

## THE HISTORY OF THE DEAL MEMORIAL BANDSTAND TRUST

The early days after the bombing (in **1989**), many local groups held fund raising events to aid the disaster fund set up to help the families and loved ones through those troubled times. Betteshanger Welfare Band were just one of these local groups.

Betteshanger band have had links with The Royal Marines since very early in its own beginnings in the 30's. Ex-Royal Marine Bandmaster Percy Barnacle was one of Betteshanger bands first Bandmasters. Later Professor W.B.Hargreaves came to Deal as Brass Professor of R.M.S.M., and took over the reins of Betteshanger. Very often bringing his keener young musicians up to play with 'his band'. As a consequence of this some of Betteshanger's young men joined The Royal Marine Band Service.

One such person was a former pupil of Deal Secondary School for Boy's, John Perkins. Many other of the Betteshanger band members for reasons of their own joined the other services, to extend their musical skills. Notably, Fred Thomson a former miner and pupil at Deal Secondary for Boy's, joined The R.A.F. Band Service, now back with Betteshanger as its Bandmaster.

October after the bombing, The Deal Round Table announced in the East Kent Mercury that it had a sum of money that it had been sent by tabler's Nation Wide, for the sole purpose of building a memorial to The 11 Lads that had been killed. The Deal Round Table said it would like some ideas on what form this memorial would take.

In answer to this Dennis Atkinson, born in Canada Road, in a house belonging to his Grandparents Arthur & Rose Moyse opposite North Barracks Gate, has been a member of Betteshanger Welfare Band since he was 12, also a former pupil of Deal Secondary School for Boy's, was fortunate enough to be tutored at Kneller Hall by Jack McIntosh, going on to serve for a short while with The Band of The Blues & Royals, and by the time of the bombing, a retired Betteshanger miner. He wrote to The East Kent Mercury suggesting the idea of a Bandstand as a memorial. This he said could be a living tribute to The 11 Lads, as they were all musicians, it seemed an obvious choice. He also asked The Round Table to get in touch if they required any help.

The reason Dennis was so keen to do something constructive was because it was coming up to the 1st anniversary of the cot death of his 5 week old baby son, Luke. He and his wife Jane, were totally unprepared how hard the 1st anniversary would be to cope with. Looking at the constructive side of things, Dennis was not the type to write letters, never mind letters to the local paper. But his wish to do something positive kept him motivated.

**January 1990**, Dennis had not heard anything, so plucked up the courage to asked the then chairman of Deal Round Table Neil Curwin, "was there any progress"? Neil said that The Round Table, Royal Marines & District Council were having discussions on the subject, and would let people know soon.

Some time later, rumour had it that The Round Table had actually dropped the idea of a Bandstand as a memorial. Mainly because The Royal Marines could not take on the large commitment of running a Bandstand once built.

This is where Dennis stepped up, (with the full support of Betteshanger Band) and offered to organise a series of Summer concerts, with the aim to prove a Bandstand was needed and would be used to its full potential, which he did.

He at this point asked David Burrige, a former Bandmaster of Betteshanger band and ex-R.M.B, now Head of Music at Chatham House Grammar School, to act as Chairman. Dennis felt he needed someone with David's academic background to keep him in line. Steve

Grindrod, Robin Parks (both ex-Royals and Betteshanger Bandsmen), Mandy McMillan and Philip Marsh soon followed, forming the first concert committee.

At a meeting between Deal Round Table Members:- Trevor Smith (1991-92 Chairman), Steve Love, Neil Curwin, Chris Howe and Deal Memorial Concert Members:- David Burrige, Dennis Atkinson and Robin Parks. Round Table tested the resolve of the Memorial Concert Committee. Dennis explained he had sent out news letters to all business' in Deal, and had some very positive response to the initial letter. Dennis had also been in touch with six local bands who would be willing to support us:- Betteshanger Welfare Band, Broadstairs & St.Peters Band, East Kent Concert Band, Hythe Town Concert Band, Margate Silver Band, and Snowdown Colliery Band, all have said they would do this for a reduced fee if required. Trevor Smith asked, "how long could you keep this up".

Dennis said and David agreed, "as long as their are local musicians willing to play". The meeting was told by Trevor Smith, that they would be advising Round Table to rethink the idea of a Memorial Bandstand, and would keep a keen interest in what The Memorial Concert Committee was doing.

**Summer 1991**, saw the first of these Memorial Concerts, 17 in all starting in June going through to 22 September. The first concert was opened by the Deal Town Mayor, Roy Towe, also a former Betteshanger Collier.

