend and hope it's not too long before the band is once again asked to perform in the county of Cornwall.



Polysteel Band end their performance in Falmouth Pavilion Bandstand

Xmas Concerts

This Christmas there will be double the opportunity to see the band in action at Cheltenham's Bacon Theatre. On Saturday 22nd December they will perform a matinee and evening performance of festive music. In the afternoon at 3.00pm they will be joined on stage by the Gotherington Singers with the evening's concert at 7.30pm supported by the Oriel Singers from Cheltenham. Tickets for the matinee are £7 and for the evening concert they are £10 available from the Bacon Theatre box office on 01242 258002.

The band will also be making its now annual appearance at St. Georges Hall in Bristol on Sunday 16th Dec at 7.30pm for a Christmas Spectacular with Choir Of The Year finalists 'Circuit 16' and their conductor Cara Clark. Tickets for this concert are available from the St. Georges Hall box office on 0845 40 24 001.



End of an era as PolySteel loses bandroom!

After a successful 2007, the PolySteel Band face an uncertain future in terms of rehearsal premises in 2008. Their present band room at the former RAF Quedgeley site in Gloucester is due to be knocked down in 2008 to make way for a new housing development by Persimmon Homes, with the band having to move out by March of next year.

"Of course we are devastated by the news that our wonderful band room will be taken from us" says Steve Jones, the bands sales and marketing manager. "It has been our home for the past seven years and has been the key to the bands success. Having a stable home to rehearse at undoubtedly plays a very important part in the way the band gel as a team and performs on stage. However on a positive note, the time has come to look elsewhere for a new home so that the band can continue to flourish and represent the county of Gloucestershire as one of the world's top brass bands".

If you know of any available space that the band can use as rehearsal premises, then you can contact the PolySteel Band by email at md@polysteelband.co.uk or by phone on: 07881 716228.

MY STRENGTH AND SHIELD

**Grand Shield British Open Qualifying Contest
Saturday 19th May 2007.**

For the second time in their history the PolySteel Band conducted by Philip Harper lifted the famous Grand Shield meaning a return to the British Open Championships in Birmingham in September.

Playing off a number 15 draw, the band gave a near faultless rendition of Bramwell Tovey's 'A Night To Sing' which adjudicator Alan Morrison described as "A very consistent high class performance". That consistency gave PolySteel victory and their second Grand Shield title – the first coming in 1998. With a very strong line up of bands, the competition for qualification to the 'Open' is fierce, with some people describing the Grand Shield as possibly the hardest contest of them all to win – let alone qualify. There were other performances of note on the day particularly from Sellers International (who also qualified by romping home in second place) and also from the 2005 national champions Leyland who put in a strong performance but unfortunately for them they only managed third place, meaning another year out of the Open. Their time will come very soon for sure!

Band Manager Mike James was ecstatic after the announcement of the results quipping, "We have worked so hard to try and qualify back to the British Open over the last few years and this year it has paid off. We felt we had delivered a very good performance but so too did other bands. Philip Harper really brought the music to the fore and I think we couldn't have played any better.



Adrian Dalton former BBb bass player receives the Grand Shield from Martin Mortimer. (photo courtesy of 4barsrest.com)

We felt we were in with a good chance so to come here and win shows that all the hard work is paying off. Philip has been a fantastic inspiration to the band over recent months and he deserves so much credit for this, I take my hat off to all of them."

Full results:

- 1. PolySteel, P. Harper**
2. Sellers International, P. McCann
3. Leyland, R. Gray
4. Tongwynlais Silver, G. Pritchard
5. Virtuosi GUS, R. Wiffen OBE
6. BTM (PHS) Band, J. Katsikaris
7. Tredegar, A. Ramsay
8. Staffordshire Band, D. Maplestone
9. Mount Charles, G. Cutt
10. Yorkshire Imperial, R. Farr
11. BT Band, M. Fowles
12. Redbridge, M. White
13. Burry Port Town, M. Thorne
14. Newstead Welfare, D. Beckley
15. Pennine Brass, I. Porthouse
16. Sovereign Brass, T. Jones
17. Ashton-Under-Lyne, P. Chalk
18. Fishburn, R. Evans
19. Alliance Brass, J. Clark

Best soloist: Mark Bousie, Euphonium - Sellers

TOP THREE FINISH AT ENGLISH CHAMPIONSHIPS.

