

# Friends of Penicuik Silver Band

## Issue No. 3

Issue two of the Friends saw us say goodbye to Jim Chamberlain. This edition sees us welcome Frank Culross as our new Conductor, and welcome Jim back as a guest soloist for our annual autumn concert.



### **Player Profile:**

#### **Alasdair Mathers:**

This issue sees us feature our principal cornet player, Alasdair Mathers.

Alasdair started playing trumpet at school in Warwickshire after his music teacher asked if anyone would like to learn to play a brass instrument.

He comes from a brass band family tradition, with his father having been a player with Dundee Citadel, the International College Staff Band of the Salvation Army and having been a Royal Marine bandsman

## August 2004

playing a variety of instruments, but with soprano cornet and French Horn his “official” instruments.

His first encounter with the brass band world was going along to Dunchurch Silver Band at the age of 9 with his dad, but he remained an orchestral player playing in a variety of school orchestras up to arriving in Penicuik and playing with the Midlothian Schools Orchestra in 1973. A pupil from 3<sup>rd</sup> year at Penicuik High School, he was lucky to be offered instrumental teaching from George Johnstone, who he retains a great admiration for. “George was one of the kindest and most supportive teachers I ever had” he says, and explained how he persuaded Alasdair to leave off the orchestra and start with Brass Bands. “He said did I enjoy counting rests?, I said not a lot- so he said, well come to Penicuik Silver band and you’ll get to play a lot more and count a lot less!”

Alasdair started as Flugel Horn player, and was with band when they won the fourth section in 1975, going to London to take part in the UK national contest. “We collected lots of paper and

sold it to raise the money for the trip” he recalls.

Leaving the band in 1978, when he went to University he did not come back until 1993 when Jack Forrest persuaded him that with only 8 players the band might fold if it couldn't get ex-members back.

Since returning he has played cornet, solo horn and soprano cornet, becoming 'temporary' principal cornet in December last year for the Scottish championships.

### **Events Reports:**

March 13<sup>th</sup> saw the Regional Qualifying Competition, also known as the 'Scottish' take place in deepest Lanarkshire, in that well-known city of arts and culture, Motherwell.

This year's test piece was Partita by Edward Gregson, and Iain Fleming conducted the band for the contest.

Sadly, despite playing well and receiving lots of positive comments from audience members, the band was placed 7<sup>th</sup>, a disappointing result, especially given the fact that the band has been consistently in the top 5 places in every year for the

past 10 and was 'tipped' by the national website 'four bars rest' to take the championship this year.

Our thanks to Iain for stepping in to conduct the band at short notice; we know that he was most disappointed given his long involvement with and support for the band.

Only three weeks later we performed the equivalent of the Scotland 1967 team by beating the Scottish champions at their home contest in Dunfermline, taking the trophy, a £250.00 prize and the satisfaction of restoring some faith in our own standards.

This summer saw the band perform at numerous events including, as usual Penicuik's Hunter and Lass celebrations, where for the first time we joined with the Pipe Band (yes despite the well known tradition of Town Crier articles!!) to beat the retreat in the Park.

This was carried off without mishap, much to some band members' surprise, as we had no rehearsal of the complex marching routine involved and so spent most of the time standing still while the pipe band counter-marched past us.

A visit to Dalkeith for the Barbecue parade was enlivened by the organisers starting 10 minutes early to allow Dalkeith and Monktonhall to leave for Another event, resulting in both Penicuik and St David's bands running down the High Street before assembling at the back of the parade to march back up it. Our thanks to the organisers for the exercise!

A trip to Musselburgh to join with the Musselburgh and Fisherrow Trades band gave us a pleasant evening by the sea and a chance to catch up with Dougie Oliver our former principal cornet, who left us last year for Bo'ness a top section band closer to his home in Falkirk. It was good to hear how he was doing, he gave us great service over his years with Penicuik, and we wish him well for the future.

After our summer holiday break, we played again at the Street Fair on the 28<sup>th</sup> August, another date to remember as it was also the day of the Newtongrange 'Brass in the Park' where, under the baton of our new musical director Frank Culross, we were placed first in the fourth section competition and took away another prize of £250.00 and a fine trophy. This

is the second time in three years that we have won this contest.



