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**Boosey & Hawkes:**  
**The Rise and Fall of a Wind Instrument**  
**Manufacturing Empire**

**Jocelyn Howell**



**PhD in Music**

**City University London, Department of Music**

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**Volume 1 of 2**

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my father, John Howell (an engineer and company director whose influence has been invaluable for this work), and to the next generation – my grandsons Oliver, Hugo and Rupert.

# **Declaration**

I grant powers of discretion to the University Librarian to allow the thesis to be copied in whole or in part without further reference to the author.

# Abstract

For over 150 years the names Boosey and Hawkes dominated the British music scene, at first independently, and from 1930, in response to the difficult trading conditions of the Depression, as a single firm – Boosey & Hawkes. Although it was run as one company it comprised two divisions – the publishing business and instrument manufacturing. This thesis examines the history, role and significance of Boosey & Hawkes and its associated companies as musical instrument makers. Acquisition of new firms played an important part in business expansion, and particular focus is given here to the complex and lengthy incorporation of Besson & Co. into Boosey & Hawkes.

The influence of Boosey & Hawkes extended far beyond Great Britain; in its heyday, besides providing wind instruments for the numerous civilian bands at home, the company supplied instruments to military regiments of the British armed forces, resulting in global distribution. Consequently the company became a symbol both of the British Empire and of British music. After the upheaval of the Second World War hand-crafting instruments gave way to mass production with many instruments made for educational purposes. Productivity increased, but quality-control declined, and it has been argued that the more successful new instruments were essentially the result of old-fashioned craftsmanship. These changing methods of manufacture are appraised here, and instrument design and innovation are examined and evaluated.

During the 1960s and 1970s Boosey & Hawkes monopolised the market and the firm became one of the largest and most successful instrument manufacturing companies in the world. However, competition from companies abroad, mismanagement and bad workmanship caused the demise and eventual closure of Boosey & Hawkes instrument-making division in 2003.

# Abbreviations and conventions

## Abbreviations

AMPC	Arnold Myers Private Collection
BC	Buffet Crampon Archive
B&Co.	Boosey & Company
B&H	Boosey & Hawkes
B&H (MI) Ltd.	Boosey & Hawkes (Musical Instruments) Ltd.
B&Sons	Boosey & Sons
Besson	Besson & Company
DJB	David James Blaikley
D&Co.	Distin & Company
EUCHMI	Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments
EUCHMI/L	Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments, Langwill Archive
EUCHMI/M	Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments, Monk Archive
EUCHMI/R	Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments, Rendall Archive
FP	Flat pitch
GSJ	Galpin Society Journal
HBSJ	Historic Brass Society Journal
HM/B&H	Horniman Museum, Boosey & Hawkes Archive
HM/B&H/McG	Horniman Museum, Boosey & Hawkes Archive, McGavin Archive
HM/CA	Horniman Museum, Adam Carse Archive
H&S	Hawkes & Son
IP	International Pitch
JAMIS	Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society
JHPC	Jocelyn Howell Private Collection
JMPC	Jeremy Montagu Private Collection
KH	Kneller Hall
KHP	Kneller Hall Pitch
LPO	London Philharmonic Orchestra

LSO	London Symphony Orchestra
RAM	Royal Academy of Music
RC	Rudall Carte
RCM	Royal College of Music
R&H	Rivière & Hawkes
RPO	Royal Philharmonic Orchestra
SAIHC	Salvation Army International Heritage Centre
TBaPC	Tim Barrett Private Collection
TBPC	Tony Bingham Private Collection
TCM	Trinity College of Music
UOBC	University of Oxford, Bate Collection
WCLAD	Westminster City Libraries Archive Department
sn	serial number
sns	serial numbers

## **Pre-decimal British currency and measurements**

Occasionally there are references in this thesis to pre-decimal currency and units of measurement. Until 15 February 1971 British currency consisted of pounds, shillings and pence (£.s.d.) whereby one pound was made up of 20 shillings, and a shilling equalled twelve pennies. On decimalisation the pound equalled 100 pence. Imperial units of measurement, feet and inches (abbreviated to ' and ") and weight, pounds and ounces (lbs and oz) were still used until the 1980s. There were 12 inches in one foot (30.48cm) and 16 ounces in one pound (453.59g).

## **Pitch level indicators** (Helmholz system of nomenclature)

$B_1$  = the note B two octaves and a semitone below middle C

C = the note C two octaves below middle C

$c^0$  = the note C one octave below middle C

$c^1$  = middle C

$c^2$  = the C one octave above middle C

$c^3$  = the note C two octaves above middle C

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

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### 1.1 Aims and objectives

In its heyday Boosey & Hawkes (B&H) was a symbol of the British Empire, with its sales to military regiments of the British armed forces resulting in global distribution of its instruments. It provided numerous military and civilian bands and orchestras with woodwind and brass instruments and, especially in the 1960s, developed many student models for use in education. Through its instruments the company influenced and shaped the sound of British music. The B&H business went through many changes but evolved to become one of the most successful music companies in the world.

The main aim of this thesis is to produce a detailed history of B&H and its associated companies with particular reference to the manufacturing of brass and woodwind musical instruments. I consider the different roots that led to the company's ultimate formation in 1930, and examine the external influences on design and production, the attitude and aspirations of B&H and its associated companies, and the changing demands and challenges within the industry. I also investigate the influence that the company had on the musical world and its contribution, by developing new instrument models, to the changing orchestral and brass band sounds in Britain.

I contextualise the role of the company within the national and international markets, outline its customer base and examine the relationship between the company and its customers. Ultimately I ask the question: How did B&H come to be taken as both the symbol and sound of British band and orchestral music-making for so much of the twentieth century?

Comparisons can be drawn between the development of business and historical empires, and these are well defined by, for example, businessman and scholar Ko Unoki who argues that:

*in the world of business, the act of two or more independent enterprises merging with each other or of one independent company taking over another [...] is basically equivalent to an act of imperialism or empire-building where one independent country takes over another by force or other means, or where several independent countries or political entities come together to form a new union. Both in M&A<sup>1</sup> and in imperialism, the outcome is the creation of a dominant center consisting of a 'parent' company in the former and a 'mother' country in the latter, and a periphery consisting of subsidiary companies or divisions in the case of businesses and colonies in the case of empires.<sup>2</sup>*

This analogy can be applied to the company of B&H, which demonstrated these characteristics in its development. In line with Unoki's statement, the merger of B&Co. and H&S represents an act of imperialism or empire-building, with the new company of B&H creating a dominant centre and a periphery of subsidiary companies as its business expanded by merger and acquisition. Thus B&H, the 'parent' company with its subsidiary divisions spread round the world, can be likened to a 'mother' country with its colonies.

Although the title of this thesis resonates with famous historical works on empires by, for example, Gibbon and Shirer,<sup>3</sup> I have neither intended to draw parallels with these books, nor to enter into an in-depth discussion of teleological theories of history. In fact I do not seek to theorise the demise of B&H as the logical consequence of an inevitable process, but demonstrate that the fall was sudden, and in part the consequence of an unpredicted series of events and poor (and completely preventable) management decisions. When talking about the rise and fall I refer to the construction and failure of a business empire. My approach therefore, is to chronicle and reflect on the rise of the B&H business empire, and examine the reasons for its ultimate demise, without prejudging the causes or subjecting them to a grand theory. I identify some of the weaknesses in the

---

<sup>1</sup> M&A: mergers and acquisitions. A merger is where two companies join to form a new company, and an acquisition is where one company purchases another, which may be absorbed into the parent company, or run as a subsidiary.

<sup>2</sup> Ko Unoki, *Mergers, Acquisitions and Global Empires: Tolerance, Diversity and the Success of M&A* (Routledge, 2013). p.4.

<sup>3</sup> Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (London: Strahan & Cadell, 1776, 1781, 1788) and William. L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (Simon and Schuster, 1960).

business practice of the firm during its global expansion, and discuss their effects on the company, but I do not presume that any one of those weaknesses was entirely responsible for the messy situation that led to the company's final dissolution.

## 1.2 Research resources

I have drawn upon many different and varied sources from within and outside the company archives; however, my major resources have come from Boosey and Hawkes themselves, their catalogues, workbooks and other literature. There is no extant corporate history of B&H as instrument manufacturers, nor of the firm's major associated companies – Boosey & Co. (B&Co.), Hawkes & Son (H&S), and Besson & Co. (Besson); however, the history of Rudall Carte before its acquisition by B&H has been thoroughly researched by Robert Bigio.<sup>4</sup> Concise articles charting the company's history have been published in *Musical Progress and Mail* and a 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary leaflet about the firm,<sup>5</sup> and historical context has been included in various academic journal articles. Helen Wallace's book *Boosey & Hawkes The Publishing Story* is written with journalistic freedom and focuses on personalities and commerce – the disagreements between the company and composers over the rights to their works, rivalry amongst the two families and directors, board-room struggles and takeover battles through the company's prosperous years and its decline.<sup>6</sup> Although a little information concerning manufacturing is included, it is only mentioned briefly when relevant to the publishing side of the business or the company as a whole.

A number of invaluable journal articles have been written on various aspects of B&H and its predecessors, with most of the key publications by Arnold Myers. Myers's research has been drawn mainly from the manufacturers' catalogues, the B&H Archive and from extant instruments. These articles give good insight into the histories of the companies and production of instruments, and detail the

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Bigio, *Rudall, Rose & Carte. The Art of the Flute in Britain* (London: Tony Bingham, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> "Boosey & Hawkes: A Century of Instrument Making," *Musical Progress and Mail* (October 1930. pp.27-29; Jeremy Boosey, "Beethoven, Bellini, Ballads and Bands," *Boosey & Hawkes 150th Anniversary* (1966). pp.2-4.

<sup>6</sup> Helen Wallace, *Boosey & Hawkes the Publishing Story* (B&H, 2007).



developments and innovations relating to brasswind manufacturing within the firm.<sup>7</sup> Woodwind manufacture at B&Co. has been well researched by Kelly White, both in her Masters' thesis and co-authored article;<sup>8</sup> these specify the type of information available in the company workbooks and give production figures etc. collated from them. Clarinet production at B&Co. and B&H has been comprehensively covered by Jennifer Brand in her PhD.<sup>9</sup> While there is inevitably some overlap in relation to clarinet manufacture with this thesis, the use of data gleaned from the archive is very different. Brand traces the development of the individual models, with particular focus on the development of the '1010' clarinet and its association with the so-called British school of clarinetists. The main body of her research is based on empirical information drawn from the factory workbooks; by detailing the first and last serial numbers of all models, and the number of instruments made, she presents a picture of the company's clarinet manufacture, relating production to social, economic and musical change. The present thesis is essentially a corporate history, and whilst most of the clarinet models have been discussed, the development of clarinet production has been integrated into the overall story and evaluated alongside the progression of all other wind instruments. Although much information has been drawn from the workbooks and technical drawings, it has been used in conjunction with extensive examination of company sales catalogues and other literature.

Early accounts of visits to wind instrument companies by Miller and Salmon, and Algernon Rose's *Talks with Bandsmen*, which is a personal and anecdotal account based on meetings with manufacturers and players, present a vivid picture of the factories and manufacturing techniques employed;<sup>10</sup> Rose compares various companies, presenting facts, figures, and names of people involved in the trade. The early development of London's instrument manufacturing has been extensively

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<sup>7</sup> Arnold Myers, "Brasswind Innovation and Output of Boosey & Co. In the Blaikley Era," *HBSJ* 14 (2002); Arnold Myers, "Brasswind Manufacturing at Boosey & Hawkes 1930-45," *HBSJ* 15 (2003). pp.55-72; Arnold Myers and Niles Eldredge, "The Brasswind Production of Marthe Besson's London Factory," *GSJ* 59 (2006). pp.43-75.

<sup>8</sup> Kelly White, *Woodwind Instruments of Boosey & Company* (University of Edinburgh MMus thesis, 2002); Kelly J White and Arnold Myers, "Woodwind Instruments of Boosey & Company," *GSJ* May 2004, no. 57 (2004). pp.62-80.

<sup>9</sup> Jennifer Brand, *From Design to Decline: Boosey & Hawkes and Clarinet Manufacturing in Britain, 1879-1986* (Goldsmiths, University of London PhD thesis, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> Frederick Miller, *How Band Instruments Are Made: A Visit to the Factory of Messrs. Boosey & Co.* (1897): AMPC; Edward Salmon, "How Brass Bands are Made," in *The Strand Magazine* (1894): AMPC; Algernon S. Rose, *Talks with Bandsmen* (London: William Rider and Son Ltd., 1895; reprint, Tony Bingham, London., 1995).

covered by Jenny Nex,<sup>11</sup> and Malou Haine in *Les facteurs d'instruments de musique à Paris au XIXe siècle* provides a detailed account, with much supporting empirical information, of the effects of the industrial expansion and economic growth that came with the new steam-age manufacturing processes in France.<sup>12</sup> There are a number of other publications that overlap with aspects of my research including an article on David Blaikley, the highly respected Works Manager, acoustician and innovator at B&Co.,<sup>13</sup> although company literature and his own papers give additional useful information about him. From a curatorial viewpoint Bradley Strauchen-Scherer and Arnold Myers give a broad impression of the museum at B&H and its relevance to the company and its records.<sup>14</sup>

There is much pertinent literature that provides a comprehensive background to the players, bands and orchestras that were the company's main customers. Besides describing the instrument factories, Rose is informative on band practices.<sup>15</sup> Early writers about military and civilian band traditions include George Farmer who charts the history of the Royal Artillery band, and therefore the development of military music;<sup>16</sup> he also covers details of personnel, instrumentation, dress and customs. Charles Hoby concentrates on repertoire and arrangers in his paper *Wind Bands and Music*, and explains and comments on the important issues of pitch with reference to British wind bands.<sup>17</sup> All of these publications compare the situation of British bands with the state of military bands abroad. In contrast, Trevor Herbert's *The British Brass Band: A Musical and Social History*, one of the definitive academic publications, is a collation of scholarly articles which covers aspects of the British tradition of brass band playing. It details the social background, history and development of practices surrounding brass bands and their players, and gives empirical data on the subject. Likewise, Herbert's co-authored book with Helen Barlow, *Music and the British Military in the*

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<sup>11</sup> Jennifer Susan Nex, *The Business of Musical-Instrument Making in Early Industrial London* (Goldsmiths, University of London, PhD thesis, 2013).

<sup>12</sup> Malou Haine, *Les facteurs d'instruments de musique à Paris au XIXe siècle: Des artisans face à l'industrialisation* (Brussels: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1985).

<sup>13</sup> Jack Smith, "David James Who? Some Notes on David James Blaikley," *GSJ* 56 (2003). pp.217-23.

<sup>14</sup> Bradley Strauchen-Scherer and Arnold Myers, "A Manufacturer's Museum: The Collection of Boosey & Hawkes," *Musique-images-instruments* 9 (2007). pp.147-64.

<sup>15</sup> Rose, *Talks*.

<sup>16</sup> Henry George Farmer, *Memoirs of the Royal Artillery Band* (1904).

<sup>17</sup> Major Charles Hoby, "Wind Bands and Music," *Proceedings of the Musical Association* 55th session (1928). pp.1-29.

*Long Nineteenth Century*, charts and discusses the history of military music and its influence on the music profession and music-making in general.<sup>18</sup>

There is much literature presented in a variety of styles about the established London orchestras and their players. Although only a comparatively small number of instrumentalists in this genre played B&Co. and H&S instruments, some were highly influential in the design of new models and in the instruments that other musicians chose to play. Books by Pearton and Kenyon are examples of detailed factual, historical accounts of the life and running of the LSO and BBC SO, whereas Moore's *Philharmonic Jubilee* is a pictorial history charting the major events, concerts and tours in photos, programmes and news-cuttings.<sup>19</sup> Smyth's *To Speak for Ourselves: The London Symphony Orchestra* consists of twenty-one interviews with members of the orchestra presented in dialogue form.<sup>20</sup> All give good insight into the orchestral world, the players, conductors and playing styles of the time, both in Britain and abroad. Howes' *Full Orchestra* discusses the symphony orchestra with reference to instrumentation and form, and also compares individual characteristics and tone qualities of the British orchestras.<sup>21</sup>

Autobiographies and memoirs of musicians often provide colourful reminiscences, anecdotes and informal details of musical life, with numerous references to other musicians and colleagues. Personal feelings are recorded about certain events, situations and changes in the musical scene, and details such as make and model of instruments are sometimes mentioned. Many entertaining and informative autobiographies of musicians are available including those by two players of the company's '1010' clarinets, Jack Brymer, who was a B&H consultant, and Basil Tschaikov.<sup>22</sup>

Many books relate to musical life generally and to the social history of music-making. My selected sources reflect contrasting approaches and attitudes

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<sup>18</sup> Trevor Herbert and Helen Barlow, *Music and the British Military in the Long Nineteenth Century* (New York: OUP, 2013).

<sup>19</sup> Maurice Pearton, *The LSO at 70: A History of the Orchestra* (London: Gollancz, 1974); Nicholas Kenyon, *The BBC Symphony Orchestra: The First Fifty Years 1930-80* (London BBC, 1981); Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Philharmonic Jubilee* (Hutchinson, 1982).

<sup>20</sup> Alan Smyth, ed. *To Speak for Ourselves: The London Symphony Orchestra* (London: William Kimber, 1970).

<sup>21</sup> Frank Howes, *Full Orchestra* (London: Secker and Warburg Ltd., 1942; reprint, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.).

<sup>22</sup> Jack Brymer, *From Where I Sit* (London: Cassell Ltd., 1979); Basil Tschaikov, *The Music Goes Round and Around* (2006). <http://www.musicweb-international.com/Tschaikove/flyer.htm>. Accessed 19/11/2008.

according to genre. Reginald Nettel gives a chronological historical account providing a thorough background of music-making until the middle of the twentieth century.<sup>23</sup> The effects of the influx of performers from abroad, and the changing economic and social conditions in England are all considered; these impacted on the development of an English style and tradition of orchestral playing which in turn affected the design and manufacture of instruments as well as the demand for them. George Bernard Shaw offers prolific opinions and criticisms of the state of music and drama from 1890 to 1894 in his articles for *The World*.<sup>24</sup> His discussions of every aspect of contemporary musical life, detailing and commenting on events, people, venues, etc. give comprehensive information and insight into all that he reports on, including occasionally wind-playing styles and manufacturers' approach to market demand. Elkin's book *Queen's Hall: 1893–1941* presents London's major concert hall as a microcosm of the music scene, and Pound's biography *Sir Henry Wood* discusses all aspects of musical life and many issues of the day, including controversial contemporary attitudes regarding the deputy system and pitch;<sup>25</sup> the latter had great implications for wind players and greatly affected the instrument manufacturing trade, as musicians were often required to own, and companies to produce, wind instruments of many different pitch standards. Ehrlich's book '*The Music Profession in Britain since the Eighteenth Century*' presents empirical data on the social and economic state of the music profession until the 1980s.<sup>26</sup> It gives a clear perspective of the working world of music and the struggle that teachers and performers experienced to make a living and attain recognition in their field.

There are numerous organological books which complement this thesis. Most contain technical and historical information, and although some of the earlier publications have been superseded by more recent works, each author offers a different perspective, giving insight into thoughts and opinions of the time. Examples include Rockstro's nineteenth-century treatise which covers every aspect of the flute and displays some personal opinions.<sup>27</sup> Bate's *The Oboe* and *The Flute*, and Langwill's *The Bassoon and Contrabassoon* cover all aspects of these

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<sup>23</sup> Reginald Nettel, *The Orchestra in England: A Social History* (Jonathan Cape, 1946).

<sup>24</sup> George Bernard Shaw, *Music in London 1890-94*, 3 vols. (London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1932).

<sup>25</sup> Robert Elkin, *Queen's Hall: 1893-1941* (London: Rider and Co., 1944); Reginald Pound, *Sir Henry Wood* (London: Cassell, 1969).

<sup>26</sup> Cyril Ehrlich, *The Music Profession in England since the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985).

<sup>27</sup> Richard Shepherd Rockstro, *A Treatise on the Construction the History and the Practice of the Flute* (London 1890; reprint, Musica Rara 1967).

instruments.<sup>28</sup> Powell's more recent publication *The Flute*, which offers a comprehensive account of the instrument and flute playing through the ages, is well illustrated with pictures and many literary references and quotations.<sup>29</sup> Whilst *The Clarinet* by Rendall is one of the most respected volumes, Brymer's *Clarinet* has also become a standard work,<sup>30</sup> and Kroll's *The Clarinet* is of particular interest as it is written from a German perspective with more information on the German style of instrument and playing than British works on the subject.<sup>31</sup> There are many similar publications which cover brass instruments, with the most recent publications tracing the history and development of individual or families of instruments included in the Yale Musical Instrument Series.<sup>32</sup> A few well recognised works cover the whole ranges of woodwind and brass instruments. Adkins' *Treatise on the Military Band*, which was written in 1931, Carse's *Musical Wind Instruments* dating from 1939, and Baines' *Woodwind Instruments and their History*, first published in 1957, all have a lot to offer.<sup>33</sup>

In the nineteenth century national and international exhibitions became a popular forum for manufacturers to show their latest innovations, with companies attending the latter in order to find new trade outlets abroad. Various publications provide general information on these exhibitions. For example, *Musical Instruments in the 1851 Exhibition* is a transcription of the musical entries from the *Official Illustrated Catalogue of the Great Exhibition of the Art and Industry of all Nations*, with additional material from contemporary sources.<sup>34</sup> From this comprehensive list of exhibitors and the instruments that they displayed, the contemporary interest by overseas companies in exporting to Britain can be gauged.

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<sup>28</sup> Philip Bate, *The Oboe: An Outline of Its History, Development and Construction*, Instruments of the Orchestra (London: Benn, 1956; reprint, 1962); ———, *The Flute: A Study of Its History, Development and Construction*, Instruments of the Orchestra (London: Benn, 1969; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1979); Lyndesay G. Langwill, *The Bassoon and Contrabassoon*, Instruments of the Orchestra (London: Benn, 1965).

<sup>29</sup> Ardal Powell, *The Flute*, The Yale Musical Instrument Series (New Haven and London: Yale, 2002).

<sup>30</sup> F. Geoffrey Rendall, *The Clarinet: Some Notes on Its History and Construction*, Instruments of the Orchestra. (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1954); Jack Brymer, *Clarinet*, Yehudi Menuhin Music Guides (London: Macdonald and Jane's, 1976).

<sup>31</sup> Oskar Kroll. *The Clarinet*. (First English Language Edition London: Batsford 1968).

<sup>32</sup> For example Reginald Morley-Pegge, *The French Horn* (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1960); Philip Bate, *The Trumpet and Trombone* (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1966); Trevor Herbert, *The Trombone*, Yale Musical Instrument Series (Yale, 2006).

<sup>33</sup> H.E. Adkins, *Treatise on the Military Band* (B&Co Ltd., 1931); Adam Carse, *Musical Wind Instruments*, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1939; reprint, London: Macmillan 1965). Anthony Baines, *Woodwind Instruments and Their History*, (London: Faber, 1957, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 1979).

<sup>34</sup> P. Mactaggart and A. Mactaggart, *Musical Instruments in the 1851 Exhibition* (Welwyn, Herts: Mac & Me Ltd., 1986).

B&H and Besson, besides producing comprehensive catalogues, published a number of books and articles about the state of wind playing and instrument design and technology in relationship to their own businesses and the general musical scene. These publications provide insight into the running of the companies and the influence that they exerted upon the market. *Woodwind Book 1940*, *Woodwind Book 1957–58* and *Brass Today* consist of collections of chapters by prominent woodwind and brass players.<sup>35</sup> Besides covering all aspects and styles of woodwind and brass playing, and comparing them with those abroad, these books contain much information on the development of manufacturing systems and processes in the B&H factory, and the new methods of mass production after World War II. F.C. Draper's *The Design and Manufacture of Musical Wind Instruments* and a booklet, *Sounding Brass*, which was printed originally in *Welding and Metal Fabrication*, give detailed acoustical and technical accounts of the fabrication of brass instruments.<sup>36</sup> They both describe the modern manufacturing techniques using precision engineering that were employed by B&H for mass production.

Manufacturers' trade journals (e.g. *Edgware Newsletter*), catalogues, advertisements in tutor books and other publications (e.g. *Musical Times*) offer much information on the companies, contemporary playing styles and market demand, etc. For information on the later years of B&H, articles from national newspapers such as the *Guardian* and the *Telegraph* give contemporary accounts and details otherwise unavailable.

### 1.3 Research methods

The principal research methodology in this thesis has comprised extensive visits to archives to examine extant company catalogues, workbooks, stockbooks, technical drawings and correspondence relating to B&H and its associated companies. The B&H archive, which has been the main source for my research, is held at the Horniman Museum in Forest Hill, South London. It contains a large collection of extant production records, drawings and instruments relating to Distin

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<sup>35</sup> B&H, *Woodwind Yearbook* (B&H, 1940); *Woodwind Yearbook* (B&H, 1957–8); *Brass Today* (London: Besson, 1957).

<sup>36</sup> F.C. Draper, *The Design and Manufacture of Musical Wind Instruments* (London: H&S, 1957); *Sounding Brass* (B&H Engineers Ltd., July and August 1958).

& Co., B&Co., Rudall Carte, Besson and B&H. The Museum purchased the B&H collection of instruments in 2003 aided by grants from the National Art Collections Fund and Heritage Lottery Fund. The official hand-over was in January 2004, and a selection of instruments has been on display in the music gallery since 2006 in the exhibition 'Sound Designs: the story of B&H.' The company's technical drawings were donated to the Horniman in 2004,<sup>37</sup> followed by additional plans, the firm's workbooks, and other literature and items when Besson, the sole remaining company of B&H, went into receivership in December 2005.

The corporate workshop books, stock books, accounts and directors' minutes offer a wealth of information on the instruments, manufacturing methods, and company employees etc. throughout the history of B&H and its associated companies. By using these resources in conjunction with the blueprints, drawings, accessories and musical instruments it has been possible to discover much about the history and running of the company, and by implication, the industry of which it was a part.

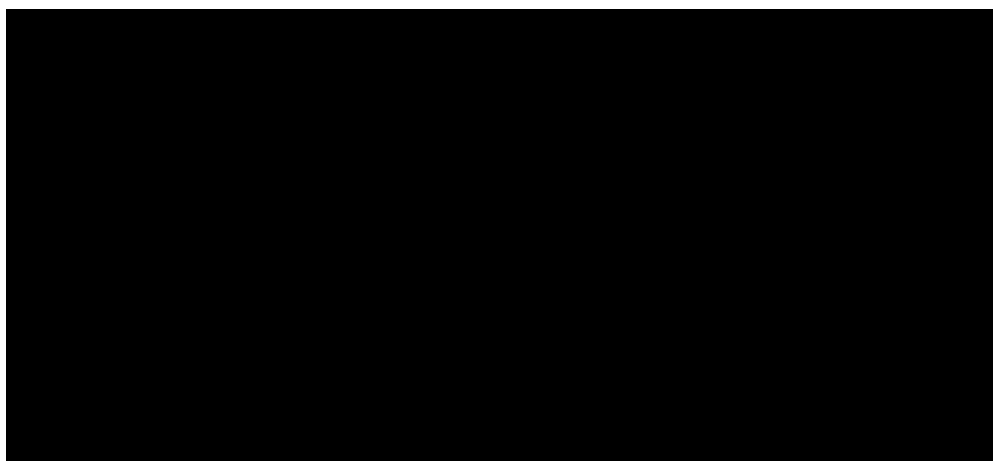
The company workbooks contain information about the instruments that were produced within the factory and those bought-in for resale. Every instrument was allotted a serial number, and details of materials used, and often finishes, plating and engraving etc. recorded. The progression of the popularity and of the introduction, development and discontinuation of particular instruments and models can be learnt from these documents. This information, cross-referenced with the firms' catalogues, presents an overview of the changing market.