**English National Championships
The Guildhall, Preston
Saturday 30th June 2007.**

PolySteel take scalps in Preston!

The 2nd English National Championships took place at the Guildhall, Preston on June 30th. Up for grabs, some very valuable ranking points but also the opportunity to capitalize on the fine result at Blackpool a month before.

At the inaugural championships last year, PolySteel were placed 8th, so if ever there was a better time to improve on that result then surely this year was it. The test piece for this year's event was Peter Graham's 'On Alderley Edge' which the band first came face to face with in 1997 when it was used as the test piece for the National Championships of Great Britain at London's Royal Albert Hall. The band traveled to Preston the night before the contest for a rehearsal at Lostock Hall Band room, before enjoying a late night supper at a local curry house organized by the band's very own chief curry house hunter David Aston.



"I take my hat off" Band manager Mike James with the trophy.

Saturday morning came and after a quick rehearsal it was off to Preston. Band manager Mike James had already left early to do the draw, so when he phoned to announce that the band were drawn to play number 14 (one from last) the band knew they were in for a long day. However, with all of the big names having already played the band were certainly up for it. The piece starts with an atmospheric opening before the solo horn strikes a call from an off stage position with Vicky Reynolds once again oozing class and showing no sign of nerves which in turn brought confidence to the band.



Band members celebrate the result.

The band are indebted to Graham Lawrence for filling the solo Euphonium chair who put in a stunning show in the exposed solo lines, indeed it was a good show all round and was much appreciated by the audience assembled in the Guildhall.

After a short wait while Fodens Band performed a mini concert the results were announced with PolySteel taking third place, Hepworth second and the reigning National Champions of Great Britain Grimethorpe Colliery taking home the top prize and in doing so going on to represent England at the 2008 European Championships. A fantastic end to the contesting season which sets the band up nicely for their return to the British Open in September.

Full Results:

English National Championships, Guildhall, Preston.
Test Piece: On Alderley Edge (Peter Graham)

1. Grimethorpe Colliery, A. Withington
2. Hepworth (Lanson Homes), M. Bentham
3. **PolySteel, P. Harper**
4. Brighouse & Rastrick, A. Morrison
5. Leyland, R. Gray
6. Fodens Richardson, G. Cutt
7. Newstead Welfare, D. Beckley
8. Carlton Main Frickley Colliery, F. Renton
9. Fairey, Major. P. Parkes
10. Aveley and Newham, N. Taken
11. Reg Vardy, R. Farr
12. YBS, R. Evans
13. Sellers International, P. McCann
14. Rothwell Temperance, D. Roberts
15. Mount Charles, A. Duncan

Best soloist: R. Westacott, Hepworth.

National Finals 2007, Royal Albert Hall, London.

Saturday October 20th saw the PolySteel Band take part in their final event of the contesting season at London's Royal Albert Hall for the National Championship of Great Britain Finals. Although slightly disappointed with their placing of eleventh from a field of twenty bands, the band more than played their part on the day with a beautiful reading of Philip Sparke's 'Music For Battle Creek'. The band were drawn to play number twelve, slap bang in-between the current British Open Champions 'Cory Band' drawn eleven and last years Open Champions 'Black Dyke' drawn thirteen, so a good audience was guaranteed. Solo euphonium Andy Hicks and principal cornet Chris Howley were outstanding in the duet section of the piece and there were notable performances from Vicky Reynolds, Danny Winder and Nathan Jenkins. Many who were present in the hall thought the performance worthy of a top six finish but it wasn't to be. For many in the band it was their Royal Albert Hall debut and of course for the band itself it was the first time of playing at the famous old hall under the PolySteel name. The band now aim to qualify once again at the regional finals at Torquay in March of next year where the test piece is Eric Ball's 'Festival Music'. Congratulations to Grimethorpe Colliery Band and their conductor Allan Withington for taking the title for the second successive year!

