

St Andrews Music Participation

Written by Steven Craig

St Andrews City Brass Band

Active 1879 – 1950

Also known as St Andrews City Silver Band.

Contesting band, (although records show only one contest attended, in 1928).

The St Andrews City Brass Band was formed in 1879 with Mr Charles Russell appointed as the first bandmaster. The members of the first committee included Mr Alex Cunningham, treasurer and secretary, Mr Thomas Peatie (who would later take over the role of treasurer and secretary) and Mr George Marr and it was these gentlemen who were principally responsible for its formation. They organised a bazar in the town hall to raise money to purchase instruments and the Provost at the time, Provost Milton of Roundel, provided the bandsmen with uniforms. The uniforms were a very distinctive blue with yellow facings, and the caps also had a yellow band. It is recorded in the local newspaper of the day *The Citizen* “that the band felt very proud of their attractive appearance”.

First Bandmaster

Charles Russell was a member of the old Fife Horse Band and was a very capable musician. Mr Russell was also the trusted foreman of the former Provost McGregor, and became the first bandmaster (or conductor as we would now call him) of the new St Andrews City Brass Band. In 1887, on his retirement after a number of years of service, Mr Russell was succeeded by Mr James Auchterlonie. He too had been a member of the Fife Light Horse Band. James Auchterlonie held the position of bandmaster until he retired in 1924, and was a member of the band for 44 years. Like Mr Russell before him, Mr Auchterlonie spent much of his time teaching young band members.

Mr Peatie was secretary and treasurer for almost 30 years and would boast that, under his business management and stewardship, there was never a deficit balance. In addition, for years “he kept pegging away with the scheme to get the instruments silver plated” and in 1908 he would see his hard work come to fruition when this was finally achieved at a cost of £152.

The Auchterlonie family would play a major part in the band’s history, as no fewer than 12 members were active at some time. James Auchterlonie played the euphonium as well as conducting. The Auchterlonie family was also a very well-known and respected golfing family within St Andrews.

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James Auchterlonie joined the St Andrews Golf Club in 1881 and, at the time of his death while visiting his two sons in the USA, was its oldest ordinary member.

Other named soloists of the early years included John Petrie and William Ritchie who both played cornet. William Ritchie was later to become the bandmaster of the Volunteer Artillery Brass Band.

Engagements

The St Andrews City Band was very much a part of the local community and one of the first engagements undertaken was to travel to Stirling by rail on the annual excursion of the employees of the Guardbridge Paper Works in order to provide music throughout the day. This was an engagement the band would fulfil on many occasions, taking them across Scotland. They would also give weekly concerts in the area beside the Royal and Ancient Golf Club and, following the erection of the bandstand at Bow Butts, they gave concerts there too; a tradition which continues today on summer Sundays when local bands give free two-hour long performances.

Like many of Fife's bands, the St Andrews City Brass Band was involved at major and historic events in the town. One such event was the local celebrations of Queen Victoria's Jubilee and they were also in attendance at the laying of the foundation stone of the Gibson Hospital. The band also played regularly at the roller skating rink on the Scores, where St James' Church now stands. It is documented that one winter, following a severe frost, the pond at Southfield froze over and was used by locals for skating. This lasted for six weeks, during which time the band was engaged "*to provide music for the skaters while they went through the evolutions of suitable dances*".

It is noted that for many years the band provided music at the Strathkinness flower show, but the highlight each year was the town's Lammass Market Day, when they provided dance music all day at the "*back o' the kirk*".

The War Years

Like many of the bands in Fife following the commencement of hostilities, players left the area to join up with various military outfits. The band's activities ceased, and it was only when peace returned that an effort was made to re-form it. Nevertheless, it struggled after the war to get back to full strength and it is reported that its struggles were due to a new invention called the *Radio*, this having dispensed with the need for local bands to provide dance music. The band did reform

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and would continue for several more years, though not without its problems, due to the shortage of players.

There is only one record of the St Andrews City Brass Band taking part in a brass band contest and that was in 1928 when it competed in the 4th Section of the Scottish Brass Band Championships, held at Portobello Town Hall in Edinburgh. The set test piece was *A Souvenir of the Opera* written by William Rimmer and the adjudicator on the day was Drake Rimmer. It is not known where the band were placed, but it is known they were not in the top four positions, the contest being won by Peebles Burgh Band. Perhaps because of their lowly position at the contest, the committee decided that contesting was not for them as there are no further records of the band participating in such events.

In 1929 the *St Andrews Citizen* reported that “*there would be no dancing on a Tuesday, which at one point was principle attraction for many, but this year the town were without a brass band*”. Mr T. T. Fordyce tried to resuscitate the band around 1930 but failed again due to lack of playing members. During 1933, the bandmaster was once again a member of the Auchterlonie family, Mr Alfred Auchterlonie.

It is not known if the band fell away again after 1933 but it is noted that, due to the combined efforts of Mr Fordyce and Mr J.B. Armit, it did once again reform around 1935 at the time of the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of King George V. The band would also lead the parade for the celebrations in St Andrews on Coronation Day, 1937. The parade would start after the band had played “God save the King” at 5.00pm and the night would end with a bonfire and dancing after the band had once again played “God save the King” at approx. 10.15 pm. Their work for the day was not finished, however, as they were to provide music at the bandstand, or if wet in the town hall, for dancing from 10.30 onwards.



Figure 1

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Fig 1 is a copy of the advert in the St Andrews Citizen on Sat 15th Jan, 1949, looking for players. It was very apparent that by the late 1940s that the band was struggling to attract new members.

On the 8th July, 1950, the following letter appeared in the St Andrews Citizen:

CITY SILVER BAND

Sir, - I would be extremely grateful if you could grant me space in your valuable paper to make an appeal regarding the St Andrews City Silver Band. A meeting is to be held next Wednesday with the object of keeping alive the band and my appeal is for all those ex-members and any others with experience of Brass Band work to come along to Kinburn and offer their services voluntarily. It is the lack of experienced men that has been the stumbling block to the band's progress, and I am sure that if volunteers rally round us now in our difficult days it will not be long until we see the St Andrews City Silver Band restored to its old vitality. – I am, etc. T.W. Robertson, Hon Secretary.

It would appear that the appeal by the secretary was unsuccessful, and it is noted that the band ceased in July / August, 1950 when all instruments etc were returned to the Town Council.