The extant workbooks of B&Co. and then B&H are comprehensive and meticulously recorded. They span the period of nearly 130 years and contain a complete record of brasswind from 1868 to 1985, and an almost complete record of woodwind from 1857 to 1986. Each instrument made was noted individually with information about it, with in some cases the workers' hours and pay (Figure 1), until the introduction of mass-production; however thereafter, although the serial numbers continued to be listed, very few details were recorded. Most of H&S corporate papers have been lost, with the exception of a few books from the period March 1921 up to just after the merger in 1930. These records are not presented clearly and are incomplete with model numbers omitted, which makes comparison

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<sup>37</sup> Strauchen-Scherer and Myers, "Manufacturer's Museum."

between the two firms difficult. In addition to this there is much specialist material in archives such as at EUCHMI, the Bate Collection and in private collections. These contain personal correspondence, pictures and jottings, as well as programmes and catalogues etc.



**Figure 1.** Example of B&Co. workbook records (HM/B&H, A227/053).

The main research for this thesis has come from detailed examination of the company workbooks and manufacturers' catalogues. In order to identify the instrument models recorded in the workbooks, I have consulted the descriptions and images in the catalogues, or extant instruments. It has also been possible to compare some of these models with technical drawings in the archive. Company publications, private correspondence, notes and sketches have all contributed to building a picture of factory life and the musical world beyond.

Besides examining and cross-referencing material from a wide range of primary and secondary sources in the archives and instrument collections, I have also consulted a number of collectors, players and ex-employees, such as Arnold Myers, Colin Bradbury and Tim Barrett. This consultation occurred through email correspondence or through informal interviews. Although not quoted directly in the text, information drawn from these sources is referenced in footnotes.

The literature review above names a sample of the many books and articles consulted, all essential in their own way for constructing the 'bigger picture' in which to contextualise the corporate history. It has been difficult in places to maintain the narrative flow as empirical data has been central to the evaluation of the evolution of instruments and models, and the players' preferences for them. Consequently,



some of the production and design details of instruments and the professional musicians who endorsed them are contained in the appendices.

## **1.4 Thesis outline**

This thesis proceeds in a broadly chronological fashion. Following this introductory material, Chapter 2 gives an overview of music-making and concert-going during the nineteenth century and discusses the rapid expansion of wind instrument manufacture in Britain. It provides a social and musical context in which to place the commencement of instrument manufacture at the companies of B&Co. and H&S.

Chapter 3 examines the origins and development of the two companies until their merger in 1930. It focuses on their corporate histories and growth in order to sustain important military contracts. It also considers the place that they occupied within a highly competitive industry.

Chapter 4 looks at a pivotal point in the history of British instrument manufacture, the merger of B&Co. and H&S. It discusses the company's development from 1930 until the end of the War from a craft-based industry to one with an ever-increasing emphasis on the use of mechanised processes and scientific precision. It considers the models that were retained in production from the individual companies and the subsequent new developments which reflected contemporary trends.

Chapter 5 details the history of the English company Besson. Most of the research was derived from the company's Directors' Minutes. From these it has been possible to understand the progression of the industry as a whole and the increasing links amongst instrument manufacturers. It discusses the growing collaboration between Besson and the newly amalgamated B&H, and details its eventual acquisition, which resulted in B&H attaining monopoly of the market and becoming one of the largest and most successful instrument manufacturing companies in the world.

Chapter 6 examines how the legacy of war work at B&H irrevocably changed factory practices, with the use of engineering skills and machinery resulting in the commencement of the mass production of instruments. It considers the changing role of the craftsmen who were forced to adapt to new and modern

methods of working with much of the original hand-crafted work performed by machine, and the altered market for instruments after the War.

Chapter 7 considers the company's changing business priorities during the 1960s and 1970s and its increasing status as a global corporation. The expansion and diversification of products and development of the role of B&H as a dealer, particularly in supplying specific instruments for the popular music and education markets, is evaluated, as is the firm's increased manufacture for export beyond the Empire and the military market.

Chapter 8 discusses the continued rise of B&H to its position as head of a large international group by its acquisition of companies abroad. During the 1980s and 1990s B&H took its expansion, globalisation and diversification of the previous decades to new levels before its sudden ignominious decline and ensuing dissolution. This chapter considers how investment in the subsidiary companies and reorganisation of work amongst them led to a gradual loss of identity of the parent company, and how these factors and a chain of adverse events from 1997 caused the untimely demise of B&H in 2003, thus marking the end of a great era of instrument making in Britain.

Chapter 9 provides the conclusions for the thesis as a whole.

## Chapter 2

# Social, musical, economic and technological contexts for the development of British woodwind and brass manufacture in the nineteenth century

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## 2.1 Introduction

When T. Boosey & Co. commenced business as importers and publishers of foreign music in 1816 they entered a world of music that was flourishing and expanding. Britain's economy was strong, and the Industrial Revolution, nurtured by thriving overseas trade and the growing empire, led to increased living standards and leisure time. This enabled cultural and musical growth and brought about rapid expansion of the music industry. This chapter sets the scene for the thesis and places the commencement of instrument manufacture at Boosey and the foundation of Hawkes & Co. in a social and musical context.

## 2.2 Eighteenth-century legacies

During the eighteenth century orchestral performance trends in Britain and on the Continent developed in very different ways. Abroad, court music and patronage predominated with refined musical activity generally restricted to the royal courts and higher strata of society. Thus, orchestras were privately owned, well disciplined, and regularly rehearsed under a single director. In Britain musicians were freelance and sought work wherever they could get it, from concert hall to music hall; consequently standards in Britain were not as high as they were abroad and British players earned a reputation for being ill-disciplined. However, there was much musical activity in London with many commercial concerts provided by privately run societies and individuals.<sup>38</sup> Concerts given by foreign composers such as Handel, J.C. Bach and Haydn attracted large audiences, and

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<sup>38</sup> For example Academy of Ancient Music (est.1726), a Philharmonic Society (est.1728), Royal Society of Musicians (1738), Bach and Abel (est.1764), Concert of Antient Music (est. 1776), The Professional Concert (1783), and Salomon's concerts (1790s). Nettel, *Orchestra*. p.26, p.62, p.74, p.78, p.80.

music was available for the masses to enjoy in pleasure gardens such as Vauxhall and Ranelagh, where sizeable orchestral forces were required.<sup>39</sup> Many orchestral players from abroad, attracted by the freedom, moved to work in London to take advantage of the opportunities for employment.

Early wind instruments were unmechanised, with good intonation up to the skill of the players. In 1775 Charles Burney wrote 'the defect, I mean, is the want of truth in wind instruments. I know it is natural for those instruments to be out of tune.'<sup>40</sup> Players and makers were only too aware of the problems and consequently instrument designs were continually being developed with many improvements made to the keys, bore, hole sizes and hole positions. Much experimentation occurred and new models were evolved. However, it was not until the nineteenth century that real innovation took place with an explosion of new ideas, model designs and instruments.

During the eighteenth century wind instruments were traditionally made by craftsmen using simple tools and techniques. Small family-run workshops produced instruments for all types of professional and amateur musicians for use in bands, orchestras and chamber music. Instrument making was largely based around small families of craftsmen; businesses often involved several family members and were frequently passed from father to son. At the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries a number of new wind instrument makers established small traditional businesses in London in response to demand for instruments from the British military forces; these included Köhler, Metzler, Keat, Key and Pace.<sup>41</sup> However in Europe, changes to the old methods of instrument making were being brought about by industrialisation and, by the 1820s, French makers were employing new technology, using machinery and steam-power to replace hand-crafted processes. Companies expanded rapidly and thus required large factories and workforces, a pattern which did not develop in Britain until some years later. When the firms of Boosey and Hawkes commenced instrument manufacturing in

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid. p.34.

<sup>40</sup> Charles Burney, *The Present State of Music in Germany, the Netherlands, and United Provinces.*, Vol. 1 (Becket, 1775). p.96.

<sup>41</sup> William Waterhouse, *The New Langwill Index* (London: Tony Bingham, 1993). p.210, p.261, p.200, p.286, p.289. Köhler was established in 1780, Metzler in 1788, Keat in 1795, Key in c.1800, and Pace in 1815.

circa 1851 and 1876 respectively they employed traditional practices, and it was not until about 1876 and 1895 respectively that they used steam-power.

## 2.3 Social and musical developments in the nineteenth century

In the nineteenth century sustained improvements in the standard of living, increased wages for the general populace and the use of steam power and mechanisation affected almost every aspect of daily life and brought growth and prosperity to the country. Factories were established to house industry, and there was rapid urban development as people moved from the countryside to towns and cities to seek employment. By the 1830s and 1840s, owing to expansion of the railways and the waterway networks, and use of steam powered ships, industry and trade were flourishing.

Over the century the population in Britain nearly doubled, and as the gradual emancipation of the middle and working classes took place the public's interest in music grew. The music industry – publishers and instrument makers – expanded to meet the demands arising from the new enthusiasm of the concert-going masses, the large number of amateur brass bands and the military market. Professional musicians and music teachers in Britain increased sixfold with numbers rising from 6,600 to 11,200 in the decade 1841 to 1851, to 15,000 by 1861, to 38,600 by 1891 and to 39,300 at the end of the century.<sup>42</sup> This growth obviously had a great effect on the musical instrument manufacturing trade and on music publishing, both of which prospered as a result.

Music-making and concert-going became activities that were not restricted to the upper and educated echelons of society, but were available to all classes. Audience numbers increased as the growth of the railway system allowed the public easy access to London, the cultural centre of England. Rail travel also enabled musicians to reach provincial cities and towns where music festivals and large-scale choral societies had become very popular. Civilian brass bands were flourishing, particularly in the north, where wealthy industrialists were keen to earn recognition as patrons of charity and music; many supported concerts and bands.

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<sup>42</sup> Ehrlich, *Music Profession*. p.235.

As reduced working hours led to more leisure time, there was an increase in the playing of all types of music both in the home and outside. Private music teaching became commonplace and amateur musicians were plentiful; local ensembles, bands and orchestras thrived. People sought entertainment and, as a result, professional music-making flourished. Live music became part of normal life in an era before recording and broadcasting.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, there was little orchestral music in London and standards of performance were generally poor. Many good instrumentalists came from abroad where fees for performance were lower than in Britain. Continental players dominated the British orchestral scene for some years, with a large number coming from military bands in Germany. They brought with them their foreign-made instruments and their national styles of playing, and inevitably these influenced British players and makers.

In Europe, from the first decade of the nineteenth century, it was possible to pursue a musical training at one of the new conservatories of music that had been founded along similar lines to the Paris Conservatoire.<sup>43</sup> These schools helped to raise playing standards. Although Britain's first musical establishment, The Royal Academy, was founded in 1822, it was some years before its instrumentalists made a real impression, as most orchestras were still recruiting from amongst the established and largely foreign profession.<sup>44</sup> Britain rather lagged behind continental Europe in this respect, but many new colleges of music were founded throughout London from the 1860s.<sup>45</sup> Some of the colleges did much to promote instrumental study and raise standards by introducing a certificated examination system for internal and external students. However, these exams made little impact on wind playing since there was an insignificant number of candidates; the majority of students were middle-class girls who wanted to become accomplished at the piano and at singing, many of whom turned to teaching as the popularity amongst

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<sup>43</sup> The first school of music established in Paris in 1784 became the Paris Conservatoire in 1795. Music schools were established in Bologna (1804), Milan (1807), Naples (1808) and Florence (1811).

<sup>44</sup> Ehrlich, *Music Profession*. p.80.

<sup>45</sup> For example 1861 London Academy of Music, 1864 College of Organists, 1865 London Organ School (later London Music School), 1874 Trinity College of Music, 1876 National Training School (became the Royal College of Music in 1883), 1880 Guildhall School of Music, 1881 Blackheath Conservatoire, 1883 Croydon Conservatoire, 1885 Forest Gate School of Music and the Hampstead Conservatoire, 1887 London College of Music and more. Ibid. p.238.

amateurs for taking music lessons increased.<sup>46</sup> In contrast, the Military School of Music at Kneller Hall made a great impact in the decade after it opened in 1857.<sup>47</sup> The school, which at first was dominated by bandmasters from the Continent, offered a highly efficient training, providing in later years many of Britain's best professional wind players. Kneller Hall played an important part in standardising the instrumentation of the military band and it maintained close links with B&Co. who provided numerous instruments for the establishment.<sup>48</sup> Many of Boosey's consultants and instrument testers were bandmasters at Kneller Hall and their catalogues often included testimonials from them.<sup>49</sup>

Business providing sheet-music publications for the amateur market thrived, encouraged by the growing number of proficient amateur pianists and singers. Many editions of operatic arias, ballad songs and songs with instrumental obligato were easily available to the public, and great numbers of arrangements for wind instruments were published in quantity and promoted by instrument manufacturers. This proved to be a lucrative area.<sup>50</sup> Rudall Carte's vocal horn, a horn in C, designed specifically to play the vocal line of ballads with accompaniment from the score, was introduced in 1862,<sup>51</sup> and Boosey's ballad horn, which was slightly different, was produced to meet the same needs and market in 1869.<sup>52</sup>

Throughout the nineteenth century the flute was a particularly fashionable instrument, attracting a great number of professional players and amateurs who were inspired by travelling soloists demonstrating their prowess on the latest models. There was much contemporary literature on the diverse styles and methods of notable players, detailing their technical brilliance, different tone qualities and the models of instruments that they played. According to Adam Carse:

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<sup>46</sup> Trinity College of Music was the first conservatoire to introduce teaching diplomas in 1882. Ibid. p.119. As late as 1922, woodwind and brass candidates were hardly represented in the number of diplomas awarded, with only five in flute and one in oboe listed, as opposed to 5,611 in piano. *Calendar of Trinity College of Music, London* (London: TCM, 1922).

<sup>47</sup> P. L. Binns, *A Hundred Years of Military Music* (Gillingham, Dorset: Blackmore Press, 1959). It was renamed The Royal Military School of Music in 1887, the year of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee.

<sup>48</sup> In the B&Co. workbooks the initials 'KH' are noted next to many instruments, indicating the instruments were for musicians at Kneller Hall.

<sup>49</sup> For example B&Co., *Illustrated Catalogue of Military & Orchestral Band Instruments Manufactured Throughout by Boosey & Co.* (1892): AMPC. p.10.

<sup>50</sup> Boosey's Ballad Concerts, which were started in 1867, did much to promote sheet-music sales for the company. William Boosey, *Fifty Years of Music* (London: Ernest Benn, 1931). p.15.

<sup>51</sup> Personal communication with Arnold Myers.

<sup>52</sup> See Appendix 3.

*Probably no one instrument has attracted the attention of so many 'inventors' as did the flute during the period from 1775–1875; of no other instrument are there so many surviving specimens in our collections, nor of any other has so much been written. The cult of flute playing by amateurs in England probably accounts for the fact that so much of the important flute literature is in English.*<sup>53</sup>

Flute production accounted for a major proportion of woodwind trade throughout the nineteenth century, with extensive improvements made to the instrument and numerous new designs developed. The first area of growth into woodwind manufacture at B&Co. was flute-making.

An increased interest in music in the provinces and the fashion for hearing music played by professional musicians at spas and seaside resorts led to greater employment for musicians. Bands and orchestras became popular holiday attractions, and programmes were varied and light to appeal to the musical tastes of the new audiences. Work was seasonal; during the summer musicians from London found employment at resorts on the south coast, and those from the north, at the resorts of North Wales and Lancashire. Many players were from an army background, and conductors were frequently military bandmasters. Some players were 'double-handed' – able to play a stringed instrument besides woodwind or brass – making it possible for them to be employed in both municipal bands and orchestras. Bournemouth led the way with the first municipal band and year-round employment for its musicians.<sup>54</sup> By the middle of the century musicians were to be found everywhere – in the music halls and theatres, on the pier and in parks, at dances, shows, cafes and assembly rooms, as well as in the concert halls.

A number of military musicians found employment from 1854 at Crystal Palace, which had been built originally in Hyde Park to house the Great Exhibition of 1851 and re-erected on Sydenham Hill as a place for public entertainment. The first band consisted of sixty-two brass instruments, a piccolo and two E ♭ clarinets. However, August Manns (1825–1907), a German military bandmaster and the first deputy conductor of the band, within a year of his engagement in 1855, introduced a full orchestra that included some of the band members. The orchestra rehearsed

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<sup>53</sup> Adam Carse, *Musical Wind Instruments*. p.101.

<sup>54</sup> The Bournemouth municipal band began in 1876 as an independent organisation comprising sixteen ex-Italian army players who had moved from Bath. Kenneth Young, *Music's Great Days in the Spas and Watering Places* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1968). pp.210-212.



daily and attained a high standard. The Saturday concerts, which usually consisted of two overtures, a symphony, a concerto or smaller orchestral pieces and four songs, were highly popular. In these concerts Manns promoted British music by introducing his audiences to new works by contemporary British composers.<sup>55</sup>

The fashion for large-scale orchestral music continued elsewhere, with for example one hundred and seventy players employed for the London Wagner Festival at the Albert Hall in 1877 under the baton of Wagner and also the respected German conductor, Hans Richter.<sup>56</sup> The popularity of Wagner's music and other large-scored Romantic works led to a greatly inflated wind section within the orchestra and the need for an increased range of instruments to be manufactured. Scoring often demanded full families of instruments with the inclusion of E♭ and bass clarinets, contra bassoon etc. New models were developed, such as the Wagner tuba, Aida and Buccina Roman trumpets and heckelphone, and B&Co. and H&S offered some of these instruments in their catalogues.<sup>57</sup>

Towards the end of the nineteenth century orchestral music in Britain was flourishing, its popularity encouraging the foundation of many new orchestras including the Scottish Orchestra (established in 1891), the Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra (1893), and the Queen's Hall Orchestra (1895). This trend continued into the early decades of the twentieth century, and with it the quest for a higher level of orchestral performance standard. In an attempt to develop a British school of orchestral playing, British players were engaged rather than those from the continent.<sup>58</sup> In 1912 Thomas Beecham came up with a short-lived scheme to improve the standard of wind playing (which he considered had been declining) and to encourage new composition for a different genre of wind music. The Beecham Wind Orchestra comprised fifty-two musicians. Whilst Beecham may have been unhappy with the standard of wind playing at the time, he did acknowledge that the development and production of wind instruments was in a healthy state, commenting that owing to 'the improvement of the manufacture of most wind instruments and the invention of several others of considerable beauty, which are

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<sup>55</sup> Nettel, *Orchestra*. pp.210-211.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. p.220.

<sup>57</sup> H&S, *The Hawkes Catalogue of Orchestral and Instrumental Music Also Illustrated Price List of Orchestral Instruments* (1912). p.89. See Appendix 3.

<sup>58</sup> Thomas Russell, *Philharmonic Decade* (London: Hutchinson, 1944). p.14.

still unfamiliar to the average player, there is a field for new development both in the practical reorganisation and theoretical treatment of wind combinations.<sup>59</sup> As will become apparent later, this expansion of professional musical activities and the increased demand for instruments to support it was reflected in the development of B&Co. and H&S in the second half of the nineteenth century.

## 2.4 Pitch standards

Perhaps one of the most recurrent and problematical issues for wind players and instrument makers in the overall development of band and orchestral music has been the variation in pitch standards. Both in Britain and on the continent many different pitches co-existed, a situation which caused great difficulties, principally for woodwind players. Over the years, in the attempt to achieve a brighter sound, instrumentalists, particularly string players, brought about a gradual rise in pitch, thus forcing orchestras to play sharper; this was also perpetuated in Britain by some conductors. Wind instrument makers were therefore obliged to make instruments to suit the different pitches.

David Blaikley, Boosey's Works Manager and respected acoustician, addressed the situation in several publications on the subject.<sup>60</sup> Pitch gradually rose in England from Handel's time (1751) when generally  $a^1$  equalled 422.5 Hz. The Philharmonic Society, at its establishment in 1813, adopted  $a^1=425.8$  Hz; however, by 1874 it had reached  $a^1=454.7$  Hz at their concerts (over a semitone higher than Handel's pitch). This sounded about three quarters of a semitone higher than the contemporary pitch on the continent which was known as 'Standard Diapason Normal', 'Continental Pitch' or 'French Pitch',  $a^1=435.4$  Hz.<sup>61</sup> Until 1896 the pitch that was widely adopted in Britain was 'Old Philharmonic Pitch' which was also known as 'High Pitch', 'Sharp Pitch', 'Kneller Hall Pitch' and 'Military Regulation Pitch' ( $a^1 = 452.4$  Hz at 60 degrees).<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Tchaikov, *Music Goes Round*. Chapter 7, p.2. <http://www.musicweb-international.com/Tschaikov/flyer.htm> Accessed 19/11/2008.

<sup>60</sup> D.J. Blaikley, *Table of Musical Pitch Based Upon 'The History of Musical Pitch' By Alexander J. Ellis* (B&Co., 1880): HM/B&H, Ibid., *Memorandum on the Pitch of Army Bands* (B&Co, 1909, revised 1922): HM/B&H.

<sup>61</sup> Blaikley, *Table of Pitch*.

<sup>62</sup> Blaikley, *Memorandum on the Pitch of Army Bands*. p.3.

Although the *Musical Times* reported that Barnby adopted the lower 'Continental Pitch' for his St James' Hall series of oratorio concerts in 1869,<sup>63</sup> it was not until 1895 that a major change was initiated by the Queen's Hall Orchestra, the first important permanent orchestra to be set up in London. It was founded by Robert Newman and relied on funding from Dr George Cathcart, an eminent laryngologist. Cathcart imposed the condition that low 'Continental Pitch' must be adopted because the high pitch in common use was causing serious vocal strain amongst singers.<sup>64</sup> A note in the programme for the first Queen's Hall Promenade Concert announced that 'at these concerts the French Pitch (*Diapason Normal*) will be exclusively used. Mr. Newman is glad to say that it will also be adopted in the future by the Philharmonic Society, the Bach Choir, the London Symphony, Mottl and Nikisch concerts and concerts under his direction which begin on October 6<sup>th</sup>.<sup>65</sup> Cathcart purchased and imported low pitched woodwind and brass instruments from Belgium for the players to borrow for the first season, but on realising that low pitch had now become established, they bought them from him.<sup>66</sup>

The change to low pitch was a gradual process, and many orchestras and players were reluctant to obtain new instruments owing to the cost involved.<sup>67</sup> For example it took until 1909 for Dan Godfrey in Bournemouth to adopt it. Money was advanced by the corporation to pay for new instruments and the players repaid it 'less a discount of one third, by weekly deductions from their wages'.<sup>68</sup> By 1912 a number of other prominent orchestras in London and the provinces, and schools of music had adopted low pitch. However, all army bands and the Royal Military School of Music continued to maintain the high 'Old Philharmonic' pitch until 1928. This often precluded players from playing with foreign bands on ceremonial occasions, and made it necessary for them to purchase different instruments for orchestral use.

Consequently it was necessary for companies to manufacture instruments in different pitches for markets at home and abroad. Until the early twentieth century,

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<sup>63</sup> Percy A. Scholes, *The Mirror of Music 1844-1944* (London: Novello & Co. Ltd. and OUP, 1947). p.406.

<sup>64</sup> Elkin, *Queen's Hall*. p.25. The pitch adopted is given as  $a^1=439$  at 68 degrees F. The Hawkes 1912 catalogue gives the date it was defined as 06/11/1896.

<sup>65</sup> Nettel, *Orchestra*. p.245.

<sup>66</sup> Elkin, *Queen's Hall*. p.25 and Pound, *Henry Wood*. p.45.

<sup>67</sup> Low pitch was also known as 'International Pitch',  $a^1=435$ , and 'New Philharmonic Pitch',  $a^1=439$ .

<sup>68</sup> Nettel, *Orchestra*. p.238.

at B&Co. most instruments were produced at Old Philharmonic Pitch with only exceptions noted.<sup>69</sup> In 1892 Boosey stated that their instruments were made to the standard pitch observed in the Army bands 'in accordance with the Queen's Regulation [...] the same pitch as that adopted by the "Philharmonic Society"'.<sup>70</sup> However, in the 1902 catalogue both 'Military Regulation Pitch' and 'New Philharmonic or Flat Pitch' were given as the standards, and customers were asked to specify the pitch required.<sup>71</sup> Scholes in 1947 tells of the struggle for reform, and reports that in spite of the acceptance of the lowered pitch by Colonel J.C. Somerville, Commandant of Kneller Hall, there were bands whose instruments remained at the high pitch.<sup>72</sup> It took many years for the high 'Old Philharmonic Pitch' to fall from use,<sup>73</sup> and the problem did not start to improve until 1939 when the standard of  $a^1=440$  Hz was agreed at an international conference in London.<sup>74</sup>

## 2.5 Military and civilian bands

By the second half of the nineteenth century, with the rise of Britain as a colonial power and the expansion of British military forces, there were many thousands of military and civilian bands throughout the Empire. Consequently there was a great demand for wind instruments, and manufacturing businesses, such as those of Boosey and of Hawkes, flourished and expanded. In 1894, George Bernard Shaw, the renowned writer and critic, reported that

*we want a maker of instruments for the classical orchestra; and we shall certainly not get him on strictly commercial lines at present, because the great*

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<sup>69</sup> The pitch was recorded in the workshop books periodically until 1912, after which it was more frequently noted. 'I.P.' was the pitch most often recorded. Other pitches recorded were Kneller Hall, high, low, flat, International, French and 465.1.

<sup>70</sup> B&Co., 1892 catalogue.

<sup>71</sup> B&Co., *Illustrated Catalogue of Military & Orchestral Band Instruments Manufactured Throughout by Boosey & Co.* (1902): AMPC.

<sup>72</sup> Scholes, *Mirror of Music*. p.409.

<sup>73</sup> Until well into the twentieth century, orchestral musicians (many of whom were free-lance) and virtuosi who undertook solo engagements around Britain encountered problems concerning pitch variation. It was often necessary for wind players to have several instruments in different pitches to enable them to play in tune with the established pitches of the different orchestras and bands. Some orchestras and bands retained high pitch into the 1920s and beyond, and the Salvation Army and all brass bands maintained it until after 1964 when instrument manufacturers stopped making high pitch instruments. Arnold Myers, "Instruments and Instrumentation of British Brass Bands," in *The British Brass Band: A Musical and Social History*, ed. Trevor Herbert (Oxford: OUP, 2000). p.183.

<sup>74</sup> Percy M. Scholes, *The Oxford Companion to Music* (London: OUP, 1938, reprinted 1974). p.807.

*bulk of the instrument business lies with military bands, and with the innumerable bands on the military model which exist throughout the country, from those of the Salvation Army to the amateur bands of the industrial counties, which compete as eagerly for prizes as rival football teams do, and which spend considerable sums out of those prizes in perfecting their instrumental equipment.*<sup>75</sup>

Until the foundation of The Military School of Music at Kneller Hall the standard of British military bands was low in comparison to that on the continent; British bands were made up of civilians with most of the able players and bandmasters coming from Germany.<sup>76</sup> Previously only a few regiments had employed a handful of civilian players to provide their music; according to T.W. Parke in his *Musical Memoirs*, by 1783 'the Bands of the three Regiments of Guards consisted [...] of only eight performers – two Oboes, two Clarinets, two Horns, and two Bassoons.'<sup>77</sup> A steady influx of well-trained German bandmen into England began in 1785 when George III approved the formation of a band for the Coldstream Guards, into which twelve players from Hanover were recruited.<sup>78</sup> Regimental bands were supported at the expense of the officers, not the State, and even after the foundation of Kneller Hall most of the bandmasters were, 'with a few exceptions, civilians, engaged at high salaries', who often refused to accompany the regiment abroad unless they received additional pay.<sup>79</sup> The establishment of full-time military bands in Britain by the end of the eighteenth century did much to raise playing standards and further the requirement for developed instruments, and by the end of the nineteenth century there was much demand from the many regimental bands in Britain and throughout the Empire for instruments.

