

# Changing Times

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## The Chichester City Band go marching on

By Portia Tremlett, Museum Assistant, Ross Wilson, University of Nottingham and Andrea Cifelli, City Band Member

THE CHICHESTER City Band, formed in 1897 by Mr Robert Bottrill, who owned a coal business in Chichester and Bognor Regis, has been a prominent part of Chichester society and is today an award-winning band of around 30 amateur members.

One of the earliest engagements we know the band took part in after its founding was to march Boer War reservists to Chichester railway station during 1900. After the outbreak of the First World War, the band were recruited to take part in military parades and to accompany troops marching to the station for service in France and Belgium. They were also recruited to raise both morale and support for those affected by the war. The City Band also took part in performances in aid of the Mayoress's Work for Women Fund, a local Chichester charity that was started by Mayoress Garland to support women made unemployed by the altered economic conditions wrought by wartime.

During Easter Monday, 1915, Priory Park

was taken over by a display of military sports to entertain the crowds. The 9th (Cyclist) Battalion of the Hants Regiment took part in a variety of events, including tug o' war, football, egg and spoon races, flat races, relay races and the excitement of a 'sack melee'. However, it was the City Band that kept spirits high when the inevitable deluge spoilt the bank holiday celebrations. It was also the City Band that accompanied Chichester's special constables, who had been drafted into service with the departure of members of the police force, as they paraded in the city as part of their route march to Boxgrove. It was the City Band that again supported institutions such as the Graylingwell War Hospital with concerts held in the grounds for citizens and wounded soldiers to raise money for hospital funds.

Throughout 1920, the City Band was involved in events to raise money for Chichester's War Memorial, playing at football matches or dancing parties. The City Band also took part

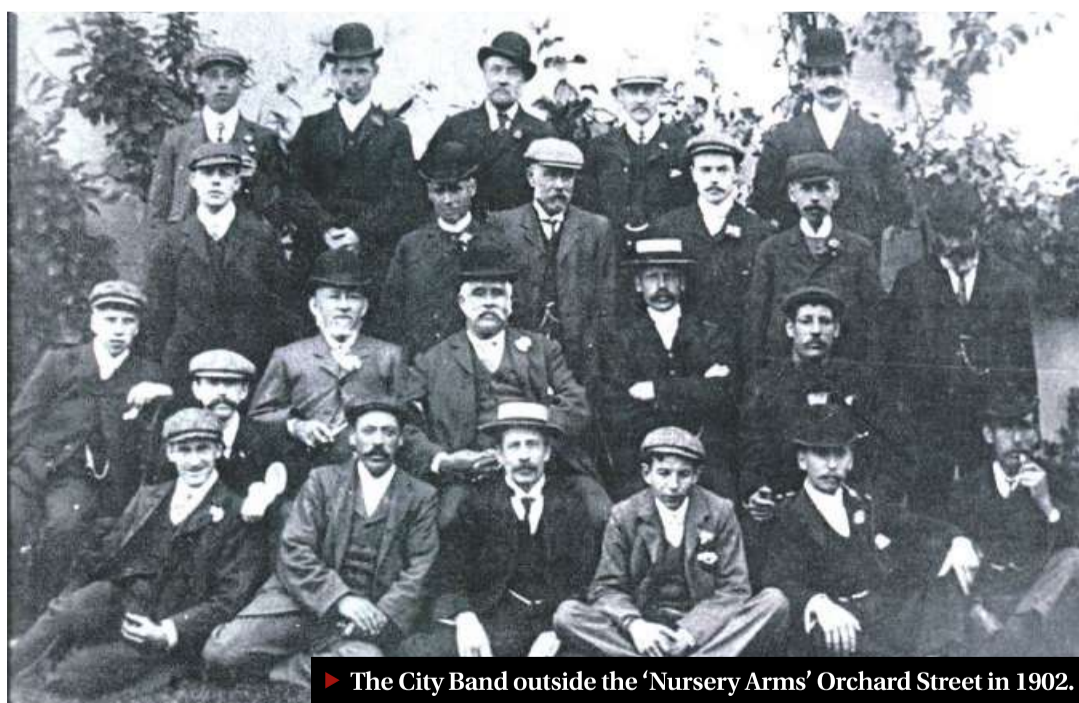
The City Band were present at the unveiling of the War Memorial in Eastgate Square on July 20, 1921.



▶ The City Band marching down West Street in 1927



▶ The photo marks the 40th Anniversary of the City Band in 1927.



▶ The City Band outside the 'Nursery Arms' Orchard Street in 1902.

in a series of winter concerts from 1920 until 1921 to ensure they had sufficient funds for their own purposes as wartime economies had not left a significant amount of money in their accounts. The City Band were present at the unveiling of the War Memorial in Eastgate Square on July 20, 1921. The memorial was presented to the city by Field Marshal Sir William Robertson and a huge crowd had gathered to witness the event.

On July 3, 1929, a sports day and fete were held at Tangmere Airfield from 2pm - midnight. Air Force lorries came to the band room and transported the band to Tangmere. Unfortunately, while unloading, the young flugelhorn player tripped and fell onto his instrument, flattening it. The spare one was quickly sent for and the band played from 2pm-5pm and 6.15pm-7pm on the sports field, and in the evening in a larger hangar for dancing. The City Band also led the procession down South Street during the Silver Jubilee celebrations of King George V in 1935.

During the 1990s, the City Band went from strength to strength, winning awards from competitions all over the country, and in 1995 they won an award of £15,000 from the Foundation for Sports & Arts, and just over £62,000 from the National Lottery to purchase new instruments. In 1998, musical director John Williams took the band to new heights of musical achievement. In April, 1999, for

the first time ever, the band performed at the Chichester Festival Theatre. The band were delighted to take part in the stage version of the hit film *Brassed Off*. Their performance was judged a great success.

The City Band qualified for the finals of the National Brass Band Championships of Great Britain at the Royal Albert Hall on Saturday, October 21, 2000, the first time in the band's history they had qualified to play at this prestigious venue. They emerged as one of the top bands in their section in the country after finishing eighth in the National Brass Band Championships.

John Williams' service to Chichester City Band was recognised by Chichester City Council at a special ceremony at Chichester College of Arts, Science and Technology in February, 2001. John was presented with a civic award in recognition of the contribution he has made to the life of the city.

Most recently the Chichester City Band has been attempting to discover more about its history and development. If you have any stories or information you would like to share, please email [thenovium@chichester.gov.uk](mailto:thenovium@chichester.gov.uk)

*Correction - An article previously published about Chichester Sculptures stated that St Richard was the First Bishop of Chichester. He was, in fact, the 13th. We apologise for this error.*