Full Results: (courtesy of 4barsrest.com).

1. Grimethorpe Colliery, Allan Withington, 198
2. Fodens Richardson, Gary Cutt, 6, 196
3. Cory, Dr. Robert Childs, 11, 194
4. Black Dyke, Dr. Nicholas Childs 13, 193
5. YBS Band, Richard Evans, 3, 192
6. Brighouse and Rastrick, Alan Morrison, 20, 191
7. BTM Band, Jason Katsikaris, 10, 190
8. Tredegar, Ian Porthouse, 19, 189
9. Whitburn, Steven Mead, 17, 188
10. Desford Colliery, Nigel Seaman, 4, 186
11. **PolySteel, Philip Harper**, 12, 185
12. East Yorkshire Motor Services, Jim Davies, 2, 183
13. Leyland, Russell Gray, 15, 182
14. Aveley and Newham, Nigel Taken, 5, 181
15. Redbridge Brass, Melvin White, 14, 180
16. Hepworth (Cookson Homes), Mark Bentham, 1, 179
17. Kirkintilloch, Nigel Boddice, 8, 178
18. Staffordshire, Michael Fowles, 16, 177
19. Reg Vardy, Ray Farr, 7, 176
20. Mount Charles, Andrew Duncan, 9, 175

POLYSTEEL RANKED 10TH IN THE WORLD

After a fine set of results so far in 2007, the PolySteel Band have climbed the world rankings table to an all time highest position of 10th with the Open and National Finals still to come.

Here are the worlds current top twenty brass bands as compiled by 4barsrest.com and World of Brass.

1. Black Dyke (Yorkshire)
2. Grimethorpe Colliery (Yorkshire)
3. Cory (Wales)
4. Fodens Richardson (North West)
5. Brighouse & Rastrick (Yorkshire)
6. Brass Band Willebroek (Belgium)
7. Scottish Co-op (Scotland)
8. YBS Band (Yorkshire)
9. Leyland (North West)
10. **POLYSTEEL** (West of England)
11. The Fairey Band (North West)
12. Hepworth (Yorkshire)
13. Sellers International (Yorkshire)
14. Carlton Main Frickley Colliery (Yorkshire)
15. Rothwell Temperance (Yorkshire)
16. Whitburn (Scotland)
17. Stavanger (Norway)
18. Kirkintilloch (Scotland)
19. Desford Colliery (Midlands)
20. Reg Vardy (North East)

The **BIG** Interview

PHILIP HARPER

In this edition of the BIG interview we put some questions to the man who makes the band tick.....the very talented Philip Harper.



Philip with the Grand Shield & West of England Trophy.

How did you first become involved in music?

When I was 7 years old and living in Essex, the secretary of the local brass band had a wooden sign at the end of her driveway advertising for beginner brass players. I suppose my mum was looking for a diversion for me so she sent me along! That was how it started.

What has been your greatest achievement so far in both playing and conducting?

As a player – reaching the televised stages of Young Musician of the Year in 1991. As a conductor I felt a great sense of achievement in winning the West of England Area Contest earlier this year.

Who is your musical inspiration?

I am inspired by so many great musicians, to name a few that have shaped my musical personality: Rimsky-Korsakov, Berlioz, Leonard Bernstein, Wynton Marsalis, John Williams, Maurice Murphy, Duke Ellington, Freddie Mercury, Philip Sparke, the list goes on!

Continued on page 8.....

More profile... **(John Moss)**



Favorite Concert Venue?

Dean Close is a great venue also DeMontfort Hall, Leicester and the Royal Concert Hall, Nottingham.

Favourite Test Piece?

Paganini Variations. What a cracking performance we played at the 2006 Masters.

Favourite Quote?

The late George Thompson (MD, Grimethorpe) when Wm Davis when doing a recording in Holland. When the producer told him our horns were flat he replied "If they're flat, I'm a bloody Dutchman!"

Banding ambitions?