During the nineteenth century the brass band movement flourished amongst the working classes, mainly in the industrial areas in northern England where most communities had their own band. In 1889 the editor of the Liverpool *Brass Band News* reported that there were 40,000 amateur bands in the UK, and that the

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<sup>75</sup> Shaw, *Music in London*. Vol. 3, p.167.

<sup>76</sup> Binns, *Hundred Years*. p.30.

<sup>77</sup> Adkins, *Treatise*. p.5.

<sup>78</sup> *Coldstream Guards – History*. <http://www.army.mod.uk/music/corps-band/467.aspx> Accessed 24/08/2010.

<sup>79</sup> Binns, *Hundred Years*. p.54.

number was rapidly increasing.<sup>80</sup> Algernon Rose, in his *Talks with Bandsmen*, commented that 'there is, nowadays, scarcely a mill, a factory, or colliery throughout the Midlands, North of England, parts of Scotland and Wales, and, going further afield, throughout certain parts of New Zealand, Tasmania, Canada, and the United States, which does not boast of its contingent of instrumentalists.'<sup>81</sup>

In the 1870s and 1880s instruments were being produced in quantity and sales were at their highest level so far.<sup>82</sup> Employers sought to promote musical and religious pursuits amongst their workforce to discourage dissention in the factories; they also realised the advertising opportunities that bands afforded their companies. The Great Exhibition of 1851 had sparked enthusiasm amongst these able colliery and factory bands, resulting in fierce rivalry at the many band competitions such as the annual contests introduced in 1853 by John Jennison at Belle Vue, Manchester, and those of Enderby Jackson at Crystal Palace from 1860.<sup>83</sup> Presentation instruments were often given as prizes by manufacturers who had an obvious commercial interest in these events; B&Co. and H&S were no exception. Standards of playing were variable and there was demand for all calibres of instruments from low cost basic models to more expensive sophisticated designs for the more discerning players, many of whom achieved extremely high standards of playing.<sup>84</sup>

Awareness of the potential that the military market held focused firms' attention on this area of lucrative and prestigious trade, and they increased their product lines accordingly. Some companies complemented their instrument production with the provision of accessories, sheet music, tutor books and journals, thus covering the entire spectrum of the market. Publishers had been producing band journals since the 1840s. These were in effect collections of arrangements of music for bands. Wessel & Co. published the first regular subscription journal in the 1840s, and Smith's 'Champion Brass Band Journal' was published in Hull in 1857.

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<sup>80</sup> Rose, *Talks*. p.125.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. p.xii.

<sup>82</sup> Myers, "Instruments and Instrumentation." p.176.

<sup>83</sup> Nettel, *Orchestra*. p.168.

<sup>84</sup> Myers, "Instruments and Instrumentation." p.176.

Chappell, Distin, Jullien and Boosey all published band journals, with Boosey taking over Distin's Journal from 1869, after their acquisition of the Distin business.<sup>85</sup>

## 2.6 Economic developments:

### French influence and British manufacture

The major source of influence and motivation for the development of woodwind and brass instrument making in Britain was France, which already had a well-established instrument manufacturing industry. From 1830, during a period of great industrial and economic growth, French companies underwent much development and enjoyed very high levels of production. This continued throughout the century with Britain becoming France's primary export destination during its Second Empire (1852–70).<sup>86</sup> Germany and Belgium provided the main competition to their market.<sup>87</sup> French manufacturers were accustomed to promoting products at national and provincial exhibitions in France; however, in 1851 they saw the opportunity to extend their market overseas by attending the first international exhibition that was held in London: *The Great Exhibition of the Art and Industry of All Nations*.

Many manufacturers of all types of musical instrument were represented at *The Great Exhibition*. Sixty-three brass and woodwind makers exhibited numerous instruments.<sup>88</sup> The number of companies from abroad far exceeded those from Britain, in spite of the high expenses incurred for transport, accommodation, development and display costs, and registration fees. The desire of the foreign makers to promote their instruments to a wider audience and prospective clientele beyond their own countries was clearly evident. Companies, keen to find new commercial outlets and no doubt to attract orders from the authorities of the British Empire, used the London Exhibition as a 'platform' from which to demonstrate their innovations and new designs, and to assert their supremacy by winning medals

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<sup>85</sup> Trevor Herbert, "Nineteenth-Century Bands: Making a Movement," in *The British Brass Band: A Musical and Social History*, ed. Trevor Herbert (Oxford: OUP, 2000). p.54.

<sup>86</sup> The Emperor brought about the gradual lifting of customs barriers culminating in a series of reciprocal trade agreements (1860-66) which opened up trade between France and a number of countries. The Anglo-French treaty reduced duties to not above 30%, a percentage which was lowered to 25% in 1864. Haïne, *Les Facteurs*. p.154.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. p.157.

<sup>88</sup> Mactaggart and Mactaggart, *1851 Exhibition*.

and achieving recognition. It can be seen from the list of exhibitors in the exhibition catalogue that Great Britain represented only 24% of the total. The Zollverein (or 'Great Custom Union', a group of German cities and states that formed a free-trade alliance in 1828) also accounted for 24% and France 21%. Austria represented 17% and all other countries 14%.<sup>89</sup>

By displaying at national exhibitions, manufacturers attained status within the trade, with leading companies affirming their positions and reputations. For the smaller and less well known firms, the chance to exhibit alongside leading makers and award holders brought them prestige, and it also gave them the opportunity to become acquainted with the full range of the market and the competition that they faced.<sup>90</sup> Above all, participation in exhibitions gave instrument makers the chance to gain national and international recognition.

Many brass instruments were imported to Britain from France, including, in particular, those of Adolphe Sax, which had become very popular. The 'Report of the Jury Class XA' from the *Official Illustrated Catalogue of the Great Exhibition* states that 'the number of instruments contributed by M. Sax, amounts to nearly fifty. It is well known that the demand has of late years increased amazingly.'<sup>91</sup> Sax achieved great acclaim, winning one of the two coveted Council Medals in the wind category; the other was awarded to Theobald Boehm. Sax earned high praise: 'His creation of the entire class of Sax-horns, and Sax-trumpets, has produced the most satisfactory results, in the total revolution of military music.'<sup>92</sup> Saxhorns were imported by Distin & Sons between 1845 and 1851,<sup>93</sup> and saxophones from 1849.<sup>94</sup> Sax's instruments had rapidly become accepted members of the band, with the term 'saxhorn' often used in the names of bands. e.g. 'Hawick Saxhorn Band'.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> In France, quinquennial national exhibitions took place in Paris with a large number of musical instrument manufacturers attending: 104, 152 and 179 manufacturers in 1834, 1839 and 1844. Haine, *Les Facteurs*. p.90. Four international exhibitions were held alternately in London and Paris in 1851, 1855, 1862 and 1867.

<sup>91</sup> Mactaggart and Mactaggart, *1851 Exhibition*. p.102.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Evgenia Mitroulia, *Adolphe Sax's Brasswind Production with a Focus on Saxhorns and Related Instruments* (University of Edinburgh PhD, 2011). p.244, and pp. 246-248.

<sup>94</sup> Waterhouse, *Index*. p.90.

<sup>95</sup> Myers, "Instruments and Instrumentation." p.170.



The large foreign presence at the Exhibition stimulated amongst British companies an awareness of the large scale of brass and wind manufacture abroad, and of the many innovations and developments that makers were promoting. The challenge to the British market was strong. Established firms, keen to seek new commercial outlets, became motivated to expand their businesses into instrument manufacture. They no doubt felt the threat from their continental rivals and saw the opportunity to capitalise on the potential sales that might be generated by their display. Companies included Distin & Sons, wind instrument sellers from 1845, who opened their 'Manufactory' in 1850,<sup>96</sup> and Boosey, music sellers since 1816,<sup>97</sup> who commenced instrument making one year later in 1851.<sup>98</sup> The French brass manufacturing firm of Besson, having exported instruments from France through its London branch from 1850, established a successful London factory in 1858,<sup>99</sup> and William Hawkes, a military cornet player, founded a retail business in 1858,<sup>100</sup> which he expanded into manufacture in 1876 when he went into partnership with Jules Rivière, a former French army bandmaster.<sup>101</sup>

As the nineteenth century progressed the wind instrument manufacturing trade in Britain continued to grow, with the greatest numbers of instruments produced by the larger firms such as Boosey, Besson, Hawkes and Higham. Certain houses held a higher reputation than others, but there was a market for instruments of all grades and prices. Whilst British manufacturers generally charged more than many of their foreign counterparts, they also gained a reputation for producing instruments of a high quality. The jurors at the 1851 Exhibition commented that 'it is in this point, viz., cheapness, that our instrument makers are eclipsed. That their brass instruments are equal to the French and

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<sup>96</sup> Henry Distin was proprietor. Waterhouse, *Index*. p.90.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.* p.40.

<sup>98</sup> Rose, *Talks*. p.209.

<sup>99</sup> Waterhouse, *Index*. p.30. It is probable that Gustave Besson moved to Britain to make instruments outside the reach of Adolphe Sax and the lawsuits Sax brought against rival French manufacturers, who he accused of copying his instrument designs. Stephen Cottrell, *The Saxophone* (Newhaven and London: Yale University Press, 2012). p.23 and fn. 48.

<sup>100</sup> H&S, *The Hawkes Band Instruments and Band Music* (c.1908): AMPC.

<sup>101</sup> Jules Rivière, *My Musical Life and Recollections* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Company Ltd., 1893). p.129.

superior to the German cannot be disputed, but they must be bought at a price often fifty per cent dearer than those of the French or German makers.<sup>102</sup>

B&Co. were no exception. They could not compete with the prices of instruments from abroad where wages were considerably lower than in Britain. Rose commented that it is 'apparent that Messrs. Boosey do not produce "cheap" work. It would be impracticable for them to compete in price with the cheapest foreign importations, and at the same time maintain their high-class quality.'<sup>103</sup> Cheap instruments were produced by some of the manufacturers at La Coutûre in Normandy, France, and also at Markneukirchen, a town renowned for instrument making in Saxony, Germany. A large number of these foreign instruments were imported, often bearing the stamps of British dealers when sold to the customer. However, there were some exceptions – instruments of excellent quality by Raoux, Savary, Sax and Courtois.<sup>104</sup>

Rose commented that as Englishmen preferred British-made instruments, it was 'commercially worth the while of the firm [Besson] to have a separate factory here [in London], apart from that in Paris.'<sup>105</sup> He also pointed out that 'in these days, when much work which ought to be given to English mechanics is unpatriotically sent abroad, it is refreshing to learn that the supply of bugles, duty-trumpets, fifes, flutes, and drums to the British army is confined to the productions of English makers.' However, he observed that 'it is a pity that the tenders given out by the India Office for India, and Woolwich for the army generally, should induce the competition which they do.' Firms were very keen to gain government contracts in order to advertise themselves as suppliers to various branches of the military forces and colonial departments. However, as only the lowest tenders were accepted, this led to price under-cutting with instruments often being sold for less than the cost price.<sup>106</sup>

As the demand for musical instruments grew, factories in Britain expanded and the number of employees increased. An indication of the substantial scale of production up to the early 1890s can be gained from Rose who commented that at

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<sup>102</sup> Mactaggart and Mactaggart, *1851 Exhibition*. p.102.

<sup>103</sup> Rose, *Talks*. p.219.

<sup>104</sup> Myers, "Instruments and Instrumentation." p.171, p.176.

<sup>105</sup> Rose, *Talks*. p.124.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.* p.56.

that time Boosey had a workforce of '100 mechanics [...] fashioning every part of almost every kind of wind instrument, whether for brass band, military band or the orchestra.'<sup>107</sup> Hawkes employed almost '100 hands',<sup>108</sup> and Besson had 10,000 bands on their contact list and were manufacturing 100 brass instruments a week with a workforce of 131 men in their London premises. (This was in addition to 145 men in the Paris factory at 92 Rue d'Angoulême).<sup>109</sup> Rose relates that the total number of instruments made at Besson in London (since its foundation in 1858) exceeded 52,000, and 'in Paris, although with more work people, 50,000 instruments have been made; so the grand total, after 56 years [...] is 102,000 brass instruments from this one house.'<sup>110</sup> The British branch of Besson, which became a limited company in 1895,<sup>111</sup> professed to have the largest workforce in Britain in about 1910.<sup>112</sup> The majority of successful British manufacturers were located in London, but there were a few exceptions; the largest provincial company, Joseph Higham, established in 1842 in Manchester, produced 60,000 instruments in the 50 years up to 1892, employing over 90 men.<sup>113</sup>

Despite the large number of workers involved in woodwind and brass manufacture in Britain during this period, no company matched the size of firms in France, such as Gautrot and Thibouville. In 1862 the firm of Gautrot, which produced both wind and stringed instruments, employed 700 workers in their Paris factory, a further 700 at Château-Thierry as well as 200 in their workshops for making wind instruments at La Coutûre and strings at Mirecourt.<sup>114</sup> The overall workforce at Thibouville-Lamy, a company which manufactured a wide range of instruments, numbered 420 (with over 120 men making woodwind and brass instruments) in 1878, and this number had reached 1000 by 1885.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid. p.212.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. p.269.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid. pp.124, 125.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid. p.125.

<sup>111</sup> Besson, *Register of Members, Ordinary and Preference Shares, Register of Transfers, Annual List 1895-1942*: HM/B&H A227/186.

<sup>112</sup> Waterhouse, *Index*. p.30.

<sup>113</sup> Rose, *Talks*. p.203.

<sup>114</sup> Haine, *Les Facteurs*. p.108.

<sup>115</sup> Waterhouse, *Index*. p.398.

## 2.7 Technology and production processes

To fulfill the demand for instruments and to compete successfully with rival firms for market share, British manufacturers' working practices evolved to meet contemporary standards. Although production techniques at most of the instrument firms were essentially similar, the individual companies were keen to promote differences in their working methods and their increasing mechanisation. Contemporary accounts of brass and woodwind production, combined with photographs and engravings, convey a vivid picture of nineteenth-century factory life and give good insight into many of the manufacturing processes used to make instruments.

In a large modern factory a source of power was needed to drive lathes and other tools. It is not documented at what stage British companies obtained steam power, but it seems that they did not acquire mechanisation in their factories until after many of their foreign counterparts. On the Continent, by 1847, Gautrot, Sax, Lecomte and Mahillon were all using steam engines which were in common use in wind instrument factories by the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>116</sup> It is possible that Boosey had steam power as early as 1876 when they moved their manufacturing into new premises in Frederick Mews; however, they certainly did by 1894 (Figure 2);<sup>117</sup> in 1897 Boosey was described as having 'the most complete machinery of any house in the trade'<sup>118</sup> including 'a steam-engine, nominally of seven horse-power' which drove 'throughout the establishment many interesting and valuable machines'.<sup>119</sup>

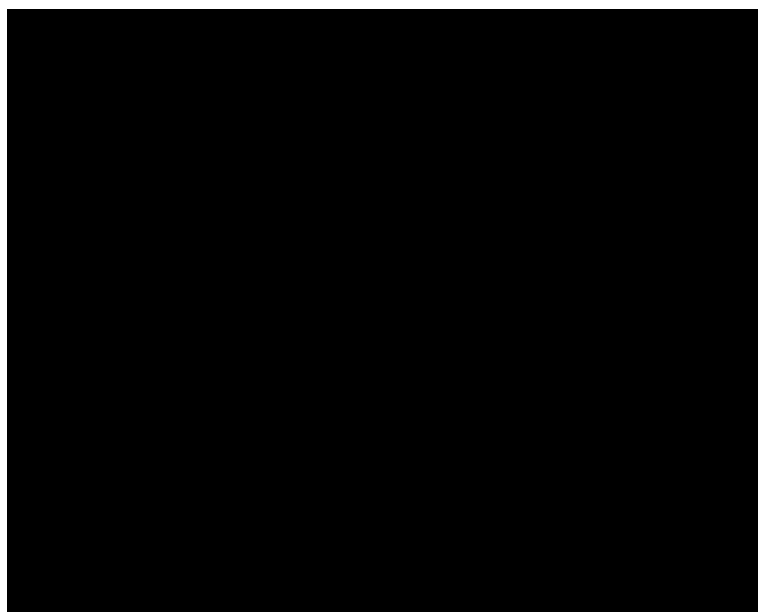
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<sup>116</sup> Ignace De Keyser, "The Paradigm of Industrial Thinking in Brass Instrument Making During the Nineteenth Century," *HBSJ*. p.236.

<sup>117</sup> B&Co., *Illustrated Catalogue of Military & Orchestral Band Instruments Manufactured Throughout by Boosey & Co.* (1894 and 1902): AMPC. cover.

<sup>118</sup> Miller, "How Band Instruments Are Made: A Visit to the Factory of Messrs. Boosey & Co.," *Brass Band News*, (1997. Reprint B&H, 1897). p.14.

<sup>119</sup> Rose, *Talks*. p.214.



**Figure 2.** Piston-makers. Image showing steam-powered machinery. B&Co. 1894 and 1902 catalogues (AMPC).

Hawkes' new, purpose-built premises under construction in Denman Street, Piccadilly Circus were described by Rose in 1895 as a site with 'a superficial area of 3,500 ft. [...] At the time of writing, convenient workshops, storerooms, and offices are being erected. The plant at present in use at Leicester Square for the making of all kinds of instruments will be supplemented by new lathes and a powerful engine to drive the whole.'<sup>120</sup> It appears that although Boosey was eager to indicate its modernity by advertising its use of the latest technology, it also retained its craft-based roots; it was estimated that at least sixty per cent of the work was still dependent on the skills of the craftsman.<sup>121</sup> However, many smaller businesses relied solely on simple craftsmen's tools such as pole-lathes and treadle lathes as at Rudall Carte.<sup>122</sup>

Although British companies at this time made many of the instruments they sold, some firms did not manufacture all the requisite pieces for the instruments, often buying in pistons and other parts for assembly in their factories. Companies that made their instruments in entirety were held in high regard. Frederick Miller, the author of a contemporary article, recounted that 'one special feature Messrs. B&Co. are able to boast of, is the fact that every part of their instruments is manufactured by them. Each instrument, from its initial to its final stage, is

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid. p.269.

<sup>121</sup> Miller, *How Band Instruments Are Made*. p.22.

<sup>122</sup> Bigio, *Rudall, Rose & Carte*. p.151.

constructed in its minutist detail in this factory.’<sup>123</sup> This was also the case at Besson. Rose stated that ‘the instruments made at Euston Road can be seen in course of construction from beginning to end. Foreign houses in other trades might take the hint and follow Messrs. Besson’s example.’<sup>124</sup>

The areas of the factories that contained the furnaces for brazing and soldering were extremely hot and noisy to work in. Salmon, after visiting the Besson works, commented that the furnaces ‘emit sufficient sulphur to supply the wants of a much less desirable region. Here the men are engaged in firing the bells.’<sup>125</sup> Rose described the noise of the hammering in a workshop for making large brass bells in the Besson factory as ‘nearly as deafening as the ear-piercing roar which startles the visitor on entering a quartz-crushing house attached to an Australian gold-mine. In this workshop the brass looked as red as copper, having been turned that colour by washing in vitriol.’<sup>126</sup>

In the large factories there was considerable activity with men collecting materials and parts from the stores and carrying unfinished instruments between the different departments. The Boosey works in Frederick Mews were described as a ‘hive of industry’ with employees ‘one hurrying here, another scurrying there, each man intent on his own work, and method in everything.’<sup>127</sup> (On the basis that in the larger, newly-constructed Boosey premises of 1916 there were only three small staircases, certain areas of the old building must have been extremely busy).<sup>128</sup> The factory was described as an ‘oblong building comprising a basement and three stories’.<sup>129</sup> The material stores were in the basement, with brass tubes, rods and sheets of brass stored on ‘frames’, and ‘valve tops and fittings of all sizes’ kept on shelves and in drawers alongside the instrument bells, slides and other parts and fittings.<sup>130</sup> Rose recounts that ‘stacks of bells and parts of almost every instrument in the store-room are kept in readiness, so that any order may be

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<sup>123</sup> Miller, *How Band Instruments Are Made*. p.14.

<sup>124</sup> Rose, *Talks*. pp.124-125.

<sup>125</sup> Salmon, *How Brass Bands are Made*. p.4.

<sup>126</sup> Rose, *Talks*. p.126.

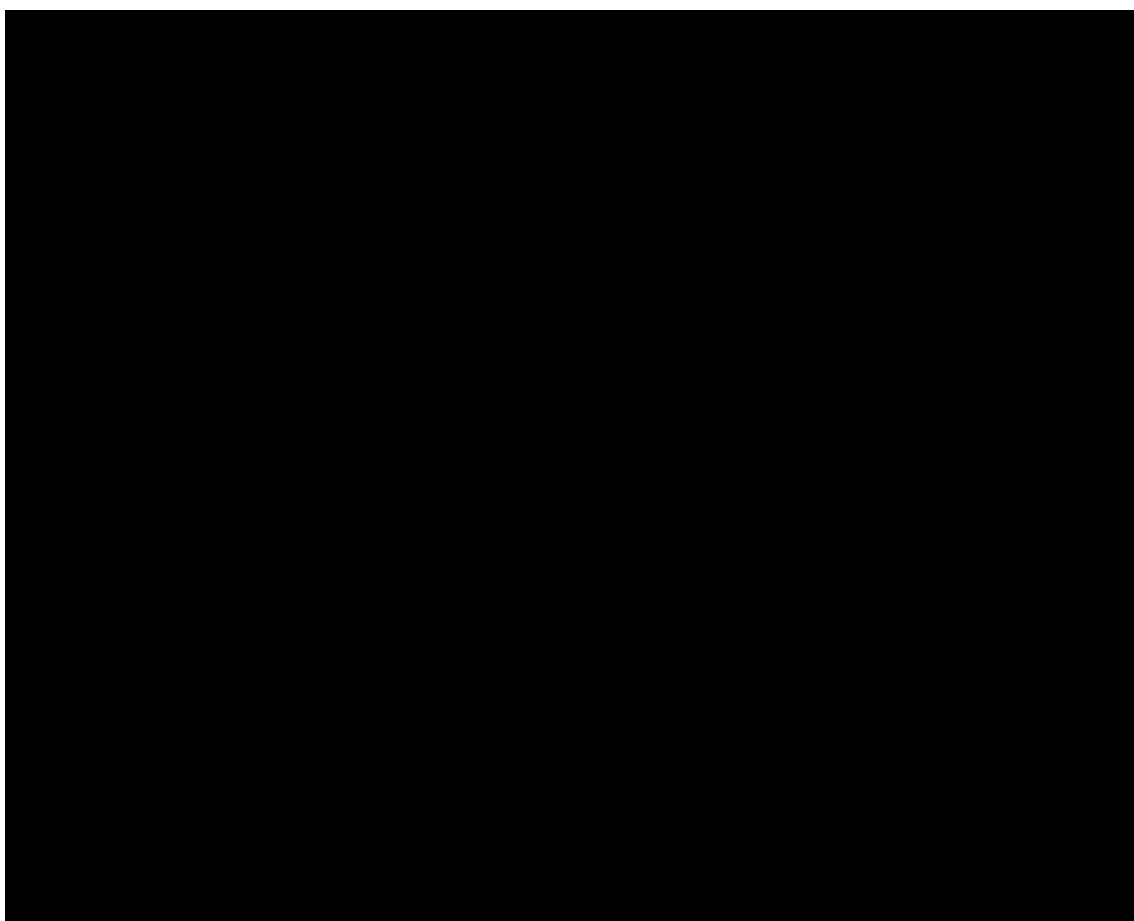
<sup>127</sup> Miller, *How Band Instruments Are Made*. p.14.

<sup>128</sup> The author visited the premises in December 2010 during their renovation and alteration into eight luxury flats.

<sup>129</sup> Miller, *How Band Instruments Are Made*. p.10.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.* p.17.

completed within a fortnight of receipt.<sup>131</sup> Wood (including cocus from the West Indies, African blackwood and ebony) and rough tubes and blocks of wood were also kept here as well as in stores on the ground floor 'where the principal machine work is done.'<sup>132</sup> The ground floor housed woodwind manufacture, and the first floor the construction of brass instruments including the fitting and adjustment of springs, valve cases and water keys. After testing, the instruments went to the second floor for polishing, electro-plating and engraving.<sup>133</sup> Contemporary photographs show cramped but adequate workshops with efficient use of space<sup>134</sup> (Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** (a) Polishing, (b) brass instrument making, (c) wood instrument making and (d) turners' department. B&Co. 1894 and 1902 catalogues (AMPC).

Firms obtained their raw materials from a variety of sources. The quality of the brass and wood obtained, and the way in which it was used, was of crucial

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<sup>131</sup> Rose, *Talks*. p.213.

<sup>132</sup> Miller, *How Band Instruments Are Made*. p.10, p.14.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.* p.21.

<sup>134</sup> B&Co., 1894 catalogue.

importance to instrument makers.<sup>135</sup> Many different grades of brass were available with those of inferior quality being unsuitable for instrument manufacture. British makers used the best quality sheet-brass, which was obtainable from the Continent. However, Boosey purchased their brass tubes from Everitt & Sons in Birmingham, which had become the centre of the brass trade in England by the 1830s and was reputed to provide the highest quality brass tubes available.<sup>136</sup>

Although most manufacturing processes were employed universally amongst companies, some firms kept certain individual details about their production of instruments closely guarded. The use of steel mandrels was a common process in all factories. Mandrels, which were shaped cylindrical and flared steel rods around which the brass was formed, were made in many different shapes and sizes. Mandrels defined the proportions of brass instruments and provided the standard which ensured that every instrument would be an exact copy of its prototype. Both Boosey and Besson called their mandrels 'prototypes'.

Gustave Besson developed the design of his own mandrels in 1856.<sup>137</sup> Much mystique and secrecy surrounded these tools, most probably as a tactical scheme created to gain publicity. Besson's prototype was described as 'a steel implement, long and spiral in shape, by means of which it is possible for the makers to guarantee that two instruments of the same class and size do not deviate by so much as a hair's-breadth from each other.'<sup>138</sup> The mandrels were all-important to the manufacturing companies and it is apparent that a high level of security was attached to the safeguarding of the original design drawings. In 1910 duplicate drawings of Besson's mandrels were placed in metal cylinders and lodged for safe keeping at the Union of London and Smiths Bank, Tottenham Court Road.<sup>139</sup>

The methods of instrument making employed by craftsmen at all houses during the nineteenth century were inevitably similar; however firms did use some different techniques to produce the same end results. Although over subsequent years gas and electricity replaced steam power, and some new materials were

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<sup>135</sup> Brass is made up of copper, zinc and other alloys, proportions of which are mixed for the required purpose.

<sup>136</sup> Rose, *Talks*. p.65, p.66, p.213.

<sup>137</sup> Constant Pierre, *Les Facteurs d'instruments de Musique* (Paris: Sagot, 1893; reprint, Nabu, La Vergne, USA., 2010). p.341.

<sup>138</sup> Salmon, *How Brass Bands are Made*. p.4.

<sup>139</sup> Besson, *Limited Directors' Minute Book 1906-1912*: HM/B&H A227/181. 09/06/1910 and 29/06/1910.



introduced, these methods were continued into the twentieth century with no substantial changes.

## 2.8 Conclusions

Throughout the nineteenth century the British instrument manufacturing industry expanded to meet rapidly increasing demands for wind instruments in Britain and across the Empire. Concert-going and amateur music-making became more popular owing to social and economic changes, and the increase in British colonial power brought about a growth in military music. Whilst orchestras accounted for only a small proportion of brass and woodwind players, large numbers were required for brass and military bands which were thriving. This encouraged the establishment of new firms and the expansion of existing British companies. However, Britain was lagging behind the continent where, by the middle of the century, instrument manufacture was in a well-developed state.

