



GLASGOW STEDFAST ASSOCIATION

THE LINK

Autumn 2022

No. 25

BUILDING FRIENDSHIPS & MEMORIES



Glasgow Police Museum



Bridgeton Vintage Bus Museum



Above...
219th Glasgow
Boys' Brigade
Flute Band



Opposite...
David Livingstone's
birthplace, Blantyre

A FASCINATING JOURNEY...

It is interesting where the walk of life takes you and the people you meet during that walk. I was introduced to The Boys' Brigade by my mother's cousin, Ruby Mullen, a Sunday school teacher at Dalmarnock Congregational Church, Dalmarnock Road, Bridgeton. She took me along to Sunday school in 1959 and I joined the Shipmates attached to the 175th Glasgow Boys' Brigade Company. I was very young and loved it. I progressed to The Life Boys and it was during a Life Boy day-trip to Millport I learned to ride a bike. At 12 years of age I was transferred from the "Lifies" to the 'big B.B.' (Company), the Captain was John Smart; I attended my first B.B. Camp in 1966. As a youngster the B.B. kept me away from gangs and I spent twelve great years living the Object of The Boys' Brigade - I can't praise this wonderful organisation enough.

I was raised in Bridgeton, a lively thriving community in the 1950s-60s with a variety of shops, cinemas, factories, schools and a B.B. Company, it seemed, in every church and all with a large membership. But, as we moved into the mid to late 1960s it was clear there was a lack of investment in the district, buildings were decaying and many families were living in slum conditions. The council's plan to create a new modern city was to demolish the old tenements and move the people out to the massive new housing schemes being built in the outskirts of the city - Castlemilk, Easterhouse etc. As the population of Bridgeton declined so too did Boys' Brigade Companies, and in 1967 when I was 13 years old, my Company the 175th amalgamated with 241st and was renumbered the 154th Glasgow - then, approximately five years later, it was all gone.



Derelict tenements, Bridgeton

On leaving school I joined the Post Office Engineering as an apprentice telecommunications technician, and for the first time I had no B.B. to go to. My family, the last in the close, moved to Auchenshuggle: -

Neighbours no more... Pals no more... B.B. no more... Bridgeton no more... All gone!

In 1972, at the age of eighteen, I was working in Bridgeton Telephone Exchange when I ran into Jim Turnbull, an acquaintance from John Street Secondary School. He was a young Officer in the 219th Glasgow B.B., who I met at John Street Primary School. We got chatting and he told me the Captain of the Company, Tom Williams, was keen to

start a B.B. band - I was back! I had taught myself to play the penny whistle when I was around 12 years of age and really enjoyed it, a few years later I learned the flute in the Alexander Memorial flute band. With a lot of hard work fundraising, sponsored walks etc. the Skipper's dream became reality when we purchased our first flutes in April 1973; prior to that I had been teaching the Boys using second-hand instruments.

Footnote: On the 2nd Feb. 1885 William Smith wrote to a local newspaper telling them they had organised a band which was making remarkable progress, this was a flute band consisting of 16 performers. (The first B.B. band was a Flute band).

The Flute Band's first outing was at a Dennistoun District Church Parade on 15th Sept 1974; the District Convenor at that time was Bill Livingston.



219th Glasgow B. B. Flute Band, 15th Sept. 1974

The above photo was taken in Hozier Street, Bridgeton, opposite John Street Primary School. Behind the band you can see the devastation that has taken place in the area. On the 6th October 1974 the Rev. Bill Crombie of Calton New Parish Church held a Dedication Service for the band and presented us with a serving dish to mark the occasion.

**219th GCBB band at
Riding of the Marches,
Sanquhar, 1981**



The band continued to play at various parades and events then, in the late '70s, I met John Cooper, your editor, who was involved in Boys' Brigade Bands at Glasgow Battalion level. He was in charge of the Glasgow Battalion Brass Band and was Bandmaster of the 32nd B.B. Glasgow Company's Brass Band. At our first meeting his love for the B.B. and his love of music was very evident. B.B. bands are and were very difficult to maintain, for the simple reason that Boys grow-up, leave the Company, and that puts the band back to basics as you continually strive to bring new Boys through to keep the band "alive". I was working hard to keep our flute band "on the road" and John was a great inspiration to me with his encouragement to bring my Boys along to various local and Battalion events. This stimulated great interest with the Boys and from 1978 to 1983 my band was ever present with The Glasgow Battalion Brass Band. The following is a list of some of our band's milestones:-

- Drumbeat, Glasgow Battalion's show held in the Kelvin Hall, Nov.1978
- Presentation of Certificates to 'Queen's Men', Glasgow City Chambers December 1978
- 25th Anniversary Parade of the 1st Sanquhar Company, Dumfriesshire
- Glasgow City Chambers, Queen's Men Parade, June 1979
- 219th/19th Jersey Camp, Church Parade, July 1979
- Sanquhar Gala Day, Riding the Marches, August 1979
- Glasgow Battalion Show, Arena '81, held in the Kelvin Hall, February 1981
- Sanquhar Gala Day, Riding the Marches, August 1981
- Girl Guide North East District Parade, April 1982
- Centenary Celebration Church Concert, December 1982
- Glasgow Battalion, Centenary Show Arena '83 held in the Kelvin Hall, August 1983.



**219th GCBB Band performing at
Glasgow Battalion's Centenary Show, Arena '83**

I have lost count of the number of Boys I taught flute and penny whistle. I hope some of them are still enjoying their music today. As a youngster the B.B. fulfilled much of my childhood. As a Boy and later as a B.B. Officer those days were amongst the happiest of my life - It was a wonderful time.

Will McArthur



Will and his band at Riding of the Marches, Sanquhar, 1981

Editor's Note...

As well as his B.B. and musical interests Will McArthur is responsible for pioneering and running the excellent "Glesca Pals" website. While the site primarily focuses on the East End of Glasgow he also includes other districts plus an extensive first-class B.B. Index with website links to various items of B.B. interest. Will's "Glesca Pals" site features a massive list of many of Glasgow's B.B. Companies and interesting stories of the B.B. down through the ages. His website receives regular correspondence from B.B. Ex-members dotted around the world. Will's "Glesca Pals" website is well worth a visit. Go on, have a look, you will not be disappointed - www.glesga.ukpals.com



Bridgeton Cross on a typical Saturday night in the 1950s by William Neilly