



GILLINGHAM IMPERIAL SILVER BAND ACADEMY SPRING (APRIL) 2024 NEWSLETTER:

SUMMER TERM BEGINS TUESDAY THE 16TH OF APRIL – WELCOME BACK!!!

Welcome back to the beginning of our busy and fun filled Summer Term on Tuesday the 16th of April

- First – Beginner Group 4.50-5.15pm
- Second – Beginner/Intermediate Group 5.15-6.00pm
- Third – Intermediate Group 6.00-7pm
- Training Band (Advanced) 6.45-7.30pm

In a later section of this 'Newsletter', I talk about some proposed changes in Group structure and timings.

OTHER IMPORTANT DATES - OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE ACADEMY TO PERFORM:

- Gillingham and Shaftesbury Show – Wednesday 14th August 2024 (Main Band will be on site most of the day and we will get a 30-minute slot if enough players are available)
- Concert as part of a Main Band Concert – Provisional (June 2024) – please note, I have just received an email from the Band informing that they may be looking to hold a Concert on a Saturday as opposed to a Sunday (Sundays have generally been the norm for Concerts during my time with the Band). Regrettably I am already booked up on Saturdays the 1st, 8th and 29th of June playing or 'Directing' and Rugby, so when checking your diary don't worry checking the aforesaid dates. It would be good if you could also check on weekends in July prior to commencement of the School Summer Holidays as I have suggested to the Committee that they might want to look at July as well.

Could you please get back to me with your availability for the 14th of August (Wednesday) and weekends in June (except for dates as above) and July please, thank you.

**CORY BAND IN CONCERT – STURMINSTER NEWTON EXCHANGE –
SATURDAY JULY 13TH 2024 – 7PM:**



They are back!!!!

The amazing and World-Renowned Cory Brass Band will be returning to 'The Exchange Theatre' Sturminster Newton, on Saturday the 13th of July with a start time of 7pm. The Cory Band performed as only to be expected, an amazing Concert at 'The Exchange' last May and a number of you attended. I am sure you will agree that it was a most polished performance from the Band covering a wide spectrum of musical genres which of course brass bands are so good at doing. The Cory Band are what is classed as a Championship Brass Band, a bit like the Premier Leagues in football and rugby. Many of their players are music teachers and their Musical Director Phillip Harper is also a first-class composer and arranger. Both Phillip Harper and Tom Hutchinson have robust brass links with the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff, an institution that is dear to me as this is where I attained my brass teaching qualification. The Band hails from the Welsh Rhondda Valley and last month won the Welsh Regional Contest and will be contesting against bands from all over the UK at the Royal Albert Hall in October chasing the title of 'Champion Band of Great Britain'. A treat not to be missed. Hopefully I will see some of you there. Do book your tickets as soon as possible if your intention is to go as they will be selling fast. I have attended concerts and contests by this band many times, both locally and in Wales, they are without doubt a fine band, talented, entertaining and highly professional!

**WESSEX SUMMER SCHOOL – STURMINSTER NEWTON HIGH SCHOOL –
MONDAY 29th JULY – SATURDAY 3rd AUGUST 2024:**

I previously mentioned in former newsletters this excellent Brass and Wind Band Summer Course which is literally on our doorstep in North Dorset. However, despite the event being local, numbers of brass players attending from this area are noticeably low. The course was founded by two fine brass musicians a John Grinnell and an Andrew Pitts. I began learning a brass instrument with Andrew who developed into being a fine Bass (Tuba) player. I can see Andrew now walking up the road to the Band Room in Blandford Forum with his Bass tucked under his arm. John who played the Trombone to an excellent standard, joined our band shortly after Andrew and I had started and it was through this association that John and Andrew brought about the Wessex Brass Band Course in 1970. It was a huge success and has been ever since. Sadly, Andrew was involved in a road traffic collision whilst in Germany serving with the Junior Leader's Regiment Band and tragically lost his life. There is an 'Award' in Andrew's name as part of the course. The initial course was held in 1970 and if I recall correctly, I attended the second and third events and to this end, from first-hand experience, I can highly recommend Wessex to any of you who are learning brass. Woodwind players are also now included. There is a Brass Band, a Woodwind Band and a Training Band. To play in the Training Band you need to be playing at a standard of Grade 1 – 4 and to partake of the Brass Band, Grade 4 and upwards standard. Note that I refer to 'standard', you do not have to have taken and passed an Associated Board or Trinity Examination to that grade. The course is held at Sturminster Newton High School and the overall Course Musical Director is Michael Fowles (currently MD