The influx of continental musicians and their foreign-made instruments to Britain gave way, by the end of the century, to an attempt to increase the number of British musicians and raise their standards. The opening in 1857 of The Military School of Music at Kneller Hall, which was initially staffed by bandmasters from the continent, did much to develop the standard of military wind players who were also often involved in orchestral work. This brought about an increase in the number of British and colonial players using British instruments, and instrument making in Britain grew from what was essentially a craft industry operating from small workshops to a more mechanised industry comprising larger more sophisticated commercial businesses.

In order to keep up with manufacturers on the continent British makers expanded their workshops to acquire government contracts. By the end of the century several companies, including B&Co. and H&S, had gained a dominant share of the market, with the greatest proportion of their orders coming from military and brass bands. The competition between firms to obtain contracts was fierce and companies developed many instrument designs specifically for military use. Indeed, such was the influence of the military consumer on instrument design and production that in 1894 George Bernard Shaw appealed for 'some genuine artist to take up the work of producing fine instruments' claiming that

*the instrument-makers will never do it, because all their efforts are aimed at better intonation, better facility of execution, and perfect smoothness of tone. Now smoothness of tone is all very well in its way; but the question remains, what sort of tone? The instrument-makers care only for that one variety, dear to Kneller Hall.*<sup>140</sup>

Driven by the sheer scale of demand from the military forces throughout the British Empire, and fired by competition from manufacturers abroad, British companies developed and produced very large numbers of high quality brass and woodwind instruments. All of this provided the foundation for B&H, in the fullness of time, to become one of the pre-eminent manufacturers of brass and woodwind instruments in the world.

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<sup>140</sup> Shaw, *Music in London*. Vol. 3. p.167.

## Chapter 3

### The origins and development of Boosey & Co. and Hawkes & Son until their merger in 1930

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#### 3.1 Introduction

The two names that have dominated British brass and woodwind manufacture for more than 150 years are those of Boosey and of Hawkes. Both developed and expanded from humble beginnings – small publishing and retail businesses – to become a united and leading global company. Until the severe economic recession of the late 1920s both firms expanded rapidly, competing amongst other British companies for trade at home and abroad.

The significant social, musical, economic and technological changes that took place during the nineteenth century provided a fertile environment for instrument makers and, as on the continent, businesses expanded and new bigger companies were established, albeit later in Britain. The businesses of Boosey and of Hawkes entered a manufacturing industry that was rapidly expanding with companies vying for lucrative contracts, most importantly from the British military forces throughout the Empire. Companies acquired rival firms to increase their trade, and were eager to advertise their military connections; for example, much of the success of the flute-makers Rudall Rose Carte & Co. (which later became part of B&H) was attributed by the flautist and writer Richard Rockstro to Richard Carte, who took over as proprietor in 1856 at a time when the company acquired military band instrument makers Key & Co.<sup>141</sup> Rockstro commented that ‘almost immediately on becoming a partner, his indomitable spirit of enterprise began to manifest itself, and the business was soon changed, by his exertions, from a manufactory of flutes alone to a most important military musical instrument establishment.’<sup>142</sup> Similarly, in 1868 B&Co. purchased the brass instrument makers Distin & Sons who claimed to be ‘Military Musical Instrument Maker to Her

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<sup>141</sup> Waterhouse, *Index*. p.204, p.339.

<sup>142</sup> Rockstro, *Treatise*. Section 925.

Majesty's Army and Navy, the Hon. Board of Ordnance, and the Hon. E[ast] I[ndia] Company'.<sup>143</sup>

Boosey and Hawkes both portrayed themselves in their illustrated catalogues primarily as companies that were targeting the military market, although both companies supplied many instruments for brass band use; like other businesses they appointed agents and established branches abroad, which was essential for successful business. This chapter charts the history and development of the companies of Boosey and Hawkes and their acquisitions until their merger in 1930.

Further historical information on types of wind instruments and additional notes on various models produced at B&Co. and H&S are presented in Appendix 3. Brief biographical details of musicians connected with the companies and notes on instrument makers and instrument systems are given in Appendices 4 and 5 respectively.<sup>144</sup>

## 3.2 Boosey

The Boosey family was of Franco Flemish origin. They were cloth spinners who came to England during the early fifteenth century to Essex, which was a centre for the cloth industry. At some point between 1765 and 1770 John Boosey (b. 1740) established a lending library in London,<sup>145</sup> and in 1792 his son Thomas (1767–1840) opened a bookshop and publishers in Paternoster Row.<sup>146</sup> Thomas expanded the business, travelling abroad to acquire the English rights to scientific and foreign books, and music. He relocated to 4 Old Broad Street and opened a branch for music at 28 Holles Street, Cavendish Square, which from 1816 was run by his son Thomas (c. 1795–1871).<sup>147</sup> This enterprise, importing and publishing

<sup>143</sup> Henry Distin, *Complete Catalogue of Military Musical Instruments Manufactured by Henry Distin & Co.* (1857): The National Library of Scotland. Cover.

<sup>144</sup> As noted in Section 1.2, for further information on clarinet production at B&Co. see Brand, *From Design to Decline*.

<sup>145</sup> Boosey, "Beethoven, Bellini, Ballads and Bands." p.2; *Exeter Working Papers in British Book Trade History; the London book trades 1775-1800*. A preliminary checklist of members gives the address as 39 King Street, Cheapside 1773-94. John Boosey retired and sold the library in 1791.

<sup>146</sup> Michael Kassler, ed. *The English Bach Awakening: Knowledge of J S Bach and His Music in England. 1750-1830* (Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2004). p.188, and Boosey, *Fifty Years*. p.13.

<sup>147</sup> Boosey, "Beethoven, Bellini, Ballads and Bands." p.2.

foreign music, books on music and musicians, and portraits of musicians, traded under the name of T. Boosey & Co. Another son, John, joined the business in 1818, and the name of the Broad Street concern was changed to Boosey & Sons. After John's death in 1830 it traded under the name T. & T. Boosey.<sup>148</sup>

Boosey's catalogue included scores by Hummel, Mercadente and Rossini, and later, operas by Bellini, Donizetti and Verdi.<sup>149</sup> This aspect of the business, with Boosey as sole agent, was very successful and the company gradually gave up its literary interests to concentrate on its music catalogue. In circa 1851, just after The Great Exhibition, the company expanded its business into brass instrument manufacture, no doubt to take advantage of the increasing demand for military band instruments. It was fortunate that they did so as in 1854 there were changes in the law concerning continental copyrights, and as a result of a court case over the rights for Bellini's opera *Sonambula* (Jeffreys v. Boosey), English publishers lost their foreign rights. This adversely affected business and Boosey turned their attention to promoting cheap editions of classical music for piano and their increasingly popular ballad publications. In 1867, to encourage sales, Thomas's son, John Boosey (circa 1832–93) introduced the London Popular Ballad Concerts in which successful artists were presented; many attained fame singing Boosey's editions. These concerts which were held at St James's Hall and then later at the new Queen's Hall, flourished for nearly seventy years, continuing until 1936.<sup>150</sup>

Rose states that instrument making commenced at Boosey in 1851,<sup>151</sup> although there is no corroborating evidence of this. The earliest extant record of musical instrument selling at Boosey is an advertisement in *The Musical Times* of 1 July 1853 by Boosey and Sons, Holles-street, London for their New Patent Model Cornet-à-Pistons which cost seven guineas and 'may be taken to pieces and placed in the pocket'.<sup>152</sup> There is no evidence of any patent or registered design taken out by Boosey and this was probably one of the many contemporary adverts

<sup>148</sup> Kassler, ed. *English Bach Awakening*. pp.188-189.

<sup>149</sup> D.J. Blaikley, "Boosey & Co," in *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. H. C. Colles (London: Macmillan and Co, 1927).

<sup>150</sup> Boosey, "Beethoven, Bellini, Ballads and Bands." p.3.

<sup>151</sup> Rose, *Talks*. p.209.

<sup>152</sup> B&Sons, "Boosey's New Patent Model Cornet-À-Pistons," *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 5, no. 110 (01/07/1853). p.210.

referring to a non-existent patent.<sup>153</sup> By 1854 the manufacturing side of business had become established; Boosey presented themselves as 'Military Instrument Manufacturers, and Music Publishers to Her Majesty's Army, and the Hon. E.I.C.'s Service.'<sup>154</sup> A year later trade had obviously expanded; Boosey & Sons had become 'Military Musical Instrument Manufacturers, and Music Publishers to Her Majesty's Army and Navy, the Honorable East India Company's Service, the Most Noble the Governor-General of India, their Excellences the Governors of Bombay and Madras, &c., &c.'<sup>155</sup>

The circumstances surrounding Boosey's commencement of instrument manufacture are not known, but during the 1850s and 1860s the company had a close connection with Carl Boosé, a highly accomplished clarinettist and bandmaster from Darmstadt in Germany who became famous for his influential military band journal. The earliest extant brass instruments stamped with Boosey's 28 Holles Street address bear the name C. Boosé. Instruments with later serial numbers are stamped C. Boosé with either 'BOOSEY & SONS' or 'BOOSEY & COMPY' [Boosey & Company] which corresponds with the company's acquisition of additional premises, 24 Holles Street.<sup>156</sup> The full extent of the collaboration between Boosey and Carl Boosé is not known, nor who actually made these instruments. However, the advertisements for C. Boosé's and Boosey's 'New Patent Model Cornet-à-Pistons' that appeared in *The Musical Times* and *The Musical World* are very similar, and it is likely that they were for the same instrument.<sup>157</sup> It seems probable that the first instruments Boosey made in Holles Street were for Boosé, and were of his design; the first surviving mention of an association between Boosey and Boosé is in 1855, when Boosey stated that 'their establishment boasts this advantage – that the various Instruments and New Models are made under the supervision of Mr. Boosé, the experienced and talented Bandmaster of the Scots Fusilier Guards, in whose Band they are tested before

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<sup>153</sup> According to the Abridgements book the only Boosey British patent in the period 1694-1866 was in 1856, for military band music stands 'made similar to the frame of an umbrella, but much larger'.

<sup>154</sup> B&Sons, "Military Musical Instruments," *The Musical Times* 5, no. 117 (01/02/1854). p.346.

<sup>155</sup> B&Sons, "Military Bands," *The Musical World* (28/07/1855). p.491.

<sup>156</sup> See Appendix 1.

<sup>157</sup> B&Sons, "Boosey's New Patent Model Cornet-À-Pistons." p.210; B&Sons, *Musical Times* (01/02/1854). p.346 and B&Sons, "Military Bands." (28/07/1855). p.491.

issued for sale.<sup>158</sup> The advertisement of 1855 lists the instruments that had gained Boosé such a high reputation:

*Cocoa and Boxwood Clarionets, with or without rings; the Rotary Model Cornet-a-Pistons, with both the Cylinder and Valve Action; Alt-Horns in B Flat and E Flat on the same Model; Valve Trumpets and Valve Trombones on Various Models; Euphonions and Bombardons With Four Cylinders, or Four Valves, for One Hand; Cylinder and Valve French Horns, Bassoons, Ophicleides, and their well-known Bass Brass Drums.*<sup>159</sup>

However, it is improbable that Boosé's clarinets and bassoons were made in Holles Street as Boosey did not commence reed manufacture until 1879. Boosey & Sons announced that they could supply 'inferior Instruments of French and German manufacture considerably under the prices even of Boosé's, but these they do not recommend, and are quite convinced that the best are, in the end, not the cheapest.'<sup>160</sup> British-made instruments were notoriously high in price but of superior quality to foreign imports; Boosé's were obviously no exception.

Boosé had moved to Britain in 1835, and had quickly become known as a military bandmaster and for his many arrangements which he published from 1846 in *Boosé's Military Band Journal*. Through this medium, until the Military School of Music was established in 1857, he exerted much influence over the instrumentation used in the military band, and consequently on the demand for the type and number of instruments employed. Publication of the journal was later taken on by B&Co. with Boosé continuing as editor until his death in 1868, after which the Royal Marines bandmaster J.A. Kappay took over until its end in 1883.<sup>161</sup>

### 3.2.1 Complete service to bands

Boosey & Sons were obviously keen to publicise the service that they offered to bands. An advertisement in the *Musical Times* in 1854 drew attention to potential customers:

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<sup>158</sup> B&Sons, "Military Bands." p.491.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid. p.491. See Appendix 1.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> H.G. Farmer and Trevor Herbert, "Boosé, Carl," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (2002). pp.884-5 and [http://www.royalmarinesbands.co.uk/history/Kappey\\_Significantimpact.html](http://www.royalmarinesbands.co.uk/history/Kappey_Significantimpact.html) Accessed 31/12/2013.

*Militia Regiments, or parties joining Bands and in want of Instruments, Music or a Band Master, are invited to apply to Messrs. Boosey & Sons, 28, Holles-street [...] The high character of their Instruments and Journals, for a Reed or Brass Band, are known throughout the Army. A Register kept of the most experienced Band Masters.*<sup>162</sup>

Boosey also announced that since the beginning of the year they had taken on the publication of *The Musical World*, aiming to 'render it worthy of the unanimous support of the profession, and interesting to the amateur and general reader.' Besides biographies of composers and artists, and reviews, it included a free monthly supplement of new music.<sup>163</sup>

In 1855 Boosey & Sons enlarged upon the services they could offer. They announced in an advertisement aimed at military bands in India that they supplied and manufactured 'every instrument and article in connection with Military Music, and Drums and Fifes,' and that 'to enumerate them or give particulars of them in an advertisement would be impossible'.<sup>164</sup> They also published a prospectus containing drawings of instrument models to send out to regiments; however Boosey appealed to their customers to have confidence in 'the prestige of Mr. Boosé's name and Boosey & Sons' establishment of nearly 40 years' standing', and to entrust the selection of instruments to them, as they would invariably send the newest models that were best adapted for military purposes.<sup>165</sup>

### 3.2.2 Commencement of flute manufacture, 1856

The first major area of growth in manufacturing at Boosey was in the design and production of flutes. Rose states that flute manufacture started in 1856 in Holles Street,<sup>166</sup> which was when Boosey acquired John Hudson's company;<sup>167</sup> however, at some stage, flute making was relocated to a workshop in Red Lion

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<sup>162</sup> B&Sons, "Military Musical Instruments." p.346. In 1855 the register of bandmasters was described as being under the direction of Carl Boosé. B&Sons, "Military Bands."

<sup>163</sup> B&Sons, "Military Musical Instruments."

<sup>164</sup> B&Sons, "Military Bands."

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Rose, *Talks*. p.209.

<sup>167</sup> Waterhouse, *Index*. p.310.



Yard.<sup>168</sup> Boosey's major early competitor, the flute specialist Rudall, Rose, Carte & Co., was already developing and making many different models. Therefore it is hardly surprising that when the opportunity arose for Boosey to collaborate with Robert Sidney Pratten, a leading contemporary flautist, to further develop and produce his 'Pratten's Perfected Flute' design, they bought Hudson's flute-making business as Hudson was already manufacturing this instrument.<sup>169</sup> The first documented entry in extant records is in 1857 with the serial number 4513;<sup>170</sup> this high serial number possibly indicates that the number system previously stamped on instruments purchased from other manufacturers for resale was continued.

At first the names of Boosey's flute-makers were not documented, but by 1879 the records show that Hudson was working alongside three other men Drayton, Howarth and Liddle, and that in 1885 he was promoted to the position of woodwind supervisor.<sup>171</sup> Although only a few flutes in the workbooks were actually recorded with the Pratten name, many were Pratten models.<sup>172</sup>

### 3.2.3 Purchase of Distin & Sons, 1868

As demand for wind instruments and competition for military custom grew, Boosey took the opportunity to ensure a dominant position for their business in the British band instrument manufacturing industry. On 19 June 1868, they expanded their brass making business by purchasing the successful company Henry Distin & Co.

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<sup>168</sup> B&Co., *Flutes 1857-1883*: HM/B&H A227/012. B&Co., *Instruments Wood 2 [sic] 1879-87*: HM/B&H A227/013.

<sup>169</sup> Waterhouse, *Index*. p.40. Hudson had originally been employed by the maker Abel Siccama, and it is probable that it was in his workshop that he had first become acquainted with Pratten. Philip Bate, *The Flute: A Study of Its History, Development and Construction*, Instruments of the Orchestra (London: Benn, 1979; reprint, 2nd edition 1979). p.146. He went on to establish his own business at 3 Rathbone Place, Oxford Street in 1853. Waterhouse, *Index*. p.185.

<sup>170</sup> B&Co., *Flutes*.

<sup>171</sup> B&Co., *Wood 2 [sic]*. Hudson took over as supervisor when the clarinet maker and foreman Eugène Albert left Boosey in December 1885. After this date he was retained on the pay-roll but not listed as making flutes.

<sup>172</sup> The earliest flute recorded as 'Pratten' was in 1859: '25 Guinea Flute, Mr Pratten's new Flute', sn5975. B&Co., *Flutes*. Further are noted as Pratten in 1877 and in 1882: 'Siccama Pratten Flute' (sn10448). 'Ebonite flute Pratten's Perfected Cyl. No. 1A' (sn11119) and Silver Flute Pratten 1A (sn11203). B&Co., *Wood 2 [sic]*. There is evidence that Rudall Carte bought a 'Pratten's Improved' flute, sn6255, from Boosey on 14 June 1870 for £4 and sold it for £10.10/-. It was old stock; it had been made in 1860 and was recorded in the Boosey workbook as a '25 Guinea Flute'. Rudall Carte, *Stock 1, 1869-70*: HM/B&H A227/147.

for the 'somewhat considerable sum' of £9,700. As a condition of sale Distin undertook not to manufacture within a hundred miles of London.<sup>173</sup>

Although Algernon Rose reports this in his *Talks with Bandsmen*, there is no primary source evidence to confirm the addition of this covenant. Nevertheless, this type of restrictive covenant is still common today. As Henry Distin subsequently went to America to pursue new business ventures, it may be assumed that the sale of his business provided the necessary funding for these. Owing to the competition between manufacturers for trade, the acquisition of Distin would almost certainly have been beneficial to B&Co., since it gave the company a greater share of the market. Trading continued under the Distin name for a further six years, allowing the company's brand to expand.

Distin's company, a family firm, was established in 1845, at first selling musical instruments from their home in Manchester Street, Manchester Square, London and then in 1846 at 31 Cranbourn Street.<sup>174</sup> At this address, from 1846–51, John Distin and his son Henry established Distin & Sons as a 'Saxhorn Depot', acting as the British agents for saxhorns, and from 1849, saxophones.<sup>175</sup> In 1850 Henry took over the company, which was renamed Distin & Co.,<sup>176</sup> and within a year brass instrument manufacture commenced.<sup>177</sup> The Distin family, who were famous for their family brass ensemble which travelled widely giving concerts, were good at self-promotion and publicity. The brass making business expanded rapidly, and in 1857 the company acquired new premises at 9 Great Newport Street.<sup>178</sup> An illustration of the 'Exterior of H. Distin's Military Musical Instrument Manufactory' in their 1857 catalogue<sup>179</sup> for effect shows an out-sized, extended representation of the building that is completely out of proportion with its locality, thus emphasising its perceived importance (Figure 4).

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<sup>173</sup> Rose, *Talks*. p.209. Waterhouse, *Index*. p.90.

<sup>174</sup> Distin, *The Musical World* 20, no. 21 (22/05/1845). p.250. Distin, *The Musical World* 21, no. 31 (01/08/1846). p.368.

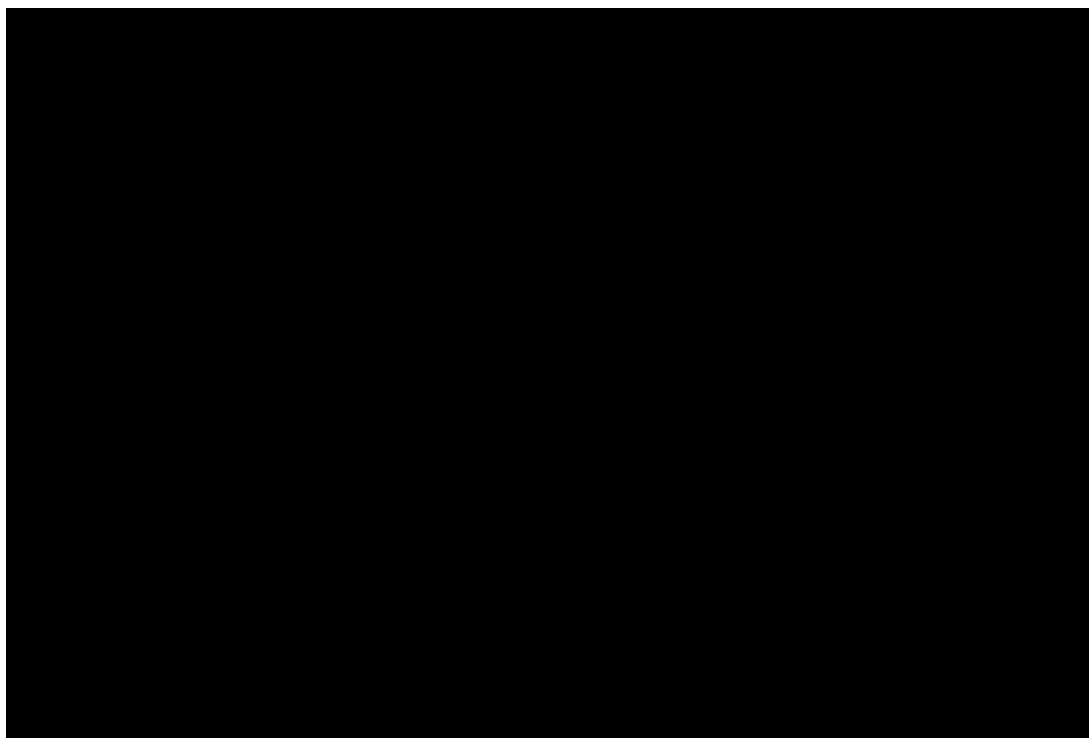
<sup>175</sup> The dealership was first transferred to Rousselot & Co. in 1851, and then to Rudall Rose Carte & Co. in 1853. Mitroulia, "Sax's Brasswind Production". pp.246-248.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.* p.245

<sup>177</sup> Distin, *The Musical World* 28, no. 21 (May 1851). p.334.

<sup>178</sup> Distin relinquished 31 Cranbourn Street in 1859. Waterhouse, *Index*. p.90.

<sup>179</sup> Henry Distin, 1857 catalogue.



**Figure 4.** Distin's factory from their 'Complete Catalogue of Military Musical Instruments' 1857 (AMPC).

From 1862–68 the firm expanded into neighbouring premises, 10 Great Newport Street.<sup>180</sup> According to Rose, by 1862 Distin had a workforce of 50 in their factory.<sup>181</sup> Although primarily renowned for their instrument manufacturing, Distin were successful publishers of band music, which they sold in *Distin's Band Journal* and *Distin's Parade Journal*. They also produced individual scores for brass band, solos for brass instruments and 'music for pianoforte with cornet accompaniment.'<sup>182</sup>

From 1868–74 Distin's address was given as 9–11 Great Newport Street,<sup>183</sup> after which the business was merged into B&Co. The acquisition of Distin marked the first significant growth of Boosey, enabling them to increase and develop their design and production of brass instruments. It is likely that until this time Boosey had acted mainly as dealers, as the entries of instrument sales noted in the stockbooks are to bands and other customers, with only a few to dealers.<sup>184</sup> Distin continued to be run as a separate company for the next six years, at first retaining

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<sup>180</sup> Waterhouse, *Index*. p.90.

<sup>181</sup> Rose, *Talks*. p.231.

<sup>182</sup> Distin, 1857 catalogue. pp.43-47.

<sup>183</sup> Waterhouse, *Index*. p.90.

<sup>184</sup> B&Co. *Band Instrument Stock Account 1868-73*: HM/B&H A227/115.

the Distin name. Many instruments in the Distin 1868–74 stock books are documented as being sold to B&Co. and some from the Boosey books are detailed as sold to Distin & Co.<sup>185</sup> Charles Boosey (1827–1905), John's brother, took over responsibility for this department assisted by David Blaikley (see Appendix 2.ii) who was appointed Manager of the 'Distin Military Musical Instrument Manufactory' in 1873.<sup>186</sup> In 1876 Boosey opened a new factory at 6a Frederick Mews, Stanhope Place near Marble Arch to which both the Boosey and Distin operations were relocated.<sup>187</sup> This date corresponds with the discontinuation of stamping instruments with the Distin trademark of field trumpet with banner, and full integration of product lines under the Boosey name.<sup>188</sup> Boosey had also built 295 Regent Street in 1874 as their new headquarters and retail department, to which all instrument sales were transferred.<sup>189</sup>

### 3.2.4 Instruments for export

Much of Boosey's early export trade was to India and the colonies. Many orders in the stockbooks are recorded from administrations such as Bengal, Bombay and Madras in India, Victoria in Australia, or Canada and the Consulate of Siam. Colonial leaders who purchased instruments included the Maharajas of Jeypoor, Jheend, and Mysore, the Nizam of Hyderabad, Governor General of India, Viceroy of India, Rajah of Mundi and the Governor of Bombay. Many other foreign regimental bands played Boosey instruments including some in Toronto, Quebec and Hong Kong.<sup>190</sup>

Besides their London headquarters, Boosey used agents and branch offices abroad and in Britain as sales outlets.<sup>191</sup> The Boosey stockbooks record that

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<sup>185</sup> *Distin Band Instrument Stock Book*: HM/B&H A227/008; B&Co. *Stock Account 1868-73*.

<sup>186</sup> "David Blaikley Obituary," *The Musical Times* 78, 1128 (1937). p.176.

<sup>187</sup> The workshop order books commence on 1 June 1876 and a plaque on the building states 'Est. 1876'. Distin's address was given as 6A Frederick Mews from 1874-86. Waterhouse, *Index*. p.91.

<sup>188</sup> Myers, "Brasswind Innovation."

<sup>189</sup> "Boosey & Hawkes: A Century of Instrument Making." The first mention of the Regent St premises in the archives is 17 March 1874 when a 'Circular E-flat' was sold to 'B&Co. Regent St'. Boosey workshop books record 'Charged to Regent St' from 1 May 1874, and in the Boosey stock books, for the stock-taking at 1 January 1875, brass instruments occupy 26 pages (reflecting the probable fact that Distin & Co. stock and B&Co. stock had been combined at Regent Street from September 1874).

<sup>190</sup> B&Co., *Stock Account 1868-73*.

<sup>191</sup> 1892: 30 Blackfriars Bridge, Manchester. 1902: 9 East Seventeenth Street, New York and 13 High Street, Aldershot. 1923: Aldershot and New York. 1926: Aldershot, New York and Montreal. 1927: B&Co's

instruments were sent to a New York branch office.<sup>192</sup> However, after its closure in around 1877, William A. Pond & Co., a New York instrument dealer and publisher of 547 Broadway and then Union Square, became a distributor for B&Co. instruments.<sup>193</sup> Entries in the stockbooks detail that instruments were sold to Pond & Co. or 'Pond'. The New York office reopened in 1892 at 9 East 17<sup>th</sup> Street during a period in which there was increasing musical activity in the city, with regular appearances of opera stars and instrumental virtuosi at the Metropolitan Opera and at the Carnegie Hall, which had opened in 1891.<sup>194</sup>

### 3.2.5 Commencement of reed instrument manufacture, 1879

When B&Co. opened its factory at Frederick Mews in 1876, only the brass manufacturing operations from Holles Street and the newly acquired Distin business were relocated there. Flute making did not move from Red Lion Yard until July 1879;<sup>195</sup> however, the workshop there was retained and continued to be used until around 1881.<sup>196</sup> Reed instrument production commenced four months later with the first recorded order for a clarinet on 13 August.<sup>197</sup> The 1892 catalogue states that 'Boosey & Co. having for many years manufactured Brass Instruments and Flutes, determined, about twelve years ago, to complete their workshops by the installation of a Reed Instrument Department, in all its detail, for Clarionets, Oboes and Bassoons'.<sup>198</sup>

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Tutors: Steinway Hall, 111-113 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street, New York. Agents included Kelly & Walsh, Shanghai and Marshall & Sons, Australia. (Addresses from B&Co.'s catalogues).