## What's Next.

The autumn concert will be held on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September in the North Kirk and we hope that this year's performance will be enjoyed by all who attend.

Our guest soloist is Jim Chamberlain, formerly our conductor, teacher of music at Tynecastle High School and Flugel horn player with Whitburn Burgh band one of Scotland's top bands. Jim is a Yorkshire man and comes from the part of the UK that has produced some of the finest brass bands ever. It is a privilege to have him perform with us.

After the autumn concert, the band's next public engagement is Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> November at the Sheraton Hotel Edinburgh,

where we play for a Breast Cancer charity dinner. We will hold a Christmas Carol concert as usual on 4 December, and will of course be playing for each of the old peoples homes on 20 December, as well as carols outside Tesco and Sainsburys supermarkets at the weekends running up to Christmas.



On Christmas Eve we traditionally play at the Christmas tree service of carols led by Penicuik Churches in John Street precinct. This early evening service is a good way to remember the meaning of Christmas, and all are welcome to attend. Before all this, we hold a slow melody contest in Penicuik High School on the 29<sup>th</sup> October. This is a solo and duet competition between band members with an independent adjudicator which encourages individual players to

show how well they can play in terms of sound and feeling, rather than speed.

The post Christmas period is when we start the run up to the next Scottish Championships more of this in our next edition.

## Contact Numbers

If you want any information regarding the band, or wish to purchase tickets for the best show in town. Contact any of the people below who will be able to assist.

Tom Easton Chairman  
Tel 01968 675039.

Pam Spence Secretary  
Tel 0131 663 3086

Jack Forrest Treasurer  
Tel 01968 675300



*FRIENDS OF PENICUIK*  
*SILVER BAND*

Welcome to Penicuik Silver Band's latest idea.

As anyone who knows the band will already know, running any voluntary organisation costs great deal of effort by people who give up their time and energy freely. The band is very lucky in the support it receives from parents, families and friends. We are also lucky that we have good friends in other organisations such as the North Kirk, Penicuik High School, and 4<sup>th</sup> Penicuik Guides whose help keeps the band running by providing simple but important help in practical ways, such as occasional practice space, chairs for local outdoor events, catering support at concerts.

But even with this network of support, the band struggles to survive financially each year. It costs over £5,000 per year just to pay for normal running costs. We receive a grant of

£1050.00 from Midlothian Council, for which we are very grateful, and in return for which we play at civic events free each year in Penicuik. This amount has not increased in the last eleven years.

The Membership fees for players bring in around another £1,800, and the remaining money is brought in by payments for playing at engagements across the Lothian's.

Despite the financial position, the band is committed to extending opportunity to local musicians of all ages. To do this, a junior band project funded by the lottery has brought in one-off cash for 6 new instruments and for additional teaching time in local primary schools. The success of this project places even more demand on the band to supply new music, further instruments and continued teaching. In addition, the Band requires to replace and add to its music library. This comes in sets varying in price from £30.00

to nearly £100.00 per set. The band also wants to replace instruments for the senior band.

To give an indication of the cost, a cornet (the smallest instrument), and costs around £1,000 – there are 10 in the band. A bass (there are 4) could cost £5,000.

If you feel that you could help the band, which is now a registered charity, then the information with this sets out our new scheme.

### *Friend of the Band Scheme*

Friends of PSB is a scheme being set up to involve members of the public and supporters being more aware of the bands activities. All subscriptions made will be used to fund the band.

An annual subscription of £10 will get a “friend” a number of benefits, which will include:

A free ticket to the annual concert, plus discount on all others purchased by them.

This regular newsletter containing details of forthcoming

engagements, contest results other newsworthy items and details of social events to which “friends” will be invited.

If you are interested in becoming a “friend” of Penicuik Silver Band, please complete the application form below: Thank you for considering this request.

I would like to apply for membership of the “Friends of Penicuik Silver Band Scheme”

Name: .....

Address: .....

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I would like to pay £10 by cash/cheque. Please make cheques payable to “Penicuik Silver Band”

Please send to Jack Forrest, 46 Cuiken Terrace, Penicuik, or hand to any member of the band.