



TWA DIGITISATION GRANT 2023

BRASS BANDS ENGLAND

Organisation Information

Name of applicant organisation/institution: Brass Bands England

Club Website: <https://www.bbe.org.uk/>

Project title: Brass Bands Archive

Project summary

Please provide a brief overview of:

- *Your project and its goals/aims*
- *How you plan to use the funding if successful*
- *Whether the project will include publishing the digitised collection(s) online, transcribing of metadata, or metadata capture via optical character recognition (OCR).*

The National Brass Band Archive was formally established in the 1970s by well known British brass players, Walter Ainscough and Alan Marsh. In order to preserve its contents for future generations, custodianship was legally transferred to Brass Bands England in 2018 and renamed the Brass Bands Archive (BBA). The collection has been listed by a professional Archivist, supported by volunteers and transferred to Heritage Quay, an archive service at Huddersfield University, where it will be made publicly available via their research room and CALMView online catalogue. For this application we wish to digitise aspects of the sheet music collection in order to help inspire brass bands across the country to expand their repertoire. This is the first step in digitising 180,000 pages of music, focusing on 3000 pages that are deemed at most risk.

Collection Information

The BBA is dedicated to preserving and making accessible brass band heritage from the 1820s to the present day. It includes 9,000 sets of paper sheet music, 5,500 brass band journals, 1,000 vinyl records, 180 textile stand banners, original uniforms, 80 trophies, medals/commemorative items, 13 boxes of photographs, 10 boxes of books and 19 boxes of contest programmes. Notable items include a first purpose 19th century performing jacket from Black Dyke Mills Band, a rare echo cornet owned by well-known player Harry Mortimer, a Memorial book of remembrance for all bands people that died in service in WW1 and the Silver Challenge cup, sponsored by Sir Oswald Moseley to promote his New Party (later subsumed into the British Union of Fascists). We want to digitise sheet music as a priority: 776 items are classified as fair condition; 22 sets of music are classified as poor; 14 sets are partially poor and 89 items are partially fair. The collection includes items that have re or water damage, suffering further deterioration each time they are handled.

Heritage need

Please outline the heritage value, uniqueness, and importance of the collection(s) you plan to digitise.

Is the collection at risk? If so, how/why?

The BBA is the largest brass band archive in the country, offering unique insight into a national cultural pastime, particularly within working class industrial communities and one not seen in archive collections nationally. This offers a window into social and cultural history as well as a musical record. We have a box listing the collection which has highlighted significant items that are in poor condition. Digitisation will create permanent preservation of at risk items, thus stabilising the collection. By digitising this sheet music material we can encourage use of the archive in different ways. It will make it easier to widen access to and engagement with the collection overall and ensure more people can take part in music making and be inspired to learn to play the music, as well as serve to inform and inspire their own work. Following this, we will pursue funding to digitise the full collection.

Social / Community Impact

Please describe how local people and communities will benefit from your digitisation project.

We considered audiences and users by undertaking surveys and consultation with members and the banding sector. The BBA is historically significant because it documents the evolution of brass band musical repertoire and brass band communities. It acts as a rich source on the history of culture/leisure time and celebrates the impact brass bands had across society. Brass bands flourished during the industrial revolution, were strongly connected with working class identity (they were created by communities for communities) and became an important aspect of the UK's national heritage. The BBA also comprises a wealth of local living memory e.g. photographs of bands people playing (as evidenced by one of the volunteers finding a photograph that depicts them playing in a band decades ago). Historically brass bands have been dismissed by the mainstream classical music sector as being "low-brow". By seeing the BBA in a respected archive, players (the majority of whom are amateur musicians), will feel recognised as a legitimate part of the music sector, leading to a sense of acceptance and belonging. Our research evidenced that whilst 96% of respondents have engaged with the performing arts only 2% have ever visited a museum or collection. When asked about how they would like to interact with the collection, 82% would want to access items digitally. This highlights that digitisation of items is key to making the archive more accessible and expanding engagement to a community that has traditionally low interaction with museums and archive collections in general. Moving the BBA to Heritage Quay will make it more accessible with a planned exhibition featuring items from the collection as part of Kirklees Year of Music 2023.