<sup>192</sup> B&Co., *Instruments Brass 1* and *Instruments Brass 2*: A227/045, A227/046.

<sup>193</sup> New York Times 13 August 1885. <http://query.nytimes.com> The first and last extant instruments stamped 'Pond' April 1877 and February 1889. Accessed 20/03/2010.

<sup>194</sup> [www.boosey.com/community/about.asp](http://www.boosey.com/community/about.asp) Accessed 09/04/2015. Some of the many instruments exported to New York were recorded in the stockbooks in 1896 and 1898.

<sup>195</sup> The first flute to be recorded as being made at Frederick Mews is sn10974. B&Co., *Flutes*. By cross-referencing the same instrument with workbook 027/013, the move can be dated to 4 July 1879.

<sup>196</sup> A number of instruments were described as 'Part done Red Lion Yard' or 'Foot joint Red Lion Yard'. The last reference was for E ♭ flute, sn11340, ordered on 5 May 1881. B&Co., *Wood 2 [sic]*.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.* sn5968. 13/08/1879. As with the numbering system for flutes, it is not known whether reed instrument stamping commenced with a later serial numbering system, or if it continued a previous system used for instruments purchased for resale. See Appendix 3.

<sup>198</sup> B&Co., 1892 catalogue. p.13. When Boosey expanded into reed instrument manufacture in 1879 Eugène Albert was engaged to oversee the development of clarinet making. Albert was employed at the Boosey factory mainly in an advisory role from at least the August of that year until 30 December 1885. B&Co., *Wood 2 [sic]*. See Appendix 3, Clarinet and Appendix 5i.

During the last two decades of the nineteenth century productivity at Boosey was high. The company prospered, feeding the huge demand for instruments and accessories, military and brass band journals, and music and instruction books throughout the Empire. In their 1892 and 1902 catalogues the company presented themselves with confidence and pride, as a respected and successful company that provided the complete range of product lines and service. 'Boosey & Co.'s Perfected Instruments' are listed, and testimonials included from renowned 'Bandmasters and other Professional Men'. The broad range of customers that Boosey supplied, both at home and abroad, can be seen in the stockbooks.<sup>199</sup> Civilian brass bands flourished, motivated by the ever-increasing enthusiasm for contests, and it is not surprising that the London Band Concerts, started by John Boosey in 1879, did much to promote brass playing and to help Boosey's sales.<sup>200</sup>

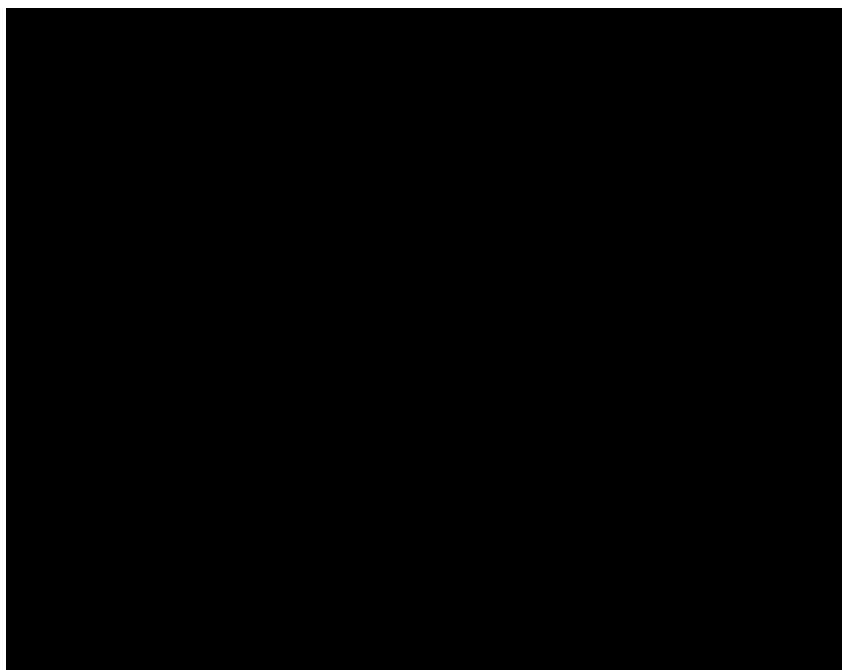
When John Boosey died in 1893 the company was flourishing, supporting a staff of 100 employees. His nephews Arthur and Charles T. Boosey took on managerial roles within the company: Arthur directed the publishing operations whilst Charles assumed responsibility for the military instrument department.<sup>201</sup> An informal photograph in the 1894 and 1902 catalogues shows some of the B&Co.'s workforce in front of the Frederick Mews factory (Figure 5). Many instrument makers in London at this time were from abroad and it is evident from both images and the employees' names recorded in the factory workbooks, that Boosey were no exception.

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<sup>199</sup> For example *B&Co. Stock Account 1868-73*.

<sup>200</sup> B&H Group, *The World of Boosey & Hawkes* (1986): HM/B&H.

<sup>201</sup> Rose, *Talks*. p.212. In the 1881 Census, Charles T. Boosey (b.1857) and Arthur Boosey (b.1858), the eldest of seven children, are listed as clerks to their father, Charles Boosey, who is recorded as Music Publisher.



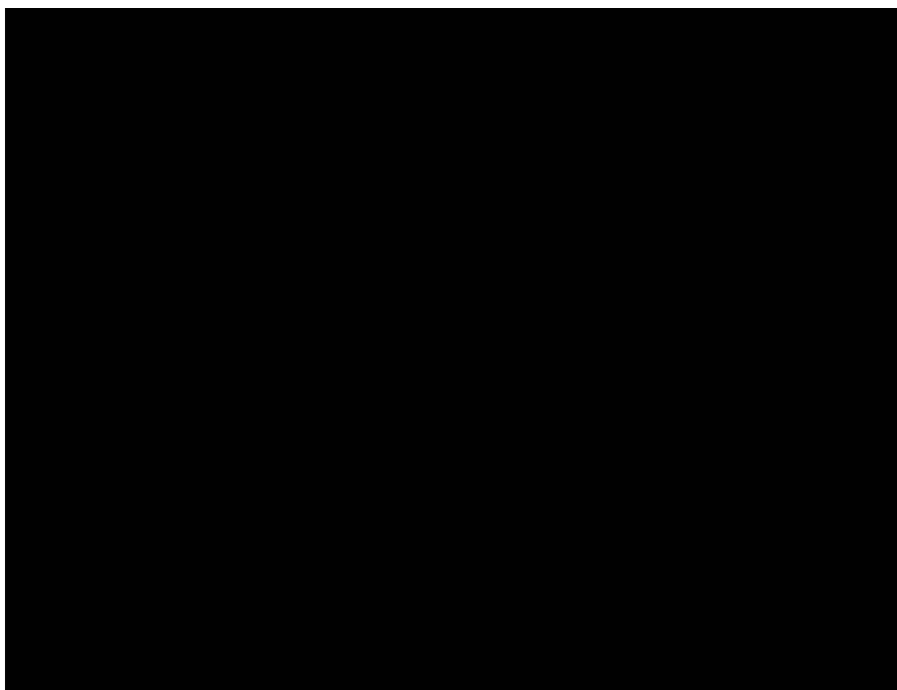
**Figure 5.** Some of the B&Co. workforce in front of the Frederick Mews factory. B&Co. 1894 and 1902 catalogues (AMPC).

The factory hierarchy is clear; the workers are wearing aprons and overalls, the young apprentices are on the right of the picture and the older boys - the 'improvers' - are sitting on the wall at the back. The foremen are wearing bowler hats and one or two managerial staff are amongst the workers in shirts and ties. It is probable that the bearded gentleman wearing the frock-coat is John Boosey.

Boosey stated in their 1902 catalogue that the factory had recently been extended. In a slightly later photograph of the workforce the exterior of the building has been improved and a smart new company sign placed over the door: 'Boosey & Co. – Military and Brass Band Instruments Manufactured'.<sup>202</sup> In contrast to the previous image, it shows an ordered turnout of the full workforce. About 100 neatly dressed men are present (Figure 6).

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<sup>202</sup> It is possible that the photograph dates from around 1905, as B&Co.'s 1905 catalogue contains a series of photographs of the factory. No other early images have been found.



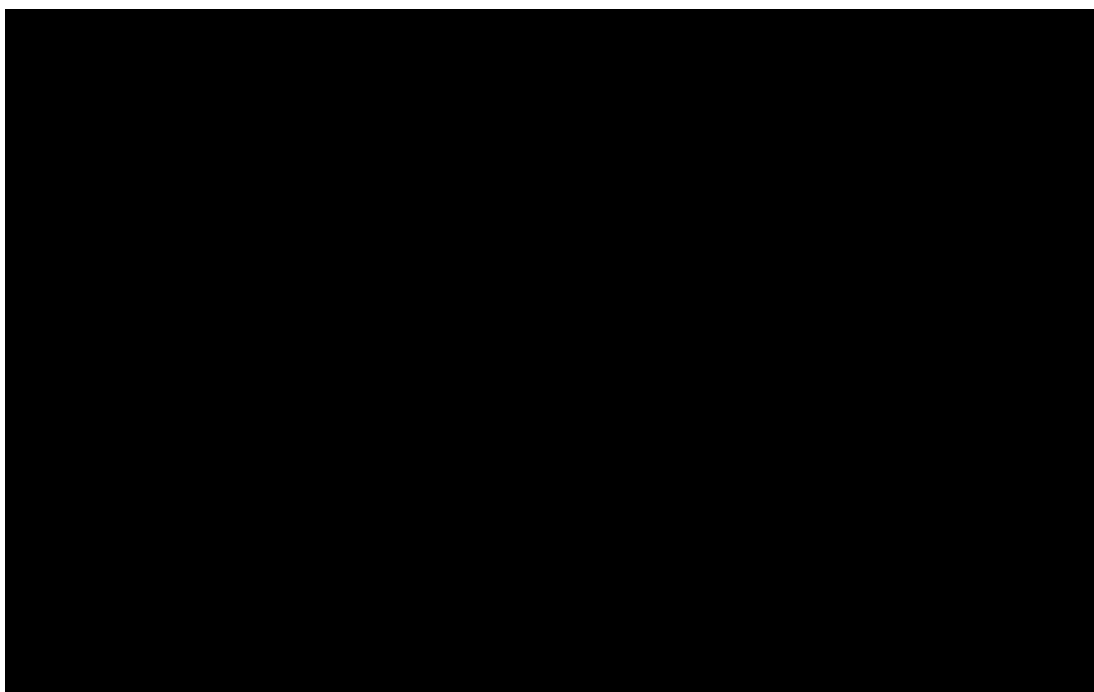
**Figure 6.** The B&Co. workforce in front of the Frederick Mews factory. (HM/B&H). Managerial staff are seated, with David Blaikley and his son Arthur (who succeeded him as Works Manager) in the centre. It is probable that the gentleman in the frock coat on the right of the picture is Charles T. Boosey, who took over instrument manufacturing operations from his father.

In September 1913 there was a fire at the Frederick Mews factory. At the time, this must have had a devastating effect on the running of the business. Whilst the workbooks give the impression of only a short interruption in production, the damage was extensive. Blaikley later stated that the premises were ‘totally destroyed by fire [...] and have since been rebuilt and largely extended on the most complete modern lines’<sup>203</sup> (Figure 7). This is borne out by a contemporary plaque on the current building commemorating its construction in 1916.

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<sup>203</sup> Blaikley, "Boosey & Co."





**Figure 7.** Line drawing of B&Co.'s new factory from their 1923 catalogue (AMPC).

About 130 woodwind and 600 brass instruments are recorded as 'destroyed by fire'; however, some of these instruments will have been in an unfinished state. It appears in the woodwind book that the last order 'given out' before the fire was on 12 September 1913, with the last clarinet charged to Regent Street on 19 September. The next batch 'given out' was on 7 November. This indicates that manufacturing continued after less than two months disruption.<sup>204</sup> Charles Boosey gratefully accepted the offer of assistance given by Besson and accepted 'the loan of a lathe and several tools'.<sup>205</sup> Whilst rebuilding took place, instrument manufacturing continued at 110 Pratt Street, Camden Town; London Trade Directories for 1914–1917 list B&Co. as 'Music publishers and manufacturers of military band instruments of every description. 295 Regent St, W; Frederick Mews, Stanhope Place W & 110 Pratt Street, Camden town NW.'<sup>206</sup>

In 1919 Arthur Boosey died and his son Leslie Boosey became director. At some point Charles T. Boosey assumed the position of Chairman, and Charles Evelyn Boosey, assisted by Arthur Blaikley, took over responsibility for instrument

<sup>204</sup> B&Co., *Instruments Wood & Percussion 5* (1912-19): HM/B&H A227/016.

<sup>205</sup> Besson, *Limited Directors' Minute Book* (1912-1917): HM/B&H A227/182. 03/10/1913.

<sup>206</sup> *Post Office London Directory. Part 4: Trades and Professional Directory* (1914), *Post Office London Directory. Part 3: Commercial and Professional Director* (1914), *Post Office London Directory. Part 4: Trades and Professional Directory* (1915), *Post Office London Directory: County Suburbs* (1917).

manufacturing operations.<sup>207</sup> Business continued to thrive with the number of instruments produced remaining high. Ballad sheet music sales reached more than two million copies, with this highly profitable side of the business continuing until 1930.<sup>208</sup>

### 3.3 Hawkes

Hawkes & Co. was founded in 1858 by William Henry Hawkes (1830–1900), who was ‘For many years Solo Cornet Player in the Band of H.M. Scots Guards, State Trumpeter, and late Principal Trumpet in the Private Orchestra of Her late Majesty Queen Victoria’<sup>209</sup> (Figure 8a). In an early catalogue (circa 1867) he is described as ‘Solo Cornet and Musician in Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen.’<sup>210</sup> The company which was located at 34 Cumberland Street, Pimlico,<sup>211</sup> published military music and imported brass instruments.<sup>212</sup>

#### 3.3.1 Rivière & Hawkes

Five years later, on 24 June 1865, the business expanded into larger premises at 33 Soho Square,<sup>213</sup> where Hawkes took on a nine year lease of the first, second and third floors of the building. It was at this time that Hawkes went into partnership with Jules Prudence Rivière (1819–1900), a former French army bandmaster whom he had met in 1860<sup>214</sup> (Figure 8b).

Jules Rivière had come to London in 1857 as a protégé of Jullien,<sup>215</sup> having served in the 12<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Infantry at Verdun. A year later he was conducting at the Cremorne Gardens, having quickly made a name for himself as a conductor.<sup>216</sup> In 1860 Rivière became involved in music publishing and retail. On behalf of his old friend René Lafleur, the Parisian music publisher, he took on ‘a newly-built shop

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<sup>207</sup> B&H, *A Century of Instrument Making*. pp.27-29.

<sup>208</sup> Boosey, "Beethoven, Bellini, Ballads and Bands." p.3.

<sup>209</sup> H&S, *Illustrated Price List of the Hawkes Military Band Instruments* (c.1908): AMPC. p.6.

<sup>210</sup> Rivière and Hawkes, catalogue (c.1876): Private collection of Thomas Lord, Bacup.

<sup>211</sup> *Counterpart Agreement: Lease* (13/05/1865): WCLAD 991/1.

<sup>212</sup> Rose, *Talks*. p.269 and Waterhouse, *Index*. p.165.

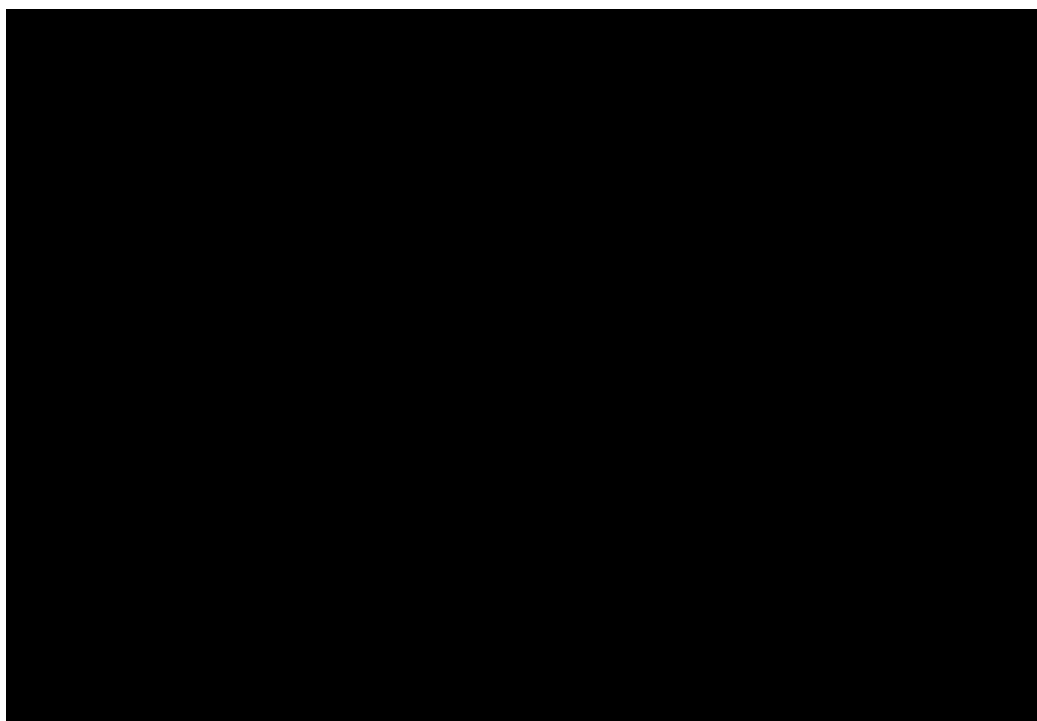
<sup>213</sup> *Counterpart Agreement: Lease*.

<sup>214</sup> Boosey, "Beethoven, Bellini, Ballads and Bands." p.3.

<sup>215</sup> Scholes, *Mirror of Music*. p.193.

<sup>216</sup> Rivière, *Musical Life*. pp.109-114.

and house situated at 15 Green Street, Leicester Square' and managed a London branch of J.R. Lafleur & Co. which was called 'Alliance Musicale'<sup>217</sup> for an agreed period of five years.<sup>218</sup> Meanwhile, he was appointed musical director at the Adelphi Theatre (1862), and subsequently at the Alhambra in Leicester Square (1866) where he had a large orchestra of fifty players.<sup>219</sup> In 1871 he started his very popular Promenade Concerts at Covent Garden in which the programmes included musicians from the Grenadier Guards and the Royal Artillery.<sup>220</sup>



**Figure 8.**(a) William Henry Hawkes from the H&S c.1908 catalogue (AMPC); (b) Jules Rivière from his book *My Musical Life and Recollections*, fronticepiece.

The company of Rivière & Hawkes which traded from a shop called 'The Musical Progress' was established in 1865.<sup>221</sup> It published and sold music, and dealt in musical instruments.<sup>222</sup> In 1869 a repair department for wind instruments was added.<sup>223</sup> Business at Rivière & Hawkes thrived, no doubt aided by Hawkes

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid. p.115.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid. p.118.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid. p.119 and p.128.

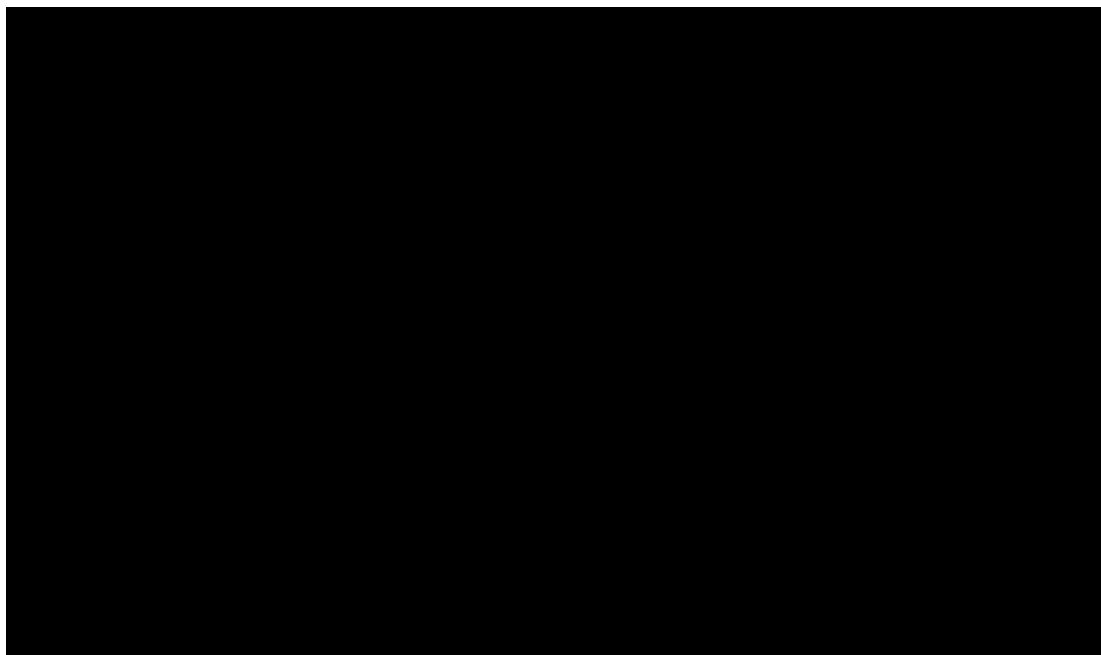
<sup>220</sup> Scholes, *Mirror of Music*. p.193.

<sup>221</sup> Rivière, *Musical Life*. p.129.

<sup>222</sup> "Notice," *The London Gazette* (16/01/1885).

<sup>223</sup> Rose, *Talks*. p.269.

and Rivière's connections with army band musicians, and in 1875<sup>224</sup> the firm moved to larger premises at 28 Leicester Square<sup>225</sup> (Figure 9).



**Figure 9.** Leicester Square 1877. The premises of R&H at 28 are on the right of the imposing Alhambra Theatre (Mary Evans Picture Library).

Rivière writes that 'our stock of musical instruments had increased to such an extent that the three floors of the roomy premises in Soho Square were no longer enough to hold them, so when I saw that the building adjoining the Alhambra was to let, we were not long in settling about the lease'.<sup>226</sup> The premises, which had been used as an Artillery Volunteers drill hall, fronted onto the Square and backed onto Castle Street. According to Rivière, the rent was 'comparatively low, namely 400*l.* [*libra*] a year, including large underground cellars. And events justified our decision, for we soon sublet the upper part of the house to a wine merchant who had access to the cellars in Castle Street' at the rear of the premises.<sup>227</sup> This tenancy almost covered the rent Hawkes had to pay. Brass instrument manufacture commenced at Rivière & Hawkes in 1876<sup>228</sup> with the manufacturing department situated at 54 Castle Street.<sup>229</sup> Rivière & Hawkes declared in their catalogue that 'in consequence of the great increase of their trade in the Instrument Department' they

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<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Rivière, *Musical Life*. p.190.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid. p.190.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> Rose, *Talks*. p.269.

<sup>229</sup> Waterhouse, *Index*. p.330.

'have taken very extensive premises and at the same time have considerably enlarged their stock; they are now quite ready to supply both Brass and Wooden Instruments to any amount. It is also further announced that a large number of each class of instruments is permanently kept in stock.'<sup>230</sup> However, many of the instruments sold were bought in. For example, from 1874 Rivière & Hawkes were sole agents for horns made by J.C. Labbaye, successor to the distinguished maker, Raoux.<sup>231</sup>

According to Rivière, the publishing side of the business also flourished; notable contemporary Hawkes publications included 'pianoforte fantasias by M. Dubois and Mlle. Secretain, an air *varié* for the flute by Demaré, another for the clarinette by Waterson, one for the cornet by Hartmann, besides a violin fantasia by Deron.'<sup>232</sup> The song *Spring! Gentle Spring!* sold 'two and three thousand copies at a time, and large orders came pouring in from the provinces and America'.<sup>233</sup>

The 19-year partnership between Hawkes and Rivière was dissolved 'by mutual consent' on 31 December 1884,<sup>234</sup> with Hawkes continuing the business alone. Rivière sold his share to Hawkes for £12,000, a sum that demonstrates the success of the firm. In his book *My Musical Life* he states that 'when Mr. Hawkes and myself commenced business, we did so, practically without capital'.<sup>235</sup>

### 3.3.2 Hawkes & Son

In 1886 William Henry Hawkes was joined by his son Oliver,<sup>236</sup> who was made a partner on 5 May 1888.<sup>237</sup> The company, like B&Co., became highly successful. Besides publishing music for orchestra and for piano, and instrumental tutors including the Otto Langey methods for all orchestral instruments,<sup>238</sup> Hawkes placed a major emphasis on the production of military and brass band music. Pieces and arrangements for bands were published in 'journals' such as the *Military*

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<sup>230</sup> R&H, c.1876 catalogue. p.58.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid. p.63.

<sup>232</sup> Rivière, *Musical Life*. p.161.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid. pp.161-162.

<sup>234</sup> "Notice."

<sup>235</sup> Rivière, *Musical Life*. p.221.

<sup>236</sup> Rose, *Talks*. p.269.

<sup>237</sup> *Copy Agreement Supplemental to Articles of Partnership* (07/03/1900): WCLAD 991/2.

<sup>238</sup> Boosey, "Beethoven, Bellini, Ballads and Bands." p.3.

*Band Journal*<sup>239</sup> and from 1891, *The Eclipse Band Journal*, one of the most significant publications of its time.<sup>240</sup> As with Boosey, Hawkes offered a complete service to the military and the brass band market, providing music, instruments and accessories to bands throughout the Empire. Reed instruments were made in the factory under the supervision of a worker named John Lewis, brass instruments under Monsieur Linotte, and drums under Herbert Weaver.<sup>241</sup> According to Rose the firm also had a branch workshop at 12 Station Road, Aldershot, managed by a Mr Adams.<sup>242</sup> Many manufacturers at this time had retail and repair departments in Aldershot to cater for trade generated by the Army which retained a substantial base there. The company continued to expand with the purchase in 1893 of the business of L. Schweizer & Son of 7 Broad Court, Longacre, which manufactured plate chests and wooden cases for musical instruments; Leonard Schweizer was kept on as Manager.<sup>243</sup>

Business prospered and in 1895 Hawkes moved to a new factory at 8, 9 and 10 Denman Street. Rose relates that 'in June 1895, Messrs. Hawkes' London Headquarters, by reason of expiration of the lease, will be removed to Denman Street, Piccadilly Circus.'<sup>244</sup> By 1900, the workforce numbered about 112 including retail staff<sup>245</sup> (Figure 10).

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid. p.3

<sup>240</sup> Roy Newsome, *Brass Roots: A Hundred Years of Brass Bands and Their Music, 1836-1936* (Ashgate, 1998). p.106. Newsome discusses in detail the brass band publications of Hawkes.