of the Fodens Championship Brass Band). There is a large team of individual instrumental tutors working under the direction of Michael Fowles all of which are excellent musicians and teachers. The course runs for a week starting on a Monday and finishing on the Saturday with Concerts in the Exchange (Sturminster Newton). If you would like further information do please ask and I will be more than happy to discuss with you. I can assess what graded standard you are playing at. The 2024 course will begin on Monday the 29th of July and finish in the Exchange on Saturday the 3rd of August. It would be fantastic to see some of this Academy on the course, a truly inspirational and beneficial week. You will learn so much and have so much enjoyment by partaking of Wessex!

LOOKING AFTER INSTRUMENTS:

Last May I ran an Instrument Care and Maintenance evening at the Band Room which was well attended and a great success. We covered how to bath a brass instrument, how to clean valves and slides in between periodic baths, how to oil valves, grease slides and instrument cases. I did have for sale valve oil, slide grease, cleaning brushes. If you would like me to run another similar presentation, please let me know and I will most happily set something up. Also, if you would like some valve oil, slide grease, brushes and other cleaning and maintenance materials, please do let me know and I will get all requirements to you.

Please do look after your instruments as repairs by external repair technicians, if we cannot resolve ourselves in-house, can be costly and a drain on band funds. Having said this, accidents do and will happen from time to time and we completely understand that. The big message however is – please do not try and remedy a problem yourselves – mouthpieces becoming stuck in an instrument are a most common occurrence please do not attempt to remove. Bring along for me to resolve, I have a tool which frees 99% of stuck/jammed mouthpieces.

1:1 SURGERIES:

If anyone is interested, I am planning to run a few 1:1 Surgeries either this coming term or in the Autumn term. The Surgery is something I did run a few years ago and it is partly a lesson, partly an opportunity to see how an individual is getting along so that I can offer help and assistance and in the case of younger members, an opportunity for parents/carers to attend and to get a first-hand appraisal of how things are progressing and what can be put in place to assist the member develop their playing skills. If you would be interested in this, open to Academy adult members as well, please let me know and dependant on take-up I can plan some dates and times for you.

RAISING BAND AND BAND ACADEMY PROFILE:

Gillingham Primary School – Next Wednesday (17th April), a 9-piece Ensemble from the Main Band and myself will be performing an end of school day mini concert for the school children and staff to raise Band awareness. I will then follow that up with Brass Workshops hopefully later in the term (still to be planned into the diaries). An outcome of new players for the Academy and from publicity, the Main Band as well is the hope. A very big thank you to the Main Band players who have taken time away from their workplaces to fulfil this event. I have taken two rehearsals with the Ensemble over the Easter break and it has been joyous to say the least and we all look forward to Wednesday afternoon immensely. A big thank you to a parent of one of our younger members who is Chair of Governors at Gillingham Primary and who raised this event as a means to prosper the Band. He has been most instrumental in getting us back into the school. Equally I thank the School Music Lead, two Teaching Assistants at the school who are brass players and who hopefully will be playing with the Ensemble and finally one of our young Academy members who will be playing with the Main Band Ensemble for one of the pieces.