A top 6 place at the Open and Nationals before I hang up my Euphonium for good. I genuinely believe we have the players and spirit within the band to do it. The atmosphere within the band is fantastic – what a great bunch of people.

Who is/was your inspiration in banding?

My inspiration still comes from the mates I made when I first started in the Midlands. What's more they will be at the Open and our rehearsal hopefully the night before.

Favourite holiday destination?

I love West Algarve and Italy.

Embarrassing moments?

Telling a joke during my speech at a Thornbury Band dinner and getting the punch line wrong. It was about a hypnotist which I kept referring to as a ventriloquist.

Best excuse for being late to band?

Fortunately a rare event. Nothing unusual springs to mind. Can't really use the kids, they are 22 and 24 now.

Favourite tippie?

Don't drink normally but to be sociable I would have a few pints – I prefer real ale when it's good but also enjoy lager especially with a curry the night before a contest.

2007 has been a great year so far for PolySteel on the contest stage, how have the band and yourself managed to maintain the consistency all year?

The results have been pretty consistent although, as a conductor, I'm always looking for more consistency in the quality of the performances. It has definitely this year been a case of one piece of good fortune has precipitated many others. The band is high on confidence.

What other musical ensembles have you worked with in the past?

I studied for 5 years at Bristol University which gave me exposure to all sorts of musical ensembles from symphony orchestras to obscure chamber groups specializing in avant-garde music. For quite some time now I have however been focused on brass groups.

Where do you source your ideas from when starting a composition?

Good question. From a variety of sources actually - sometimes from something else I've heard, sometimes from something extra-musical (a story or an image). A lot of the time now I compose the piece pretty much fully in my head before I go near a piano and piece of paper. When the juices are flowing I find it happens quite fluently.

If you hadn't have taken a career path into music, what other job do you think you would be doing right now?

Professional Basketball player?

You spent some time working in Japan, how do bands differ in Britain from those in the far east?

There aren't many brass bands in Japan, mainly wind bands which flourish due to the competition structure in place. In Japan rehearsals were always on a Sunday. On weekdays no-one finishes work early enough to do a band practice, but rehearsals on a Sunday were sometimes 9-5, so just as fanatic but in a different sort of way.

Any future ambitions within the banding arena?

Well, taking the PolySteel Band into the top-5 would be nice, but for now I'd like to establish the band as regular contenders at all the major national championships, as well as expanding our reputation for first-class entertainment in the local community.

POPS would like to thank Philip for taking time out of his busy rehearsal schedule leading up to the British Open to answer our questions.

In profile...



Spencer O'Leary
Soprano

Spencer hails from Yorkshire where he learnt his trade with a number of top bands including Brighouse & Rastrick when in 1995 they won the Yorkshire Area. Whilst 'up north' he played principal cornet for Lindley and Yorkshire Co-op and found himself in demand by many top bands as a guest including Black Dyke and Grimethorpe Colliery Band. In the late 1990's Spencer moved south and joined the City of Bristol Band. He was invited to join the then Flowers Band in April 2005. Over the last two years he has made a huge impact on the contest stage being a major part of all of the bands successes.

Most Admired Musician?

Jools Holland – unbelievable arranger and performer.

Greatest Banding Moments?

Winning the first section area with Yorkshire Co-op in Bradford in my first contest as Principal Cornet and first concert with Sarah (now my wife) playing horn.

Favourite Solo?

By the time I get to Phoenix (the only piece I could ever play without music).

Favorite Concert Venue?

Huddersfield Town Hall.

Favourite Test Piece?

Cloudcatcher Fells by John McCabe.

Favourite Quote?

To any conductor – "If you can show me how to play that high quietly I might learn how to do it".

Who is/was your inspiration in banding?

David Moore who was my teacher in Sheffield. I played cornet & trumpet and he encouraged the former. Interestingly after moving to Bristol, his daughters partner (Dan Jones) also now plays in the band.

Favourite holiday destination?

Madeira – would move there but it's a long way to band!

Embarrassing moments?

Playing 'My Love is Like a Red Red Rose' with City of Bristol and coming in two bars early. I didn't stop and played the next fifty bars on my own!