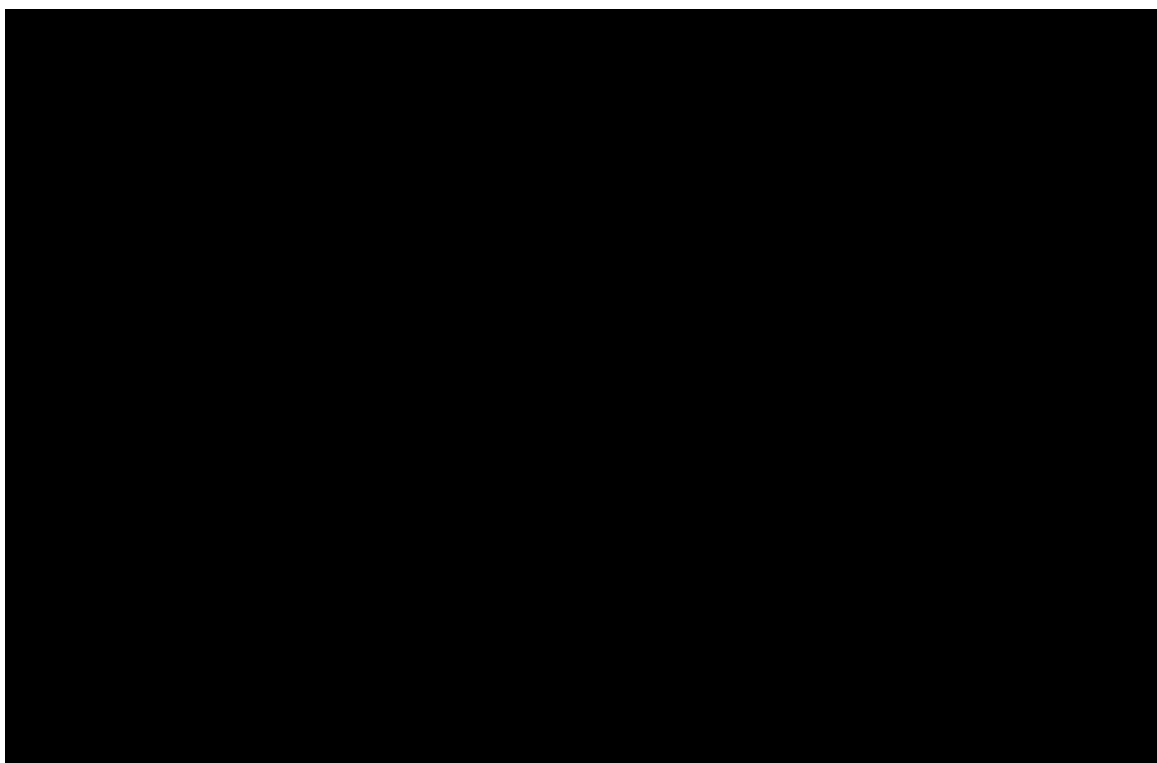
<sup>241</sup> *B&H, Century of Instrument Making*. pp.27-29.

<sup>242</sup> Rose, *Talks*. p.269.

<sup>243</sup> *Memorandum of Agreement* (16/01/1893): WCLAD 991/9.

<sup>244</sup> Rose *Talks*. p.269.

<sup>245</sup> Photograph taken in 1900. H&S c.1908 catalogue.



**Figure 10.** H&S staff outside their Denman Street premises. H&S c.1908 catalogue (AMPC). As in the Boosey pictures (Figures 5 and 6) the workers are wearing aprons and the apprentices are sitting on the ground at the front. One foreman, to the right of the picture, is wearing a bowler hat, and the directors, management, office and retail staff are wearing suits. The gentleman seated on the left is probably Oliver Hawkes.

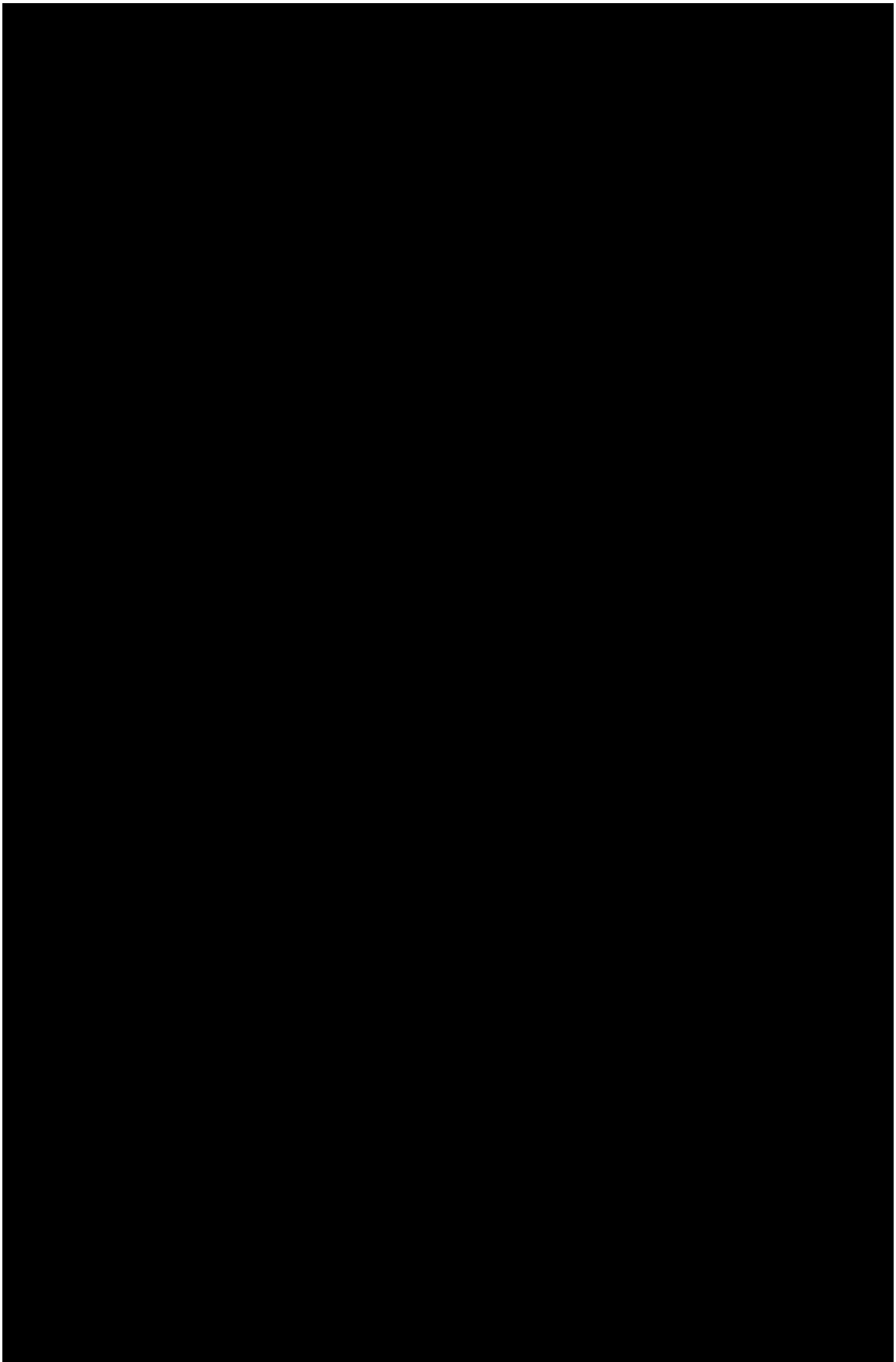
After William Henry Hawkes died in 1900 Oliver Hawkes continued to trade as Hawkes & Son. In 1902 Hawkes bought the tools and patterns of the renowned oboe and bassoon maker A.W. Morton & Sons,<sup>246</sup> and according to the *Orchestral Times* (1902) 'they have since carried on the manufacture of oboes on his principle' but did not buy the right to use his name.<sup>247</sup> However, in their 1912 catalogue Hawkes state that they 'wish it to be clearly understood, that in purchasing A.W. Morton & Son, they also purchased the name of the firm, and the entire collection of tools, patterns etc., including all the borers, which are quite unique in character.'<sup>248</sup> Expansion continued, and by about 1908 Hawkes claimed that they 'now employ directly in their factory in Denman Street, Piccadilly Circus, London, an average of 200 men, who are distributed in the various workshops producing the different instruments used in Military and Brass Bands and their kindred organisations'<sup>249</sup> (Figures 11a, 11b; Figures 12a, 12b).

<sup>246</sup> Waterhouse, *Index*. p.269.

<sup>247</sup> "Answers to Correspondents," *The Orchestral Times* (1902).

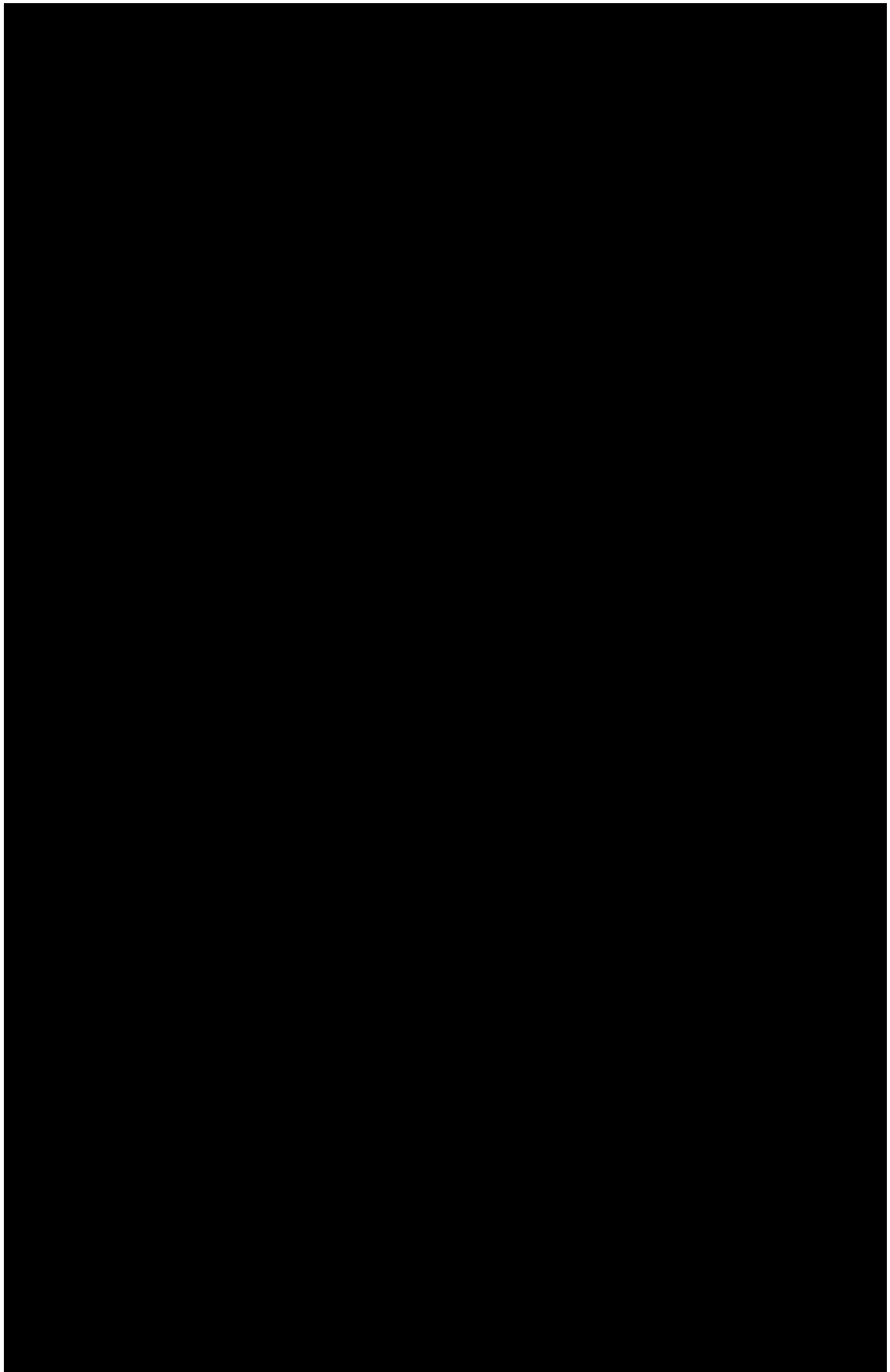
<sup>248</sup> H&S, 1912 catalogue. p.71.

<sup>249</sup> H&S, c.1908 catalogue. p.6.



**Figure 11.** Denman Street workshops: (a) bombardon and euphonium makers; (b) valve makers. H&S c.1908 catalogue (AMPC).





**Figure 12.** Denman Street workshops: (a) reed instrument and flute shop; (b) making and finishing brass instruments. H&S c.1908 catalogue (AMPC).

In August 1911 the company expanded and built a new 'model factory' with electric power at Highgate in North London, removing their works from Denman Street when it was completed. This made room there for a 'special floor' for sales of 'high class Violins and other Stringed Instruments, Bows, Cases and up-to-date Accessories.'<sup>250</sup> Extra workforce was engaged at Highgate with the number of employees increasing to 250 men.<sup>251</sup> Hawkes described the factory as

*the largest in England, and [...] unquestionably the most perfect in the world. All kinds of instruments are made here; all brass including saxophones, all Wood including Oboes and Bassoons, and even Violins and Double Basses, though of course but few of the last two, as the large demand the firm has is satisfied from a factory established abroad, and presided over by a foreman who learned his craft in the employ of Hawkes & Son in London.*<sup>252</sup>

Hawkes did make their own top-of-the-range double basses, 'Panormo', which are still much sought after today. But, they also exploited the foreign string-making connection, explaining that the highest quality instruments were obtained from the esteemed Venetian maker, Giovanni Schwarz,<sup>253</sup> whose violins were crafted from particularly finely seasoned wood. The romantic sales pitch employed in the catalogue was designed to capture the imagination of susceptible prospective customers. According to Hawkes:

*A large quantity of wood, which has matured for many centuries in the old Campanile of St Marc, which was recently dismantled, has luckily fallen into the hands of our friend Giovanni Schwarz. His quick discerning eye did not fail to grasp the fact that the long seasoning process, which has been going on among the beams of this celebrated edifice, was of pre-eminent importance to secure the ideal tone quality in the make of his violins.*<sup>254</sup>

However, it appears from the photographs of the remaining pile of rubble of the campanile on the day it collapsed (14 July 1902) that there could have been little truth in this pronouncement (Figure 13).

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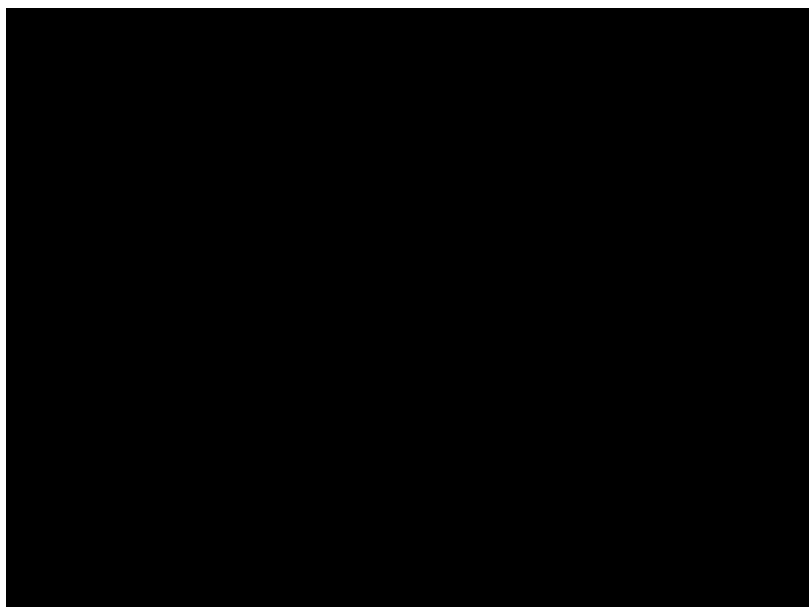
<sup>250</sup> H&S, 1912 catalogue. p.6.

<sup>251</sup> H&S, *Illustrated Price List of the Hawkes Brass Band Instruments* (post 1911): EUCHMI/L. p.2.

<sup>252</sup> H&S, 1912 catalogue. p.69.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.* p.38.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.* p.44.



**Figure 13.** The campanile, Venice. 14 July 1902.<sup>255</sup>

In 1913 Hawkes were sole UK agent for Maison Courtois and were also trading under the name J.R. Lafleur & Son<sup>256</sup> at 15 Green Street. Lafleur were 'Music Publishers, Musical-Instrument Manufacturers to the Army and Navy, and Militia and Volunteer Corps, and Musical Societies of England, France and the Colonies'.<sup>257</sup> It appears that some time before 1917 Hawkes must have purchased Lafleur,<sup>258</sup> as in June 1917 completion took place on the 'sale of the business of J.R. Lafleur and Sons and its premises 147 Wardour Street, to a company formed for acquiring it'.<sup>259</sup> It is likely that the company was set up as a subsidiary of Hawkes as the premises are included in the accounts of the private estate of Oliver Hawkes,<sup>260</sup> by 1939 the directors of Lafleur were listed as 'A. Hawkes, G. Hawkes, R. Hawkes and J. Couesnon (French)'.<sup>261</sup>

<sup>255</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St\\_Mark%27s\\_Campanile](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_Mark%27s_Campanile) Accessed 31/07/2015.

<sup>256</sup> *Power of Attorney* (13/03/1913): WCLAD 991/11.

<sup>257</sup> J.R. Lafleur & Son Ltd., *Lafleur Catalogue of Musical Instruments and Fittings* (n.d.): TBPC.

<sup>258</sup> Waterhouse, *Index*. Waterhouse states that B&Co. acquired Lafleur c.1917, but there is no evidence to support this. p.222.

<sup>259</sup> *Power of Attorney: Sale of J.R. Lafleur and Son Ltd. To Company Formed for Acquiring It* (15/03/1917): WCLAD 991/3; *Counterpart Agreement between Oliver Hawkes and J.R. Lafleur & Son Ltd* (07/06/1917): WCLAD 991/12.

<sup>260</sup> *Accounts of Private Estate of Oliver Hawkes, Deceased* (1923): WCLAD 991/9.

<sup>261</sup> J.R. Lafleur & Son Ltd., catalogue; Friede Rothe and Irving Kolodin, "Ralph Hawkes," *Tempo New Series*, no. 17 (1950).

As Hawkes continued to expand they acquired additional premises: 43A Ashbrook Road, Upper Holloway (from circa 1917)<sup>262</sup> and 84A Leighton Road, Kentish Town (from 6 February 1919).<sup>263</sup> In 1919, a few weeks before his death, Oliver Hawkes purchased the leather case manufacturing business of Charles Benck in Manchester,<sup>264</sup> and the 'Compactum Case Company' was consequently established.<sup>265</sup> Oliver Hawkes' sons Geoffrey and Ralph inherited his estate,<sup>266</sup> which included the 'business in Denman Street (with two-thirds of freehold premises), stock and plant of factory in Aldershot, factory at Highgate and interests in Hawkes & Harris, Toronto, and J.R. Lafleur & Sons Ltd.'<sup>267</sup> Ralph Hawkes took over responsibility for the publishing side of the business and Geoffrey Hawkes the instrument division. All of Hawkes' north London premises were relinquished when they moved to their vast new factory in Deansbrook Road, Edgware in 1925.<sup>268</sup> A photograph of the workforce in July 1925 outside the new works shows nearly 300 employees (including about 40 women) (Figure 14). Built in 1924, the factory buildings covered over an acre. Images of the Edgware factory in the 1927 catalogue show spacious and contemporary workshops and stores, with men operating modern equipment and machines – a very different workplace from before (Figure 15). Captions explain the processes depicted, emphasising the combination of skill and craftsmanship, and the precision tools used to make the instruments. In a Hawkes catalogue from 1926, the 'Sonorous Works' at Edgware were described as 'the largest and most up-to-date of its kind in Great Britain.'<sup>269</sup> Retail continued from Denman Street, with a branch in Glasgow at 48 St George's Road.<sup>270</sup> However, despite having 'the largest and most up-to-date' factory in Britain and numerous employees, the dire economic situation of trade in Britain during the Depression forced Hawkes into merger with its main rival, B&Co.

<sup>262</sup> Insurance policies with receipts for Government Aircraft Insurance for buildings, stock and machinery of W.H. Hawkes & Sons at the factory in Ashbrook Road, Holloway, and showrooms and warehouse at 8,9,10 Denman Street, Golden Square. *W.H. Hawkes & Son: Insurance Policies* (15/06/1916 to 15/11/1917): WCLAD 991/6.

<sup>263</sup> *Letter and Receipt Relating to Lease: 84a Leighton Road* (06/02/1919): WCLAD 991/5.

<sup>264</sup> *Agreement between Charles Benck and Oliver Hawkes* (07/05/1918): WCLAD 991/13.

<sup>265</sup> Letter (26/05/1919): WCLAD 991/15.

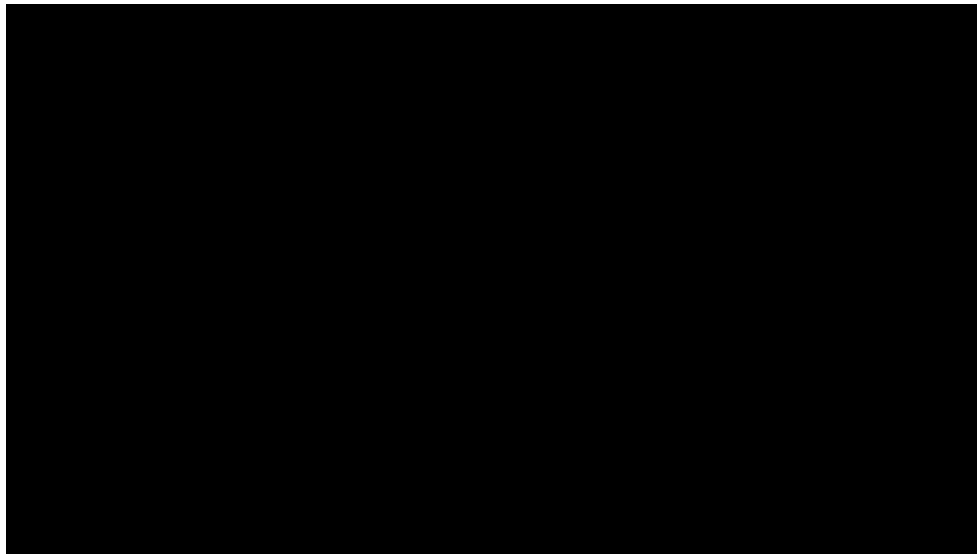
<sup>266</sup> Rothe and Kolodin, "Ralph Hawkes."

<sup>267</sup> *Copy Will of Oliver Hawkes* (09/07/1917): WCLAD, 991/4. Oliver Hawkes died 14 June 1919.

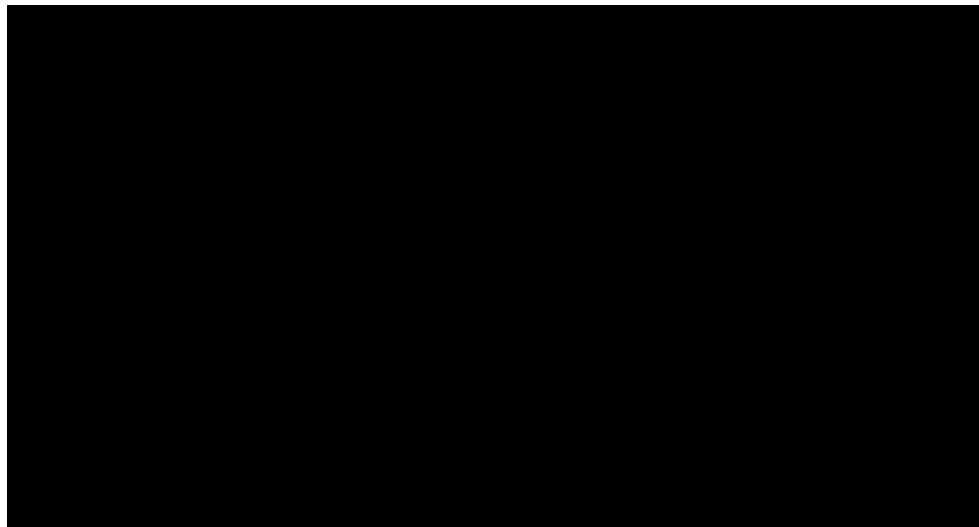
<sup>268</sup> The architect of this new building is not known. The name is incorrectly given in the Horniman gallery as Ernest Seel, the architect who was responsible for additional building and modifications in 1943.

<sup>269</sup> H&S, *Flutes & Piccolos* (1926): HM/B&H and HM/B&H A227/143. p.2.

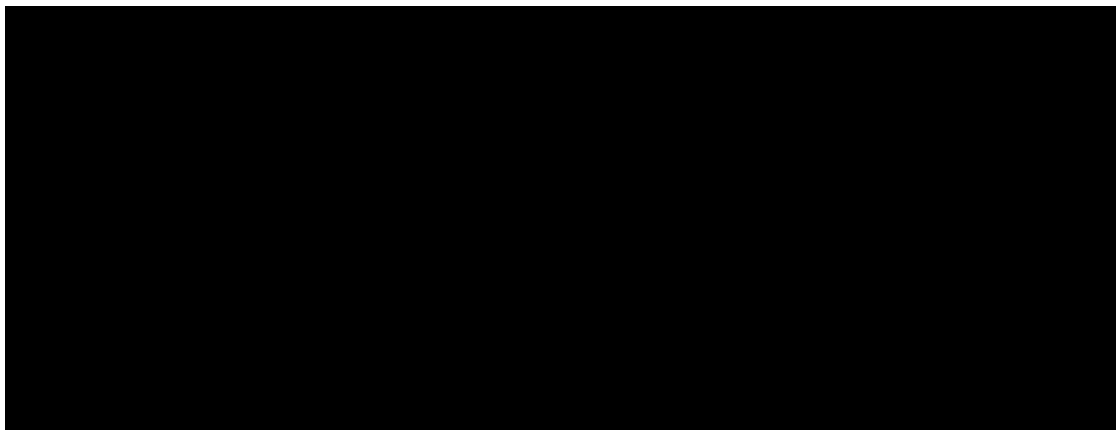
<sup>270</sup> Ibid.



**Figure 14.** Edgware workforce outside the new 'Sonorous Works', 1925 (HM/B&H).



EXTERIOR OF HAWKES' NEW WORKS, EDGWARE  
COVERING OVER ONE ACRE OF FLOOR SPACE



Showing Bell making section and general sheet metal department—Note the amount of hand-fashioned metal necessitating great skill at the hands of men who have spent their lives in perfecting their art.

Forges and heat treatment, where metals are scientifically treated for correct density and degree of hardness ensuring good tone and long life.

**Figure 15.** Edgware factory pictures from the H&S 1927 catalogue (AMPC).

### 3.4 The merger of Boosey and Hawkes

The Depression and the General Strike during the late 1920s had a great effect on the musical instrument manufacturing industry and its trade. Many firms struggling with sales and stockpiling instruments that became almost unsaleable, maintained professional links and worked together to present a united approach. From 1925 many brass instruments at Boosey were recorded as not being plated for some years after they were made, with many being completed after the merger between Boosey and Hawkes in 1930.<sup>271</sup>

Times were hard throughout the decade, with workers' wages remaining at their 1920 rates until 1927 – something reflected in Boosey's 1923 and 1926 catalogue prices, which remained unchanged – before then decreasing by 17% from the beginning of 1928.<sup>272</sup> In 1927, as on a number of previous occasions, representatives from Boosey, Besson and Hawkes met to decide a common policy concerning instrument prices and the reduction of working hours, thus effectively creating a cartel which would be considered illegal today.<sup>273</sup> (See Chapter 5.5). There was no improvement in the economic situation by the end of the decade, and the problems that all companies were experiencing left them vulnerable and in decline.