What's Great in SP8 – Gillingham Rotary Club are hosting an event at the Gillingham Leisure Centre on Saturday the 18th of May where local organisations can promote themselves with a Display Stand/Table. A super opportunity to spread the word, talking with the public who attend and sharing with them the opportunities that organisations can offer. The Band here in Gillingham has so much to offer and to share with the Community. From experience I can confidently say that there are people in Gillingham and the surrounding area who know nothing about the Band or even that a Band exists! This is a travesty second to none and on Saturday the 18th of May, the Band has a fantastic opportunity to network with the community and sell both the Main Band and Academy to them. The original SP8 has moved dates a few times – originally scheduled for October of last year it was moved to April 13th of this year and has now moved again to the 18th of May. Regrettably I am booked up on that date but hopefully a few representatives of the Band will be able to run a stand at the event. A wonderful opportunity to talk with people and to maximise networking and partnership opportunities – We Need To Talk!!

In the pipeline – We do have a local Guide/Brownies Group who may be calling on the Academy to run a mini ensemble concert and workshop later this year. There is a Cub Group over at the wonderfully acoustic Scout Hut Milton On Stour who will be giving us a date to run an ensemble concert and workshop in the Autumn term of this year and Mere Primary are also talking about inviting us in soon. So, a busy schedule which is exciting and which will hopefully result in more members joining the Academy to enjoy a fun and educational brass and percussion journey.

LEARN TO PLAY DAY(S):

Just a thought at this stage, but a serious thought. I would like to arrange for sometime in the Autumn Term to run a 'Learn To Play Day' where we pre book people in who are interested to come along and partake of a Brass Workshop, as a Group and, to participate in playing an instrument, or two or three. Like a Mini Brass Course if you want. Watch this space!

ACADEMY SUBSCRIPTIONS:

A gentle reminder regarding subscriptions, if you are owing these or are not sure if you are up to date with payments, then please do get hold of me and I will in turn speak with Steve who is currently caretaking the Band Treasurer's role. If you are paying a subscription by Bank Transfer, can I please ask that you kindly let me know once the payment has been made so that I can update central records, thank you.

ADJUSTING ACADEMY HOURS:

The thought for adjusting the times of our wonderful Academy Groups on a Tuesday evening has come about for two reasons. One being that we do not have much time with the Beginner Group, especially when valves are stuck and/or other instrument issues arise just as we are about to start what is a relatively short 25-minute session. The other reason is that all Academy members are improving and getting better, so much so that the vision of moving players onto next groups and challenges is becoming real as opposed to merely a vision. This is what I am **proposing** –

- Beginner Group (first Group) – 4.45pm to 5.30pm
- Beginner/Intermediate Group (second Group) – 5.15pm to 6pm
- Intermediate/Advanced Group (third Group) – 6pm to 7pm (I am in thought about running on until 7.15pm albeit with the 4 or 5 members who stay on after 7pm to run a challenge of the week extra 15 minutes)

During the last two terms there has been some super flexibility, especially with the 5.15pm group turning up early and joining in with the first group. This has been extremely helpful to that first

group and I would encourage that to continue. I am going to start merging groups commensurate with individual player development and ideally we should end up with two groups playing exercises and tunes ie. an Intermediate and Advanced Group (the old Junior and Training Bands previous to my taking the reins) and a 'Beginner's Group' on stand-by for new members starting out on an instrument and who do not necessarily read music.

This is purely a thought at this time but I would value any observations that anyone may have and hopefully we can get a revised evening in place for the second half of the Summer term. SO, FOR THE FIRST HALF OF TERM AT LEAST, CURRENT TIMES STILL APPLY – NO CHANGES YET.

So, there it is, hopefully I have covered everything and do please get in touch regarding availability for –

- **the Gillingham and Shaftesbury Show (14th August)**
- **June/July availability in case a Concert is going to be put in place for some time those months.**
- **1:1 Surgeries**

The main thing is that you all enjoy your music making and learning with the Academy, I am always open to new ideas as to how we can do things better so do come forward if you have any suggestions. Do keep turning up as the over-riding and most successful recruitment of new members strategy, is for us to have a well-attended gathering for new members to be getting involved with. We go from strength to strength, let us maintain that momentum!

TAKE CARE AND HAPPY MUSIC MAKING!!!

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