

## From an article in the Guardian

### Brigstock's Champion Brass Band

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How one's thoughts can travel backwards when an old photograph is sent to the paper with the question "Who were they?" This week it especially seems appropriate with the Leicester Band Festival held on Saturday, that a photo of the Brigstock Brass Band of between 40 and 50 years ago should be the one for query. As a member of the present band it is an added pleasure to remember the old faces and recall the episodes during the career of this village combination as we have had it handed down to us by one or other of the "old uns."

Several times during recent years Brigstock Band has been the topic for news in the Press, and several old photos have been printed, and the family connections of its members, which seem to be a link in the chain of its history. In this photo there are fathers and sons and brothers too. Time has taken its toll, for only one remains as a bandsman with us now. What musician in the county does not know William Abbott, still as interested as when this photo was taken, with 50 years' playing to his credit? Unfortunately his health is keeping him away from us at present, but we still hope he will be able to turn out again despite his 75 years. Another on the photo is now one of our esteemed vice-presidents, Mr F. J. Steward of Whitehall Farm, whose influence and help has at all times been freely given. He loves to tell us how, as a bandsman, he "bust the drum" and then had a new end put in it. At present Mr Steward is in a London hospital undergoing a serious operation, and all of us wish him a speedy recovery.

Many times during the career of the band it has had to struggle for its existence; times were when all seemed plane sailing; then a sudden "bust-up," and its life seemed in danger. But always came a revival, and its present members cherish the thought that they are a link of one of – if not quite – the oldest brass bands in the county. In this group which was taken against the school, are:-

Reading from left to right: Standing (1) Wm Abbott (trombone). This same instrument is still in use in the present band, and was a prize won at Stanion. Employed on Farming Woods estate as a woodman. (2) Herbert Slawson (deceased), baritone; in later years became a builder. (3) Thomas Adams (cornet). Formerly worked for Mr Bradshaw, farmer, but now in the U.S.A. (4) J. Shirley Richards (deceased), cornet; was bandmaster for a number of years, also a violin player. He was a tailor, and made these striking uniforms. (5) William "Presser" Gray (deceased), euphonium; a presser at Wallis and Linnell's factory. (6) George Richards (deceased), bass, brother of Shirley and a partner in Richard Bros, tailors.

Seated: (1) J. Harrison who went to Birmingham. (2) Fred J. Steward, cornet, now a prominent farmer at Brigstock. (3) Horace Gray, valve trombone, son of William Gray. Left Brigstock many years ago. (4) Joe Adams (deceased), baritone, was also a bellringer and worked at Brigstock Mill. (5) Tommy Starsmore, drummer, still lives in the village, was also a bellringer at one time. Works at Spencer's Timber Yard. (6) William Reeve, horn, better known as "the

Village Blacksmith"; still loves to tell us how they used to "blow". (7) Arnold Smith, circular bass, whose father and mother were the schoolmaster and mistress in the (last century).

