

BAND WITH THE



The band as it was in around 1895

CLOUGH TOUCH

By IAN HAMILTON

YOU might call Nassington Brass Band the Nottingham Forest of the brass band world. Certainly it's an analogy of which percussionist Richard Bizley would approve.

But for the fact that he's an ardent Norwich City supporter, Richard has a lot of the Brian Clough about him. A self-confessed extrovert, he talks of the village band with all the enthusiasm of Clough landing his side's latest European Cup success.

At the moment Nassington is in a sense a 'Fourth Division' outfit, since it is in the small band section but, after finishing runners-up in their section at last week's national championships in London, the village players have placed their foot on a ladder leading to national success.

"It's a phenomenal achievement, and we've not finished yet — within five years we'll be a champ-



The modern-day band celebrates its latest success

ionship band alongside Black Dyke Mill," said Richard (32), who is managing director of a Peterborough cleaning firm.

It's taken Nassington just over 100 years to produce the second-best small band in the country (Manchester's Darwen Brass was

voted champions by the margin of one point).

In that time the band has lost more than the grand title of Nassington Britannia Brass Band, under which the outfit started back in the 1860s.

The traditionally working class image of the brass band has faded. Today, the 31-strong band includes four teachers, four businessmen, a housewife, a supermarket manager and several schoolchildren.

Local critics have accused the band's organising committee of destroying the village character of the outfit. One Nassington worthy withdrew his services after the committee decided that his son's playing was not up to the standard of the band.

The turning-point, some would say, came when the running of the band was handed over to 56-year-old Glyn Lewis, a musical director who had previously taken the Spillers Championship Band to national success.

The sober-suited man in the middle of Nassington Brass is a Perkins engineer

Thursday night rehearsals.

But the Welsh passion for music of all sorts is never far beneath the nine-to-five exterior.

"I find brass very exhilarating but when you get in the middle you forget what the particular sort of music is. There are just instrumentalists and musicians," he enthused over a lunchtime half-of-bitter.

Despite a track record of which a soccer manager would be proud, Glyn betrays much of the insecurity of that much-maligned profession.

"If I kept losing competitions then the committee would be quite right to think it was time for me to go," he said.

You could say it's the sort of professionalism expected from the man in charge of a band which cost around £23,000 to set up.

But Nassington Brass go further. For last week's national championships the 25 players selected for the team were booked into a four-star London hotel on Friday night.

In best FA Cup Final tradition team members

band were drawn form — 16th out of 20 small bands in contest.

At about 1.30 Saturday afternoon band were given 15 minutes to catch the attention of the ears of the Brass Association's two adjudicators. Nassy natty dinner dress dickie-bows perform the job but the music — Roy New 'A Suite for Switzerl' was reckoned by some to be an unlucky selection for the Northampton band.

"It wasn't terrible enough for us," Richard after the event. "A couple of us were on the kerb side on the terrible. But then I realised what an achievement to finish second on our ever trip to London." Richard.

At the end of the mile coach trip back to Nassy the team greeted by a "welcome home" party staged and Sid Petrie, landlady of Queen's Head pub. Nan and Sid a

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