Research Impact

How will digitising your collection(s) benefit researchers?

Whether academic, social historians, genealogists, or other researchers.

Because many brass bands were founded in the workplace, the BBA provides an insight into the lives and leisure time of lower socio-economic groups, i.e. the working classes. We believe this provides a vital historical and social record of a particular segment of society, and of a genre that has no other substantial archive in existence, with links to a culture still prevalent 200 years later and growing in relevance once again. We hope the collection will begin to appear in academic research, e.g. researchers with an interest in British social history and music and we are currently maintaining a dialogue with an academic in Norway interested in the collection. We will be seeking additional funding for research projects on the composers, arrangers, bands, publication dates and copyright status, to ensure the metadata recorded in CALM is as accurate as possible. The collection itself explores themes relating to military, industry and community and also has relevance to family genealogy researchers. The sheet music in the collection includes band stamps for example, which track changes in ownership of music as bands grow and collapse, changes in the sponsorship of bands, etc. As the longer-term project evolves we intend to develop a more interactive version of this access on our own website, which would include recordings and performance advice to further widen access to the collection.

Improved Accessibility

What platform is the digitised collection going to be accessible to wider communities?

The Archivist will catalogue the BBA on CALM collections management software following ISAD (G) standards. They will create Authority les for the persons, bands and organisations featured in the BBA following ISAAR (CPF) guidance, to simplify searching and make the collection more accessible. Heritage Quay is an accredited archive service and an institutional member of the Archives and Records Association and the Association of Performing Arts Collections, meaning it operates at the highest level of professional best practice in the archive sector. Through the CALM system all items that are not covered by copyright (which includes all items considered at risk within this project application), will be available to download on the Heritage Quay website, in addition to the Brass Bands England website - as part of a later phase of the archive digitisation project. Digital records are stored by Heritage Quay, but BBE are also looking to purchase a hard drive back-up which will be stored at a different location to protect against the loss of digital records, alongside additional cloud storage backup.

Match Funding

How much funding do you have available from other sources? (Trusts, charities, foundations etc)

Note - Match funding is NOT a prerequisite for applying for the TWA Digitisation Grant.

Please include sources and amounts. If you have applied for HLF funding please indicate if you have a Stage 1 pass or Stage 2 pass.

A grant from the government's Culture Recovery Fund initially enabled us to contract a freelance Archivist to sort and box list the collection. As we are recent custodians of such a large archive, we intend to apply to HLF for cataloguing and further archivist support to continue to develop the collection. We have made plans for this project to take place over an extended number of years and after making an initial EOI and received a positive response, we intend to submit an application in the Autumn to fund the first year of the project. This plan includes continuation of cataloguing, development of a regular podcast, recording of lost music discovered in the collection, support for exhibitions at Heritage Quay during Kirklees Year of Music 2023 (a mobile display at 2 host museums), outreach visit days from local primary schools and continued digitisation focusing on out of copyright items.

Additional Notes

Please include any additional information about your project/collection that you would like to be considered with your application here. This can include information about:

- *Image collections that you currently own (or have previously been digitised)*
- *Any digital image management systems that you currently use, links to websites where some of your digitised material might already be displayed.*
- *Any long term aspirations for your organisation/initiative.*

We regularly tell stories from the archive through social media, including engaging with campaigns such as the twitter #AChive30 to highlight interesting items from within the collection

https://twitter.com/search?q=%23archive30%20%40BrassBandseng&src=typed_query&f=top

We have volunteers who write blogs covering interesting stories discovered as part of their archive research published on the BBE website <https://www.bbe.org.uk/news11072022-1518/brass-band-archive-the-prolicmr-nck> This attracts more interest in the collection, widens the scope of researchers who interact with us and captures public imagination of what is possible with an archive collection of this nature. Separate from the main catalogue, the BBA also has a digital asset register which records all the digital files held in the collection. This register records the format, size and checksums for all digital files, so that risks relating to the management of digital records can be managed. BBE has an independent Collecting Policy and Donation Agreement with Heritage Quay which implements a Collections Care Policy that states that the institution subscribes to relevant professional standards for caring for archives in their custody.