These concerts were sponsored by people & and some business' of Deal, which took a lot of canvassing, which proved to Dennis that there was support for a Memorial Bandstand. By the end of the 1991 season of Memorial Concerts, the plans had been passed for the building of The Memorial Bandstand.

It was hoped that The Memorial would be ready for the start of the 1992 season.

1991, Total cost of bands was £1,270 + £266 Public Liability Insurance, making £1,536 cost of 1991 concerts.

Other Expenditures totalled £195

Total sponsorship collected by Dennis was £1,364.

Total collections from the 1991 Memorial Concerts was £1,092.

Making a total income of £2,456.

That income minus the expenditure totalled £724.70

The first season proved a success having finished up in profit, if only £724.70, it was a start for next year, 1992.

**1992, February**, Robin Parks a committee member approached solicitor Jonathan Daniels to make inquiries on our behalf to become a charity.

**April**, we received a copy of the plans. After chalking the area out, Dennis realised it may be too small. Dennis asked Fred Thomson what he thought, Fred Thomson confirmed the fears.

Dennis made a scaled model of a typical brass band set up sat on that actual area, which proved too small. Dennis also included an alternative area, to show a more comfortable seat arrangement for the band.

Dennis went to see John Miller (Architect), to pass on his model and his fears. After some discussion with Round Table the plans were amended to suit.

The 1992 season started in **May**, because of the earlier start this meant an extra 4 concerts were booked. By this time more interest was being shown by the people of Deal. The original small committee was soon to be augmented.

**6 June**, The Association of Men of Kent & Kentish Men asked for a representative from The Memorial Concert Committee to receive a cheque from them. David Burrige was busy and Mandy preferred not to as it was her wedding anniversary, so Dennis was volunteered. As it turned out, apart from the cheque (which was gratefully received), Mrs Margaret Hoskins introduced her husband Lt.Col.Graham Hoskins, a former Principal Director of Music of The Royal Marines School of Music here in Deal.

Col.Hoskins, offered his help if ever it was needed, Dennis passed this on to the committee. At the next committee meeting it was voted to invite Lt.Col.Hoskins to be our President, in July we received a letter of acceptance.

With Col.Hoskins talks, soon started to create more interest, and slowly built up to a tidy some of £1,466. With this sort of support and his professional approach, we went from strength to strength.

By the end of the 1992 Memorial Concert Season cost of bands totalled £1,750 + £250 for insurance came to £2,000  
Sponsorship and donations Totalled £1,220.  
Monies Collected at Memorial Concerts Totalled £1,529.24.  
Total income was £2,749.24  
Leaving a profit of £749.24 no massive increase, but a nice steady rise on last year, after bands fees had been taken out.

**1992. 18 August**, Work started on The Memorial Bandstand.

The excavation was carried out by Billy Oatridge and Trevor Smith.

**19 August**, The footings were knocked up by hand, by members of The Deal Round Table. They worked under flood light to get the job finished that night.

**25 August**, The block work for the base was started by Allan Sutton and his team:- Paul Cureton, Shaun Keenan and Graham Harris.

**17 September**, Eddie Oliver, Trevor Smith and Alan Sutton's team laid the concrete base.

**20 September**, Although not finished we decided to hold the annual Act of Worship next to the concrete base.

**26 September**, Billy Thomson (former Betteshanger Mechanical Fitter) erected the legs and ring beams.

**9 October**, Billy finished the steel work for the roof.

**January 1993**, Shaun Keenan and Graham Harris laid the brickwork and commemorative stones, they ran out of coping stones, more were ordered.

Nothing more was done to the Memorial until 2 weeks before the start of the 1993 season opening concert and handing over ceremony.

**April 1993**, Carter Scaffolding supplied the scaffolding for the roofing work.

Eddie Oliver laid the marine ply decking for the roof. Prior to fixing the tongue and groove pine cladding to the ceiling the wiring for the electrics was put in place.

The week before the opening concert, the roofing contractors Murry/Blench started on the copper roof.

Two days before the Opening Concert, Billy Thomson fixed the railings in place. Phew!

**2 May.** The Opening Concert and Handing Over Ceremony. Accompanied by a Fanfare, played by H.M. Royal Marines, Mr.Rohit Tanna of National Round Table handed over a parchment to Lt.Col.Hoskins, President of The Deal Memorial Bandstand Trust.

The real work for The Deal Memorial Bandstand Trust Committee has just begun, and they look forward to supplying music every Sunday afternoon with the occasional evening concert for generations to come.

*Dennis Atkinson*

*May 1993*

For more about the Deal Memorial Bandstand - including photographs taken during its construction - please see: [www.walmerweb.co.uk/history/history-bandstand.html](http://www.walmerweb.co.uk/history/history-bandstand.html)