

THE ASHDOWN FOREST TEMPERANCE BAND

The Ashdown Forest Temperance Band was formed in 1902 with players mainly from Nutley and Fairwarp with a practice hut midway between the two villages.

Despite the name Temperance the musicians were not very temperate at all and they liked a drop of “sherbert” - which was a generic name for any alcoholic drink. It sounded better to have a drop of sherbert, than a drop of beer.

A newspaper article from November 1906 reports on Fletching and its celebrations concerning the Gunpowder Plot. The Rt. Hon. Earl of Sheffield gave his support to a special celebration and a Bonfire Society was formed under the management of Mr Attenborough and other leading tradesmen of the village.

The Bonfire Boys, as they were known, included friends from neighbouring villages who dressed in fancy costumes of all colours for the event. They assembled at 6pm, led by Mr H W Attenborough who represented Mephistopheles riding a horse, and Mr G Turner as a Hungarian Hussar followed by the Ashdown Forest Temperance Brass Band.

The procession went through Fletching, calling at the Vicarage, on to Splaynes Green and then to the Sheffield Arms where they had a halt for refreshments.

They then proceeded to the entrance of Sheffield Park by way of Home Farm where a fresh supply of torches and coloured lights was given, and many more villagers joined in the procession.

Arriving at Sheffield House his Lordship watched the proceedings from his bedroom where he had been confined owing to indisposition.

After a speech by Mr Attenborough they all sang ‘Auld Lang Syne’ and ‘For He’s a Jolly Good Fellow’ and after Three Cheers they made their way to the huge bonfire which included effigies of Guy Fawkes and “The New Woman” representing Women’s Suffrage.

At 10 p.m. the Band played ‘God Save the King’ and brought the proceedings to a close.

The Ashdown Forest Temperance Band around 1910.[right)

In about 1915 the Band split into two separate Bands, one half became the Nutley Brass Band and the other became the Fairwarp Brass Band.

The photo, below from around the 1930’s is of the Fairwarp Brass Band and was taken at Chelwood Gate where they had been playing.



These photos are by kind permission of the late Peter Kirby.

Jill Rolfe