In 1930 Leslie Boosey (Figure 16a) approached Ralph Hawkes (Figure 16b) about amalgamating their companies. It is likely that awareness of the necessity for firms to adopt common policies led Boosey to foresee the benefits of a united company. Whilst there were a number of other firms that Boosey might have turned to (for example, Besson. or Rudall Carte), it is probable that both directors, whilst working together as members of the Performing Rights Society, would have been well acquainted and mutually aware of the strengths and weaknesses of each other's firms. With hindsight the decision to merge the two similar companies (manufacturers and publishers with similar client bases) can be seen as prudent. It strengthened their market position and enabled their survival through a period of enduring economic depression, thus assuring a consolidated attempt to keep up

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<sup>271</sup> For example, some instruments made in 1925 were not plated until 1929, many 1930s instruments were plated between 1931 and 1935, and some not for seven or eight years after they were made. E.g. HM/B&H A227/059.

<sup>272</sup> B&H, *Instruments Brass 13*: HM/B&H A227/057.

<sup>273</sup> Besson, *Limited Directors' Minute Book* (1917-1932): HM/B&H A227/183. pp.244-245.

with American competitors who were technologically far ahead of British manufacturers. Other firms such as Besson and Rudall Carte managed to continue in business, but they never regained profitability, and were also to be later acquired by B&H (see Chapter 4.10 and Chapter 5). It may be assumed that the economic situations of both B&Co. and H&S were so poor that the amalgamation was implemented as quickly as possible; it was completed within six months, on 30 September 1930.<sup>274</sup>

Since the only available accounts of the merger are contained in a contemporary article<sup>275</sup> and a corporate publication celebrating B&H's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1966<sup>276</sup> (which is clearly based on the former and was written after the event), we can gain only restricted insights into the circumstances that led to the merger. No direct evidence of management decisions such as directors' minutes or other primary sources are known to have survived, and records from this period are no longer stored at Companies House.

The company literature gives the reason for the merger as the removal of competition between the two firms. However, it is likely that Leslie Boosey saw the potential for expansion with H&S, a company that presented itself as a forward-looking business, one abreast of modern manufacturing processes, with a spacious, new factory on a five-acre site; B&Co., a business with limited factory premises on a small site, had no space to expand. It may be that H&S anticipated some benefit from amalgamating with B&Co., a company that gave the impression in its catalogues of being an efficiently managed, traditional factory that demonstrated a high level of craftsmanship in their instruments. The removal of the Boosey works to Edgware, the subsequent retention by B&H of a majority of the B&Co. models and the adoption of more modern manufacturing techniques advocated by Hawkes were all advantageous. The benefits to both companies were symbiotic. The merger represented the foundation of the business empire of B&H, and the start of the company's rise to success.

Leslie Boosey was appointed Chairman<sup>277</sup> and 295 Regent Street registered as their headquarters.<sup>278</sup> Leslie Boosey and Ralph Hawkes assumed responsibility

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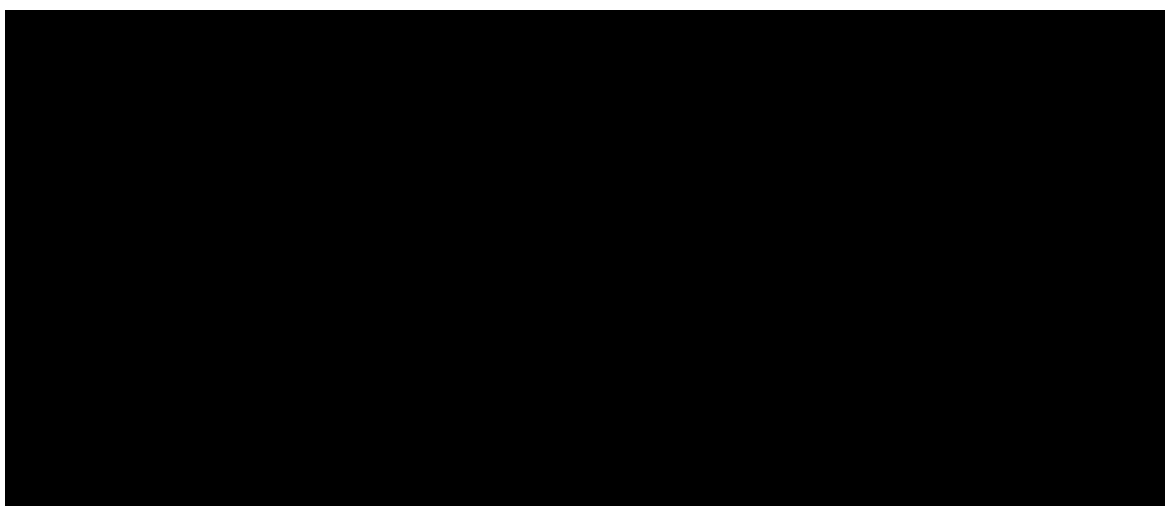
<sup>274</sup> Boosey, "Beethoven, Bellini, Ballads and Bands." p.4.

<sup>275</sup> "Boosey & Hawkes: A Century of Music Making." *Musical Progress and Mail*, 27-29, October 1930

<sup>276</sup> Boosey, "Beethoven, Bellini, Ballads and Bands." p.4.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

for the publishing division, and Geoffrey Hawkes (Figure 16c) and Evelyn Boosey concentrated on developing the instrument manufacturing business.<sup>279</sup> All of the B&Co. instrument production was moved in 1931 to the Hawkes Edgware premises (called the Sonorous Works), where they stayed until the closure of the factory in 2001. Retail was conducted from Regent Street and Hawkes' Denman Street premises were retained as a retail and repair department until about 1957.<sup>280</sup> Frederick Mews (after Besson had relinquished their lease and moved production to Edgware) was maintained as the band instrument repair department until about the same time, after which repairs were transferred to the basement of 295 Regent Street.



**Figure 16.** (a) Leslie Boosey; (b) Ralph Hawkes; (c) Geoffrey Hawkes

### 3.5 Conclusions

B&Co. and H&S were just two of many British businesses that responded to the exceptional rise in demand for wind instruments, music and accessories during the nineteenth century. Aware of competition from companies abroad, they took advantage of an already established and developing industry, expanding rapidly to attract and fulfil contracts, needing increasingly greater resources to compete on a global scale and to gain recognition.

Boosey were quick to exploit the demand for band instruments and, from their early collaboration with Carl Boosé, were able to offer a complete service to

<sup>278</sup> Waterhouse, *Index*. p.40.

<sup>279</sup> Boosey, "Beethoven, Bellini, Ballads and Bands." p.4.

<sup>280</sup> The Denman Street premises were last mentioned in workbook A227/029 (HM/B&H). Substandard instruments were sent there.



musicians, not only selling music editions, but also instruments and accessories as well as band journals. Publication of journals, such as *Boosey's Military Band Journal*, enabled the company to influence the instrumentation of bands and cultivate closer contact with their military and brass band customers. Likewise, Boosey founded their series of ballad concerts to popularise ballads and to encourage sales of their sheet music editions; this in turn led to their promotion of the ballad horn. Although Hawkes' entered the market late (seven years after Boosey commenced instrument making), the new company established its share of trade and rapidly achieved success in the expanding market.

Boosey, to facilitate early growth, acquired Hudson's flute-making business and Distin's brass factory; Hawkes, albeit later, purchased Schweizer's musical instrument case business, Morton's tooling, and the dealers Lafleur. Both companies gradually adapted their working practices to adopt new technological advances such as steam and electric power, and increased mechanisation. Whilst Boosey developed their Frederick Mews factory, Hawkes focused on acquiring and expanding into larger premises. B&Co. and H&S grew to become key British instrument manufacturers, with the major part of their production for military and brass band contracts affording both companies significant status. Individually both companies were very successful for many years.

However, as with other companies, the dire economic conditions during the 1920s severely affected business and production at Boosey and at Hawkes. The shrinking market resulted in both firms stock-piling instruments to avoid losing skilled staff, and severely reducing their product ranges. By 1930 the market was greatly diminished and unable to sustain the existing instrument manufacturing companies. The merger that same year of B&Co. and H&S allowed two rival firms with different attitudes and images but similar objectives to reduce and integrate their product lines and to proceed into the next decade from a stronger position, thus setting the foundation of one of the largest and most influential manufacturers of musical instruments in the world.

## Chapter 4

### 1930 to the end of the Second World War

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#### 4.1 Introduction

Between 1930 and the end of the Second World War many external factors affected the instrument manufacturing industry, and changing economic and social conditions resulted in altering markets and fluctuation in demand for instruments. Competition from overseas obliged British instrument makers to address the declining and expanding areas of trade, and to develop instrument models targeted at specific genres. The decrease in demand for instruments brought about by the Depression continued into the early 1930s, but trade then improved until the War.<sup>281</sup>

The decision of B&Co. and H&S to merge in 1930 enabled them to eliminate competition between each other and benefit from a united customer base. Thus they were able to attain a position of strength and dominance of the market. The merger provided Hawkes with an opportunity to develop their 'largest Band Instrument Factory, as applied to Military and Orchestral Instruments, in Europe', and to further their ambition and vision.<sup>282</sup> It gave Boosey the chance to move out of their cramped traditional factory to spacious works with contemporary mechanised manufacturing methods.

The amalgamation of Boosey and Hawkes created the largest instrument manufacturing company in Britain. Hawkes alone had '200–250 skilled operators' in 1927,<sup>283</sup> but although the size of the joint workforce was by far the largest in Britain, it was still nowhere near as large as some companies abroad, such as Couesnon in France and Conn in America;<sup>284</sup> Conn claimed in 1925 that the number of

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<sup>281</sup> Just after the merger of Boosey and Hawkes staff had to accept a 10% wage reduction as business at Regent Street was not good. J. Macree in *B&H, Edgware Newsletter* (1970). p.18.

<sup>282</sup> H&S, 1927 catalogue. p.3.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid.

<sup>284</sup> Couesnon, who had taken over Gautrot in 1883, by 1911 employed over 1000 employees in eight factories, and by 1913 Conn had a workforce of 303 and was technologically far in advance of any British firm. Waterhouse, *Index*. p.72, p.73, p.59, p.70.

employees in their factory engaged in the building and finishing of saxophones alone averaged over 500.<sup>285</sup>

This chapter describes the effects of the merger of Boosey and Hawkes, and of the Second World War, upon factory methods and production, and outlines the changing profile and focus of the company. The models that B&H chose to make and develop during this period are discussed, thus demonstrating how the company's output reflected the altering market and the influence that the company had on shaping the sound of British music. References to the B&H workbooks and plans, and empirical details are recorded in Appendices 7 and 8. Short biographical notes on musicians mentioned in the text are included in Appendix 4.

## 4.2 Music-making and concert-going in the 1930s

During the 1930s the plentiful work opportunities that musicians had enjoyed in Britain in the 1920s were severely diminished by the introduction of films with recorded sound. The first 'talkie', *The Jazz Singer*, released in New York in 1927, had far reaching effects on the music profession, as the use of recorded music led to the unemployment of a great number of musicians when silent films ended in 1932.<sup>286</sup> However, many musicians in Britain were still employed to provide live music in hotels, restaurants, dance halls, concert halls and theatres, whereas in America 'wired-music' and juke-boxes were becoming popular.<sup>287</sup> Although there was little domestic music-making at this time, the BBC reached a wide audience with their broadcasts. Ehrlich states that by 1939 the number of radio licences in the UK reached nine million, which amounted to seventy-three out of every 100 households. The BBC became Britain's largest employer of musicians with, by 1939, 400 orchestral musicians on contract and very many players engaged on an occasional basis.<sup>288</sup>

Greater accessibility to recordings of foreign orchestras led to a growing realisation that British standards were not as high as those on the continent. British orchestras suffered from a lack of funding, inadequate rehearsal, and the frequent

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<sup>285</sup> C.G. Conn Ltd, *New Wonder Saxophones* (1925) EUCHMI/R 2577. p.5.

<sup>286</sup> Ehrlich, *Music Profession*. p.10.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.* p.212.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*

use of deputies by players. Awareness of the low standard and poor discipline of orchestral playing in Britain reached a peak in 1927, when the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra under Fürtwangler visited London and captivated audiences with its precision and high standard of playing.<sup>289</sup> A year later the visiting Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Dohnányi performed with the same distinction.<sup>290</sup> This led to a rise in British orchestral standards. The LSO started to address the problem by breaking with tradition and appointing a single conductor, Willem Mengelberg, to lead the orchestra for a complete season in 1930.<sup>291</sup> At the same time the BBC formed its own symphony orchestra, the first permanent full-time salaried orchestra in London,<sup>292</sup> and this stimulated Beecham, in 1932, to start a new London Philharmonic Orchestra, his objectives being to emulate standards abroad and attain a similar reputation to foreign orchestras.<sup>293</sup>

Wireless broadcasts brought music to a wide audience at home, as did the gramophone on which a single performance could be heard multiple times. Thus listeners became more critically aware of musical detail, such as intonation, tone quality and precision, and this developed expectations of raised performance levels. Consequently players sought improved instruments and looked to the instrument manufacturers, such as B&H, to develop them.

### 4.3 The amalgamation of Boosey and Hawkes

As already discussed in Chapter 3.6 the official date of the merger of B&Co. and H&S was 30 September 1930. The amalgamation enabled the two separate firms to expand their business together at a difficult economic time at the expense of their competitors. Although this date signified the foundation of their business empire, it was some years before their works were fully integrated and they could benefit from being one large company. Whilst, inevitably, additional expenditure was incurred during the initial period, the amalgamation proved to be beneficial to

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<sup>289</sup> Howes, *Full Orchestra*. pp.4-5.

<sup>290</sup> Pearton, *LSO*. p.76.

<sup>291</sup> Howes, *Full Orchestra*. p.5.

<sup>292</sup> The players were contracted for fifty-two weeks a year and no deputies were permitted. Kenyon, *BBC Symphony Orchestra*. p.44.

<sup>293</sup> At the outbreak of war in 1939 Ralph Hawkes enabled the administration of the LPO to rent rooms at B&H in Regent St. for their library and meetings. Russell, *Philharmonic*. p.17.

both companies, giving B&H corporate strength, and thus the advantage of expansion.

Although the removal of Boosey to the Hawkes 'Sonorous Works' at Edgware was costly and required considerable planning, the restructuring and amalgamation of the workforce and factory lines progressively eliminated duplication of company expenses. The integration of two large workforces and implementation of new work practices required major reorganisation at the factory. However, owing to good management, production continued without interruption throughout this period. The eight-mile move was organised by the Works Manager, Arthur Blaikley,<sup>294</sup> who was responsible for the continuation of instrument production throughout.<sup>295</sup> B&H commented that 'the re-equipment of a great works was a mighty undertaking',<sup>296</sup> and it was over two years before Boosey had completely transferred to Edgware.<sup>297</sup> 295 Regent Street became the firm's head office and main retail department, and a professional department was opened in Denman Street.<sup>298</sup> By retaining branches in Aldershot, Manchester and Glasgow, with 'repair service centres' situated at all locations, B&H maintained a presence outside London.<sup>299</sup> The lease to Besson of the old Boosey works at Frederick Mews from September 1933 brought in additional revenue to B&H.

In 1931 B&H set up, in name only, a subsidiary company called the 'British Band Instrument Company', possibly to rationalise product lines and to produce new ranges of branded B&H instruments, since many (previously competing) models by both B&Co. and H&S continued to coexist after the merger. Many cheaper quality instruments including the 'Regent' models were sold under this name with some stamped 'British Band Instrument Company Ltd.'; however, only a

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<sup>294</sup> Letter from G. Hawkes to Langwill. (16/08/1932): EUCHMI/L 284.

<sup>295</sup> A letter dated 13/12/32 from Margaret F. Blaikley (an employee) to Langwill sets out the situation: 'Mr. Arthur Blaikley [...] is at present and has been for some months, working at very high pressure to get the machinery and men from this factory moved out to Edgware and combined with the Hawkes' factory, without interfering with the normal output of work [...] we do not know from day to day where men and goods will be.' EUCHMI/L 470.

<sup>296</sup> B&H, Catalogue (post 01/05/1935): JMPC. p.1.

<sup>297</sup> Geoffrey Hawkes stated in a letter dated 19/08/1932 to Langwill that 'It is unlikely that the collection [of historic musical instruments] will be available for view in September, for we shall still be moving then, in fact our works will not be completely moved until Christmas.' Letter, EUCHMI/L 288.

<sup>298</sup> B&H, Catalogue (post December 1936): EUCHMI/R 2677. Foreword.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid. page after A62.

small proportion of instruments were actually recorded as such in the workbooks.<sup>300</sup> A joint B&H model numbering system was introduced progressively from September 1932 for brass instruments and December 1933 for woodwind.<sup>301</sup> This was fully developed by 1935 and used in their first comprehensive combined catalogue. From 1936 B&H regularly made brass instruments of all different types for Besson and manufactured multiple instruments of certain models as stencils for the dealer J.R. Lafleur, who exported them to America. A number of instruments were stamped with other dealers' names such as P. Carabot (a Maltese dealer) and W. Grey.

## 4.4 The identity of Boosey & Hawkes after the merger

B&H struggled to find an identity during the early years of the amalgamation, whilst continuing to produce the separate model lines of its antecedents. The individual companies of B&Co. and H&S had projected contrasting images in their catalogues; whereas B&Co. portrayed itself as an orderly, traditional business, H&S adopted a more direct attitude, sometimes promoting themselves with pompous self-confidence as the biggest and the best. However, since catalogues are marketing tools, companies inevitably used them to project an idealised picture of themselves, and thus impressions gained from corporate literature must be treated with caution.

It was five years before B&H found their new identity. From their first comprehensive consolidated catalogues (introduced in 1935).<sup>302</sup> B&H confidently presented an image of a modern, progressive company that placed great emphasis on the use of engineering skills and mechanisation, and on scientific precision and accuracy in manufacture. Although by this time B&H were equipped with new machines, employed a complete range of materials, metals and processes, and had developed their first jointly designed models with some using new techniques, they still lagged behind their competitors abroad. Just as B&Co. and H&S had been behind their European counterparts during the nineteenth century, by the 1930s

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<sup>300</sup> Appendix 7.i.

<sup>301</sup> Appendix 7.iii.

<sup>302</sup> The first B&H catalogues were presented in simple black loose-leaf ring-binders stamped with a gold embossed hawk and bugle - the combined B&H emblems, and was compiled with the appropriate pages for distribution to specific clients and markets – military, orchestral, brass and dance band musicians.

manufacturing processes in American factories were more advanced than those employed by B&H.

It may be that H&S's expansion and relocation to the Edgware premises five years earlier had been inspired by the American firm Conn, who similarly presented themselves in their catalogues as a large, modern and progressive company. Hawkes' advertising style and wording in their Edgware catalogues bear more than a passing resemblance to Conn's earlier literature.<sup>303</sup> After the merger, Conn's influence on manufacturing techniques at B&H was clear; by 1932 B&H had adopted Conn's hydraulic expansion process for making seamless brass tubes, and later in the decade also their Strobocconn, a chromatic stroboscope for checking tuning to within 100<sup>th</sup> of a semitone.<sup>304</sup>

The forward-looking attitude that B&H projected of a strong and proudly British company that had entered a new age of British technology was in great contrast to that of many contemporary firms, such as Rudall Carte, who continued to use traditional methods and antiquated tools for some years thereafter.<sup>305</sup> But, although B&H focused on promoting an image of modernity, they sometimes harked back to the past; they described themselves in true Hawkes style as a firm with 'vast experience covering literally hundreds of years, now joined with engineering knowledge and equipment more advanced than any other in the world',<sup>306</sup> (their British customers were assumed to be ignorant of the advances pioneered by Conn and other American firms). Whilst B&H wanted to portray a new, modern factory with an emphasis on engineering and machines, they still clung on to the importance of the individual experience of their craftsman and the company's heritage. Thus, the new identity that emerged was a paradox. They acknowledged that in instrument making, the scientific approach was not sufficient alone, stating in their catalogue that

*we have made enough instruments to know that although theory, science of acoustics, blue prints and engineers' plans are an invariable help in the construction of the perfect musical instrument, yet experience*

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<sup>303</sup> C.G. Conn Ltd, *Saxophones*. p.5.

<sup>304</sup> The Strobocconn was patented by Conn in 1936. C.G. Conn Ltd., *Clarinets Flutes Oboes* Leaflet: EUCHMI/L 8-28-39.

<sup>305</sup> Bigio, *Rudall, Rose & Carte*. p.151.

<sup>306</sup> B&H, Catalogue (post December 1936): EUCHMI/R. p.1.

*has proven to us that theory alone can never produce the artist's instrument. There is something more in a musical instrument that only the really skilled artisan can produce.*<sup>307</sup>

However, this deliberate marketing technique, suggesting that they had the 'best of both worlds', enabled B&H to demonstrate the merger of science and art. In bridging the gap between a traditional and modern approach to manufacturing, the company perhaps offered reassurance to customers nervous of change.

Before the merger the individual companies of B&Co. and H&S had paid much attention to the final tuning of their instruments and the personal service they offered to customers. B&H continued this marketing ploy, emphasising in their catalogues the importance of well-tuned instruments, declaring that their tuning rooms were 'equipped with every conceivable device, [with] highly paid testers and factory staff... at your disposal.'<sup>308</sup> However, the devices they primarily employed, even after the chromatic stroboscope was introduced into the factory, were those that were traditionally used: a harmonium, chime bars and tuning forks.<sup>309</sup>

Although employees qualifications are not known, it is probable that B&H's assertions that their new design and development department was staffed by 'acoustic experts, highly qualified men with college degrees' were also marketing hype; it may be assumed, as there is no evidence to the contrary, that after the merger most existing members of both companies' R&D teams remained (apart from Blaikley who had retired). In their literature the company claimed that the Boosey collection of historic musical instruments kept at the factory was used for reference by the designers, who were 'constantly evolving designs, experimenting with new bores, in fact new everything.'<sup>310</sup> In spite of this marketing hyperbole, they admitted that very rarely was anything new found, and they continued to promote and feature old innovations, such as Boosey's 1923 New Valve Action and 'Silbron' valves, well into the 1930s. However, they offered a new marketing perspective by

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<sup>307</sup> Ibid. p.2.

<sup>308</sup> Customers were offered a personal service, with the 'personal fitting and adjusting to the purchaser of best grade instruments.' Ibid. (post December 1936): EUCHMI/R. p.2.

<sup>309</sup> B&H, *Woodwind 1940*. p.13, p.17 and p.59.

<sup>310</sup> B&H, Catalogue (post December 1936): EUCHMI/R. p.3.



emphasising the role that new small precision machines played in their manufacture.<sup>311</sup>

## 4.5 Mechanisation in the factory

The development of new factory methods using machinery ultimately led to the replacement of skilled craftsmen by unskilled operators. B&H stated, under the caption 'British engineering revolutionizes instrument production', that 'the result of the amalgamation of two firms of magnitude', and 'the mingling of brains and tools, has necessitated vital changes in methods and designs.'<sup>312</sup> The company's use of hydraulic expansion (as at Conn) was first employed for saxophone production in 1932 (Figure 17). This major advance in manufacturing techniques enabled the bell, bow and crook to be seamlessly expanded from single pieces of metal.<sup>313</sup> Hydraulic dies were created for the new process, which was considered modern, scientific, precise and accurate. In the words of B&H, 'Hydraulic expansion takes the guess out of Brass instruments for ever'.<sup>314</sup> They stated that nothing was left to chance with 'no guess work [...] – no reliance on old-time skill which varied according to the health and temperament of the worker. Accuracy is built in this saxophone, every model made is an exact replica of the perfected master instrument.'<sup>315</sup> B&H included photographs of the processes in their catalogues,<sup>316</sup> the use later of hydraulic expansion for making parts of other instruments revolutionised brass manufacture. Saxophone key-making and positioning were also performed by machine, with the keys steel-bushed and strongly constructed from one piece of Aero-Metal instead of by the old method of hand or power forging.<sup>317</sup>

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<sup>311</sup> Ibid. p.5.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid. p.1.

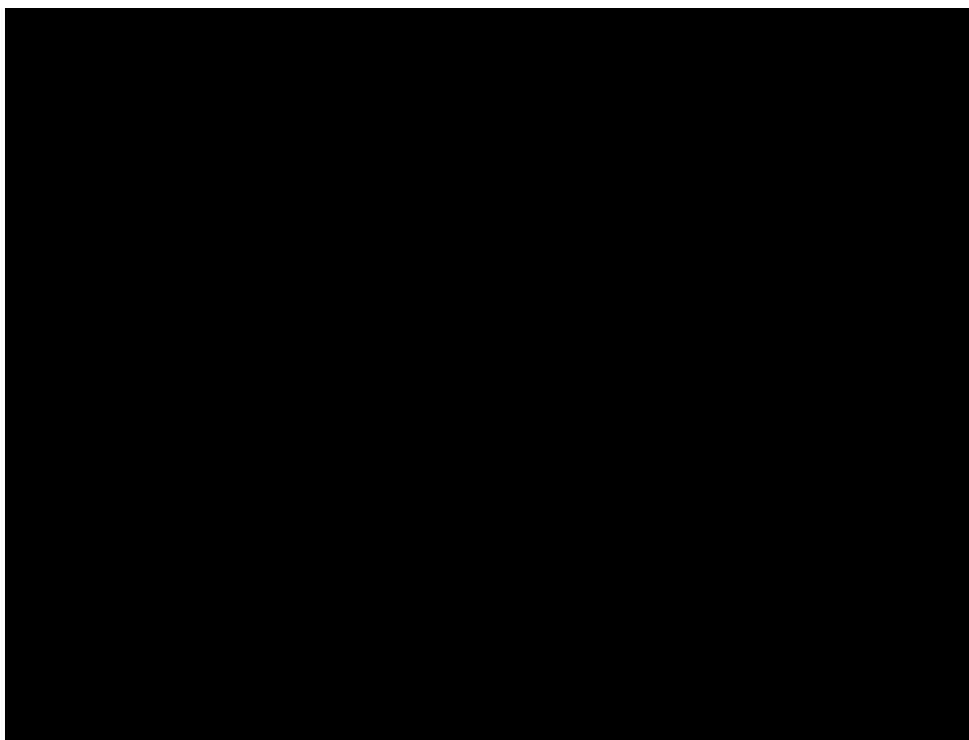
<sup>313</sup> B&H Ltd., *The Boosey & Hawkes Bulletin. Supplement to the Melody Maker* (March 1932). p.iii.

<sup>314</sup> B&H, Catalogue (post December 1936): JMPC. p.3.

<sup>315</sup> B&H Ltd., *Bulletin*. p.iii.

<sup>316</sup> B&H, Catalogue (ante 01/05/1935): JHPC.

<sup>317</sup> B&H Ltd., *Bulletin*. p.iii.



**Figure 17.** Compressors for hydraulic expansion. 1935 catalogue (JHPC).

New machinery was used for making mouthpieces for brass instruments. B&H claimed that the introduction of new technology and equipment, and the extensive facilities at the Edgware factory, enabled ‘correct scientific principles’ to be applied to their manufacture. They emphasised the importance of a suitable mouthpiece for each player and instrument, and the effect that it had on tone and intonation.<sup>318</sup> Wide ranges of mouthpieces for all instruments were introduced. The ‘Kosikup’, originally a Hawkes design, was described as being ‘built on strictly scientific lines’<sup>319</sup> and ‘accurately cut by high-class machine tools’ from ‘the most perfect’ brass rod. However, in spite of all their intended scientific accuracy B&H, with reference to a chart of mouthpiece measurements, added that ‘although the greatest possible care is taken to standardise the various models as specified, the measurements quoted above can only be taken as approximate.’<sup>320</sup>

The use of new technology and equipment may have enabled B&H to produce saxophone parts and many models of mouthpieces economically, but this was clearly at the expense of accurately handcrafted items, which would also have been made according to ‘correct scientific principles’ but by a craftsman. This admission by B&H is the first indication of their lack of concern for accuracy, and

<sup>318</sup> B&H, Catalogue (post December 1936): EUCHMI/R. p.28.

<sup>319</sup> B&H Ltd., *Band Instruments and Accessories by Boosey & Hawkes* (1932): AMPC. p.29.

