

BRASS BAND NEWS

BBC RADIO 2 NATIONAL YOUTH BRASS BAND 1998 BY LIVERYMAN FRANK RENTON

Being the presenter of 'Listen to the Band' on BBC Radio 2, and a Liveryman of the Company, it was a great joy to be able to bring the two elements together. Earlier this year, I was in the process of planning Radio 2's search for the best youth brass band of 1998. Following the presentation of a silver cup and donation of £5,000 by the Iles family, the Brass Band Committee supported my suggestion that the prize should be made available for the competition. It seemed too good an opportunity to miss, given the Company's commitment to music in education, and the shortage of good silver cups!

It was agreed that the cup would go to the best band from a single school, which sounds simple, but isn't. Youth bands range in size from whatever a school can pull together in any one year, perhaps twenty plus, to the might of the County Youth Brass Bands sporting fifty or sixty players. So we decided to divide the competition into two sections, one for the large bands that draw players from a number of schools, or a large geographic area, and another that encompassed bands from single schools or accredited youth bands like Dobcross and St Keverne that draw their players from a small town or village. There would be a winner of each section which would then meet at Stamford Hall in Loughborough to decide the overall winner.

The West Lothian Schools Brass Band was considered the best large band and the youth band from St Keverne the best small band. In the end it was a close run thing, some rather undisciplined music making in their finale by the young people of St Keverne cost them the title of BBC Radio 2 Youth Brass Band of 1998. This went to Nigel Boddice, a Company Silver Medallist, and his young musicians from Scotland – possibly the most consistently successful youth band in Europe.

The Best Single School Band, I can hear you ask, went to the Bishop Stopford School Band from Kettering.

It was a superb evening, young people making music with great enthusiasm and ability, and the Company at the centre of it. It was a privilege to be involved.

DIPLOMAS OF HONOUR

The following letter from the Council of West of England Brass Band Associations was received by Liveryman Peter Wilson, Editor of the *British Bandsman* and sponsor of these Company awards.

"At a recent meeting of our Council it was the unanimous wish of the members that a letter be sent to you applauding the award of Diplomas of Honour as provided by the Worshipful Company of Musicians.

Members were impressed by the genuine reception given by the audiences at each centre to the worthy recipients of these awards. It is obviously an acknowledgement of long devoted and faithful service to the movement.

Also we would like to thank you for being invited to host these presentations. We hope there will be a continuance of such awards within our movement.

J Wesley Wilton
Hon Secretary."

THE ILES MEDAL

The medal has been awarded to Professor Edward Gregson, Principal of the RNCM. Best known as a composer, but also a distinguished conductor, adjudicator and educationalist, his compositions *Connotations*, *Dances & Arias* and *Of Men & Mountains* are just three works which have become an important part of the contemporary Brass Band repertoire.



Pastmaster Adrian Davis presenting the Cup to Brian Clarke, music master and conductor, Bishop Stopford School.

Photo: BBC Birmingham

THE MORTIMER MEDAL

In recognition of his achievements in teaching young players, the medal has been awarded to Christopher Wormald. Recent successes have been mainly with Smithills School bands. Under his direction they have, won at least one national title every year since 1994. In 1997 they became National School Concert Band Champions and won First Prize and the Gold Medal in the World Music Contest, Kirkcraze, Holland. In March this year, they won the National Youth Brass band Championships of Great Britain (Junior Section) for the second time.

POINTS OF VIEW

The BBC have been much criticised for the savage way that programmes have been discontinued and altered. Whether we like it or not, we live in a consumer led society and Classic FM has made considerable inroads into the BBC audiences. Audience figures show that 'Listen To The Band' in its current format is amongst the most popular programmes on the network. Hopefully that popularity will lead to the expansion of brass band programmes, and more brass band music being heard on the network. Liveryman Frank Renton is not only a gifted musician, but a pragmatist.