<sup>320</sup> B&H, Catalogue. (post December 1936): EUCHMI/R. p.29 and p.30.

indicative of falling standards, which contributed to the ultimate downfall of the company.

## 4.6 Boosey & Co. and Hawkes & Son models retained after the merger

For the first few years after the merger, whilst reorganisation of the company took place, both B&Co. and H&S models continued to be made. The 1932 catalogue (brass instruments only) did not contain any new designs.<sup>321</sup> By September 1932 brass lines had been integrated and a list of instruments to be included in a new catalogue was noted in the front of the workbook.<sup>322</sup> Most of the brass instrument models that continued in production were Boosey designs, but occasionally discontinued Hawkes and Boosey models were made to order. Boosey models were sometimes stamped with the Hawkes name, and vice-versa.<sup>323</sup> For some time after the introduction of the combined instrument model numbering system the new numbers appeared alongside the old Boosey numbers in the workbooks, thus enabling the historical progression of models to be understood. All the new numbers corresponded to Boosey's 'Class A' instruments, with many of the 'Class B' instruments listed rebranded 'Regent' and assigned new numbers; sometimes both numbers were recorded.<sup>324</sup>

During the early 1930s the cornets that B&H manufactured were predominantly Boosey models plus Hawkes' 'Clippertone'. Only a small number of soprano cornets, echo cornets and flugel horns were made. Although the instrumentation for a brass band included just one E ♭ soprano cornet (but seven or eight B ♭ cornets) and one flugel horn, the number of these instruments that B&H produced was low for the possible demand. Therefore it is probable that bands were buying these instruments from Besson and other companies. Until

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<sup>321</sup> Appendix 7.ii.

<sup>322</sup> Appendix 7.iii.

<sup>323</sup> For example: 24/11/31 Clippertone Trumpet IP 18b sn139984. Clippertone Trumpet NVA 18b sn139985. 02/12/31 B ♭ Trumpet B17a stamped HS Empire Cabarot. *Instruments Brass 15*: HM/B&H A227/059.

<sup>324</sup> Appendix 7.iv.

1939 flugel horns were predominantly old stock with five H&S models sold and three experimental instruments made.<sup>325</sup>

Directly after the merger, the only trumpet models produced were Hawkes' 'Empire' and 'Clippertone' (M28) models. The 'Clippertone' trumpet, a high quality instrument, remained popular throughout the 1930s and was developed with the addition of Boosey's 'New Valve Action'. It was the only 'combined' B&H design, and was available in four different models from September 1932.<sup>326</sup>

Boosey's tenor cor models in F and E ♭ continued to be produced in modest numbers as a substitute for French horn in military bands. B ♭ baritones were available with a small or large bore and compensating pistons, and in a cheaper 'Regent' model. Euphoniums were made in the 'Imperial' model with four compensating pistons and as a three-valve compensating instrument. Both Boosey's 'Sotone' and Hawkes' Raoux French horn models continued in production until 1932: 'Sotone' No.1 in A (small bore), originally a Boosey model, was described as the original 'Sotone' and as possessing 'the true French Horn tone, much demanded by English musicians, conductors etc'. 'Sotone' No.2 in A (medium bore) was based on the Hawkes Raoux design, and gave 'a little more freedom in playing'.<sup>327</sup> Throughout the period Boosey's horns in F and E ♭ (A41 and B42) continued to be produced for military use, with from 1935 the latter sometimes named 'Regent'; this was occasionally specified as having a German bore, i.e. a large bore.<sup>328</sup>

In 1932 B&H offered seven models of trombone, each possessing 'distinctive features – from which to make your choice and selection of the instrument best suited for your work'; four were originally Hawkes designs, three were Boosey.<sup>329</sup> A variety of bore sizes was offered. Today, both the small and medium bore sizes would be considered small. Large-bore instruments were popular for dance band use; however, the 'Cabaret' and 'Imperial' were not

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<sup>325</sup> Appendix 8.v.

<sup>326</sup> Appendix 8.xii.a.

<sup>327</sup> B&H, Catalogue (post 01/05/35): JMPC. p.24.

<sup>328</sup> Appendix 8.vi.

<sup>329</sup> Appendix 8.xi.a.

presented in the 1935 catalogue, which offered a reduced selection of slide trombones, even though the other models continued to be manufactured.<sup>330</sup>

All the bass instruments that were continued in regular production after the merger were Boosey designs, although a very small number of Hawkes' basses were made to order and old stock was cleared. In the circa 1935 catalogue seven models of E ♭, EE ♭ and BB ♭ bass were offered.<sup>331</sup> Boosey's 'Imperial' basses earned the reputation of being the finest available and continued to be the most popular band instruments after the War. A few circular basses were produced, but there was little demand for them.<sup>332</sup> Between 1935 and 1939 production of basses rose steadily by approximately 150%. This may have been because Boosey basses were preferred to those made by Besson.

Clarinet manufacture at B&H accounted for a major proportion of woodwind production, with a wide range of models designed for all areas of the market. The company optimistically described them as assembled by 'the finest craftsmen in the world [...] with individual care and precision', each instrument 'exhaustively tested for tone and tune by experts, using specifically devised systems of unflinching accuracy.'<sup>333</sup> The clarinet was the only woodwind instrument the company made that was widely adopted by professional players.

B&H offered a broad range of clarinets:<sup>334</sup> 'old' models included the 14-keyed clarinet, Barret, Clinton, Clinton-Boehm and Boehm systems. The Clinton System, previously made by B&Co., had gained popularity amongst British players and in the colonies towards the end of the nineteenth century. George Clinton subsequently developed this model with duplicate little finger keys and articulated g#<sup>0</sup> which, because of its resemblance to the keywork of the Boehm clarinet, became known as the Clinton-Boehm System. This model remained in limited use until the 1950s, but was superseded by Boehm system.

Most of the B&H oboes produced in the early 1930s were Boosey models, plus a few of Hawkes, including their 'Morton No.1' design. Still few professional

<sup>330</sup> In 1935 B&H were still trying to sell 'Cabaret' trombones 'given out' in 1932. HM/B&H A227/059. Appendix 8.ix.b.

<sup>331</sup> Appendix 8.i.a.

<sup>332</sup> Appendix 8.i.b.

<sup>333</sup> B&H, Catalogue (post December 1936): EUCHMI/R. p.A7.

<sup>334</sup> Appendix 8.iii.a.

oboists played B&H instruments, many preferring models by Louis. By 1935 the company had reduced the number of models offered to five plus a cor anglais and oboe d'amore.<sup>335</sup> Although most players on the continent had adopted the conservatoire system after the Paris Conservatoire had officially endorsed it in 1881, the majority of British oboists were slow to make the change, with many still favouring the thumb-plate system into the 1950s.<sup>336</sup> The old Boosey 16-key 2-ring oboe, which continued to be produced in small quantities every year until 1940, and the 'Artist's Model' accounted for most of the oboes manufactured for some years. B&H did not produce a conservatoire model until 1934, and even then only a small number were made annually.

Saxophone models continued after the merger were Boosey's 'Artist' and 'Regent', and Hawkes' highly thought-of 'XX<sup>th</sup> Century'; however, during 1931 production was considerably lower than in previous years with most Boosey models discontinued and replaced by new designs.<sup>337</sup> The Hawkes 'XX<sup>th</sup> Century' range of saxophones continued in regular production until 1940.

## 4.7 New Boosey & Hawkes instrument models

During the 1930s B&H focused much of their attention on developing new models of instruments particularly for use in dance orchestras and jazz bands, which had been growing in popularity in Britain throughout the 1920s. B&H produced many instruments for this market with trumpet, saxophone, clarinet and wide-bore trombone models designed specifically for the jazz player. The first extant company literature to reflect the popular dance-band trend and predominantly to target dance-band clientele was the 1932 *B&H Bulletin*. It promoted new models specifically for this genre, offering a broad selection of instruments from banjos, guitars, drums and piano accordions to brass and woodwind models. It also included sheet music for 'the Latest & Best Stomps & Hot

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<sup>335</sup> Appendix 8.vii.b.

<sup>336</sup> Baines, *Woodwind*. p.101.

<sup>337</sup> No Boosey 'Artist' models were made after 1931, except for a baritone in 1932 and 1933. No 'Regents' were recorded after 1932. A list of 25 H&S instruments made by De Cort and Richer, sns from between 58410 and 61256 with order dates from 6 July to 25 October 1931 was included separately in the workbook. *Instruments Wood & Percussion 7, Instruments Wood & Percussion 8*: HM/B&H A227/018, A227/019.

Numbers'.<sup>338</sup> In particular, the *Bulletin* featured the 'new "32" All-British E ♭ Saxophone' and gave a detailed explanation of its manufacture by the process of hydraulic expansion.<sup>339</sup>

It was with the introduction of the '1932 model' (the '32', first recorded in the workbooks in September 1931) that saxophone lines at B&H were integrated.<sup>340</sup> The '32' was promoted as manufactured by craftsmen with the aid of modern technology, and was endorsed by leading dance-band players. The saxophone workforces of Boosey and of Hawkes were amalgamated and expanded, and the latest factory methods adopted with new machinery installed for hydraulic processes. All instruments were tested by ex-Hawkes employee John Pausey, an experienced player and saxophone expert.<sup>341</sup> From August 1932 a number of the '32' were branded 'Regent' and sold under the British Band Instrument Company name, but this name was not used on saxophones other than for these instruments. The '32' represented the cheaper end of the market and was described as 'thoroughly serviceable and efficient'.<sup>342</sup> It remained in production in diminishing numbers until 1939 when it was rebranded the 'Predominant' model. During 1932 and 1933 saxophones represented 45% and 42% respectively of total reed manufacture at B&H, thus demonstrating the influence of dance and jazz band music on production.<sup>343</sup>

The higher quality 'XX<sup>th</sup> Century' model, available in the complete range, remained popular until the War,<sup>344</sup> with the alto advertised as 'the alto with every modern improvement' and as 'The Choice of the Stars'.<sup>345</sup> During this period saxophones were recorded in the workbooks under a number of different model names. However, it is unclear whether these were new designs, designs made up

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<sup>338</sup> B&H Ltd., *Bulletin*. p.ix.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid. pp.ii-iii.

<sup>340</sup> Appendix 8.viii.a.

<sup>341</sup> B&H Ltd., *Bulletin*. p.iii. 54 '32' saxophones were manufactured before the end of 1931, and for a few months production of all other saxophone models was suspended. High productivity was maintained for the first four months of 1932. The total number of all saxophones produced in 1932 was 280, and in 1933, 244; however, thereafter orders diminished. A227/018, A227/019.

<sup>342</sup> B&H, Catalogue (ante 01/05/1935): JHPC; p.A55.

<sup>343</sup> *Instruments Wood & Percussion 9*: HM/B&H A227/020.

<sup>344</sup> B&H, Catalogue. p.A51, A52.

<sup>345</sup> B&H, *Woodwind 1940*.

of features from existing models, or renamed models.<sup>346</sup> An amalgamated '32' and 'XX<sup>th</sup> Century' alto model was recorded from December 1934, and this was the most frequently produced saxophone during 1935. It seems that the 'XX<sup>th</sup> Century' may also have been sold as the 'New Century' model. The 'New Century' was regularly noted from 1935, and although it was not included in the 1935/6 catalogues, it appears to have replaced a high proportion of 'XX<sup>th</sup> Century' saxophone production.<sup>347</sup> All except one saxophone recorded from June 1935 until the end of the year were listed as 'New Century', but from the beginning of 1936 the 'XX<sup>th</sup> Century' name resumed.<sup>348</sup> The model name 'New Century' was also given to other instruments, including the 'Boehm system deLuxe' and '1010' clarinets, a flute model and a large bore compensating double horn in 1936.<sup>349</sup>

Besides making trumpets for the home and colonial markets B&H manufactured particular models for export to America where the popularity of bands and dance bands continued to grow. The 'Alliance', a 'cheap' model that had previously been produced by H&S for Lafleur (from at least 1923) was recorded in the workbook as a 'new model' in January 1932; it went into regular production from the end of February and manufacture increased from May, with multiple batches of 'Alliance' and fifty 'Regent' trumpets listed in the workbooks. It may be that they were both the same design sold under different names, as the 'Regent' was first promoted in March 1932. The 'Regent' was made to be less expensive than the 'Clippertone', and although a low-priced model, B&H described it as having 'all the more important features attached to the higher priced instruments' and 'brilliancy of tone and structural perfection'.<sup>350</sup> Many 'Alliance' trumpets were produced in 1933, with most of them almost certainly for American export.

Only a few experimental trumpets were made between February 1934 and June 1935, and a new low-price model aimed particularly at the dance-band market – the 'Piccadilly' – was developed for Lafleur for sale in America. It was brought into regular production from 18 June 1935 under the name 'Piccadilly Zenith'.

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<sup>346</sup> Appendix 8.viii.a.

<sup>347</sup> The name 'New Century' was first noted, but deleted, in the workbooks two years before in June 1933 with the instruments sold as 'XX<sup>th</sup> Century'.

<sup>348</sup> Whilst there are many extant 'XX<sup>th</sup> Century' saxophones, at present the author knows of no surviving 'New Century' instruments.

<sup>349</sup> B&H, Catalogue (post 01/05/35): JMPC.

<sup>350</sup> B&H Ltd., *Bulletin*. p.vi.



Adjustments were made to the design in February 1937. Many of these trumpets were made, but it appears that very few have survived.<sup>351</sup> The last batch of 'PZ' trumpets was recorded in November 1938.<sup>352</sup>

In 1935 a 'Narrow Regent Trumpet' was listed in the workbooks, but at first it was recorded under the names of 'Piccadilly' and 'Alliance'. Many of these instruments were produced, some with shunt and some rotary action (the B  $\flat$  to A rotary valve was often called a 'quick change valve'). It would appear that the 'Piccadilly', 'Alliance' and 'Narrow Regent' trumpets were similar in design and that sometimes the model names were interchangeable.

The 'Regent' trumpet was first presented in the 1932 *B&H Bulletin*, endorsed by J.H. Cozens (principal trumpet of the LSO) and Jack Raine (Jack Hylton's Band).<sup>353</sup> Jack Raine subsequently worked with B&H to design the new 'Jack Raine Special Trumpet' and mouthpieces, which were offered in their circa 1935 catalogue. Greater demands were being placed on jazz and dance band trumpeters to play in the altissimo register through the 1930s into the 1940s, and the Raine model, 'Designed by a Player – for a Player!', was promoted as having 'higher notes, increased range, speedier action and increased performance [...] Notes from top C to G above are now within the reach of the modern player.' Raine, who was described in the catalogue as playing 'with success an all-British made Trumpet,' expressed his 'admiration for the excellent interpretation of my ideas which you have successfully incorporated in this new "all in one" model' and acknowledged the trumpet as 'the best ever in my long and varied experience.'<sup>354</sup> There is evidence that during 1928 and 1929 B&Co. had customised a few instruments for Raine, although in a circa 1931 trumpet catalogue he featured alongside other players endorsing what had been the Hawkes 'Clippertone'.<sup>355</sup> However, the 'Jack Raine' model never caught on. From the end of 1936 the 'Regent', listed with a new model number, was the most frequently recorded trumpet; it also appears to have been the same as a Besson model, Boosey's A18B, and Hawkes' 'Empire'.

<sup>351</sup> A few surviving instruments have been discussed on forums on the internet such as <http://en.allexperts.com/q/Trumpet-2049/2010/3/trumpet-45.htm> Accessed 10/11/2014.

<sup>352</sup> *Instruments Brass 16*: HM/B&H A227/060.

<sup>353</sup> B&H Ltd., *Bulletin*. p.vi.

<sup>354</sup> Trumpet model: B4001, mouthpieces: B4002/3 in B&H, Catalogue (post 01/05/1935): JMPC.

<sup>355</sup> B&H, *Trumpets* (c.1931): AMPC.

During the 1930s, owing to the popularity of British dance bands, many players became very successful. This was reflected in the high prices of some models of dance band instruments. The most expensive of the range was the 'Cabaret' trombone, which was considered to have a wide bore. Boosey's 'Imperial', also aimed at dance band players, was available with a large bore, but was lower-priced.<sup>356</sup> However, some instruments from this period stamped 'Imperial' were made for band and orchestral use with narrow bores. The demand for larger bore instruments for popular music was increasing, influenced by instruments made by American companies such as Conn and Olds. Extant notes and drawings by B&H of trombone models produced by these firms and of experimental instruments made in the B&H factory show new designs developed in collaboration with certain celebrated players. For a long time, wide-bore trombones were popular only for dance band use, as brass bands and orchestral players retained the narrow-bore 'peashooters' until after the Second World War and into the 1950s.

The 'Piccadilly Zenith' tenor trombone, which was introduced in 1935 and produced until 1937, like the trumpet of the same name, was a lower quality instrument manufactured for sale abroad by Lafleur and therefore not included in the B&H catalogue. A number of trial trombone models with different specifications and names were recorded in the workbooks. Sometimes small batches of instruments were made based on a previous custom-made instrument.<sup>357</sup> Special orders were taken for professional musicians like Ted Heath, and new design improvements developed in collaboration with dance band trombonist Tony Thorpe.<sup>358</sup> The 'Thorpe' instruments in 1933 had 'an additional cylinder to F' (a thumb valve for F), in 1935 similar slide lengths to an Olds trombone, and in 1936 'spiral slides'. 'Spiral slides' had been patented in America in 1931.<sup>359</sup> Fifteen instruments are recorded with Thorpe's name but none are known to have

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<sup>356</sup> Appendix 8.xi.a.

<sup>357</sup> Appendix 8.xi.c.

<sup>358</sup> Appendix 8.xi.d.

<sup>359</sup> US1789589 A. Application 05/08/1929. Approved 20/01/1931. Alfred J. Johnson, York Band Instrument Company. This patent was for an improved arrangement of the slide stockings whereby the stockings are provided with an inner-helical lubricant groove.

survived.<sup>360</sup> B&H developed their valve trombone in 1934 and 1935, and this resulted in new tenor, bass and contra-bass models with an additional fourth valve.

Although during the 1920s many British clarinettists continued to play simple system instruments, B&H recognised that the Boehm system clarinet had found increased favour in Britain. They therefore promoted a 'new' Boehm clarinet which became one of their most notable post-merger models. It soon became the instrument of choice for many clarinettists from all genres, and the model which would define the sound of British clarinet playing for some decades.<sup>361</sup> Although the 'new "B&H" Boehm Clarinet', introduced and endorsed by Frederick Thurston, was featured in the 1932 *Bulletin* as a 'new' model (no. L420), the workbook records suggest that it was in fact an existing B&H design,<sup>362</sup> even though they later stated:

*The researches were conducted in collaboration with the entire technical staff of the Edgware works and culminated in a long series of experiments in which neither time nor money were spared, until after many months of labour these models were produced which after the most stringent tests by independent artists were found to be in excess of the most sanguine expectations, indeed it is but the bare truth to describe these clarinets as standing in a class by themselves, so completely do they render obsolete any others hitherto obtainable.*<sup>363</sup>

There is no surviving material that endorses this, but improvements were made to the model 200 and 201 clarinets, with some recorded as having been tuned especially for professional clarinettists Haydn Draper, and Frederick Thurston and Ralph Clarke during May–July 1932; however, Thurston's own clarinets were ordered on 30 September 1932. During 1933 cast keys were introduced, and in June a 'new B ♭ Boehm clarinet' (no model number given) was documented as having 'mc cast keys'; the keys were machine cast, i.e. made in one piece, not soldered. A month later two further instruments were also noted as having them, and subsequently this was recorded for most model 200 and 201 clarinets. In

<sup>360</sup> Other unnamed instruments of this design have survived: eg no.143560, EUCHMI 1122.

<sup>361</sup> For further evaluation of the development of the '1010' clarinet see Brand *From Design to Decline: B&H and Clarinet Manufacturing in Britain*. Chapter 3.

<sup>362</sup> No L420 model was noted in the *Bulletin*; the wooden Boehm model continued to be listed as the 200 and the military model (ebonite) 201. B&H Ltd., *Bulletin*. p.iv.

<sup>363</sup> B&H, Catalogue (ante 01/05/1935): JHPC. p.A12.

November 1933 new model numbers 1010 (wood) and 1011 (ebonite) replaced the numbers 200 and 201.

The '1010' clarinet, one of the most influential and well known of all B&H instruments, rapidly became associated with the British sound and style of clarinet playing. It had a wide bore of 0.6" (15.24mm), and was generally characterised by a large and free-sounding tone which enabled many players to produce a full, expressive vibrato. It was described in its early days by the company as the 'ideal clarinet for the critical performer' and as possessing 'a most perfect tone equality and entire freedom from defective notes, due to dimensioning of the bore and mouthpiece.'<sup>364</sup> There is no evidence in the workbooks to suggest that the '1010' was a specific new design even though B&H asserted that:

*the resident wood-wind experts at the great B&H works at Edgware were instructed to undertake the task of creating entirely new models, that should embody the results of minute and rigorous investigation of the theories of the greatest authorities on acoustical science up to the present day.*<sup>365</sup>

B&H claimed that development of the model started towards the end of 1930 when the directors of the company had recognised 'the steady and notable increase in the number of customers for the Boehm-system Clarinets made by the firm'. Their objective was 'the production of a Boehm Clarinet that should remain for all time unassailable in its perfection.'<sup>366</sup> B&H may not have achieved perfection with the '1010' as it was renowned amongst players for being difficult to play in tune, but it became the model of choice of the majority of leading British clarinet players in all genres of music for about fifty years and is still used professionally by a few performers today.<sup>367</sup>

Some 'special features' were applied to the '1010' in 1937: an improved thumb rest, Lonberg coupling and Taylor silent action. Other improvements

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<sup>364</sup> B&H Ltd., *Bulletin*. p.iv.

<sup>365</sup> B&H, Catalogue (ante 01/05/1935): JHPC. p.A12.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid.

<sup>367</sup> The name is that of its catalogue model number: 1010. However, it was also available in ebonite (model no. 1011) and metal (model no. 1012).

included 'New Century Tuning', 'New C natural connection' and 'New Rubbers' or 'Rubber Stops'.<sup>368</sup> The last 'pre-war' '1010s' were produced on 6 February 1941.

The top of the range clarinet, 'The "B&H" "New Century" Boehm System De-Luxe' model, was first introduced in the post-December 1936 catalogue. It was described as possessing 'manifold advantages' and was aimed at 'all artist clarinettists'. According to B&H it was already being played by the majority of players in America and certain countries on the Continent. This obviously untrue claim was clearly a marketing ploy which did not attract the custom they had intended. The first instrument made was recorded in July 1936 and only a further six B ♭ clarinets and five pairs were produced between 1936 and 1940. At first, promotion of this model was aimed at the classical clarinettists; however, having received limited interest, B&H targeted the dance band market, describing it as 'The Finest Clarinet in the World, Tuned for the Dance Band Player'. It was advertised under the name 'New Century', rather ambiguously with a list of 31 purported players (with more clarinettists endorsing it than the number of instruments made) alongside the cheaper 'New Century Standard Model' – the '1010' promoted under a different name.<sup>369</sup>

In the circa 1935/36 catalogues B&H offered a new range of 'Clarinets of Moderate Price, London and Paris' which were available in 14-key, Barret and Boehm systems.<sup>370</sup> These instruments were made in part on the continent, as manufacturing costs for large quantities were lower abroad than in Britain. They were described in the catalogue as 'an entirely new range of models', designed 'in collaboration with a Continental key machinery manufacturer' with 'certain parts, such as rough key machinery, rough wooden joints, etc. [...] imported'. However, the 'essentials' of these instruments were considered to be '100 per cent British' and the instruments were tuned in the factory under the same supervision as the more expensive models.<sup>371</sup> Until towards the end of 1939, only modest numbers of

<sup>368</sup> 'Lonberg coupling' was an improved link between the middle joint for long e ♭ 1/b ♭ 2). 'Taylor silent action' was applied to the little finger action b<sup>1</sup> to c<sup>#2</sup>. Patents were pending. B&H, Catalogue. (post December 1936): EUCHMI/R. p.A15. Some clarinets were tuned sharper specifically for dance band players; they were advertised as 'The B.&H. New Century Boehm System clarinet' 'Tuned for the Dance Player' and were available in standard model 17k, 6r, and de luxe 20k 6r. B&H, *Woodwind 1940*. p.52.

<sup>369</sup> B&H, *Woodwind 1940*.

<sup>370</sup> Model numbers 1024, 1025, 1026.

<sup>371</sup> B&H, Catalogue (ante 01/05/1935): JHPC. p.A15.

the 14-key clarinet were recorded in the workbooks. None of the Barret model was produced, and it was not until October 1939 that reference was made to the Boehm 1026 model. The 1026 was developed in response to increased demand for low-priced Boehm clarinets, and it is possible that some instruments described as 'Boehm' 'B', recorded before the end of the year, were trial instruments. Regular production commenced in January 1940, and the model was marketed under the name 'Predominant' as 'the ideal doubling instrument for the dance band saxophonist'.<sup>372</sup>

After the merger B&H continued to develop and produce a small number of metal clarinets. Although Hawkes' 'XX<sup>th</sup> Century' was well established, aspects of both firms' designs were applied to the new instrument models. By 1935 metal clarinets were offered with 14 keys, and in Clinton and Boehm systems.<sup>373</sup> It was not recorded whether the alto and bass clarinets were from Boosey or Hawkes, or of a new design. They were available in simple and Boehm systems, with other systems, such as Clinton, made to order. Simple system instruments remained popular, with four alto and 24 bass clarinets made between 1931 and 1940, plus a Barret and a Clinton system for Edward Augarde. Only eight Boehm bass clarinets were recorded in the workbooks. One made for Walter Lear in 1931 was measured and a plan drawn of it in 1934, perhaps with the intention of using it for design development. According to B&H they brought out 'the epoch-making New Century Boehm Bass Clarinet in 1933',<sup>374</sup> but there is no record of such a model in the workbooks. Four Boehm bass clarinets were made in 1936 and one in 1937, but it is not recorded whether they were made with the new 'automatic speaker-key action' they offered in their catalogue.<sup>375</sup> No bass clarinets were produced from 1941 until May 1946 owing to the company's focus on war work.

B&H promoted a number of minority models in their literature in the hope that they would gain popularity. During the dance band era, players were often expected to play more than one instrument ('double'). Seven oboes with saxophone fingering were recorded in the workbooks – six were bought in and one was made

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<sup>372</sup> B&H, *Woodwind* 1940. p.54. The 'Predominant' clarinet was available in Boehm system and Albert system.

<sup>373</sup> 14 keys A1003 p.A7, Clinton A1009 p.A9, Boehm A1012. B&H, Catalogue (ante 01/05/1935): JHPC. p.A13.

<sup>374</sup> B&H, Catalogue (post December 1936): EUCHMI/R. p.A17.

<sup>375</sup> Ibid. p.A17.

in-house. They were recommended for dance band and military players who needed to double on saxophone and oboe.<sup>376</sup> In 1934 two 'Reynolds' oboes were made according to modifications that Charles Reynolds had devised;<sup>377</sup> Reynolds was an influential oboist who, as a professor at the Royal Manchester College, taught many pupils including the distinguished player, Leon Goossens. There is an extant drawing made in 1934 of Goossens' oboe, and details of two instruments that were made according to this plan are recorded in the workbooks.<sup>378</sup>

The Barret system oboe was devised by Appolon Marie-Rose Barret in 1860.<sup>379</sup> Although it was popular in Britain, B&H did not produce any full Barret system oboes until 1935; the first was bought in and then a further four were made. The 'Whittaker' model was promoted by B&H in their 1940 Yearbook as 'designed by the late Stephen Whittaker to facilitate the rapid passages in flat keys and extreme sharp keys'. It was played and recommended by Alec Whittaker, Professor of the Oboe, Royal Academy of Music. However, it did not gain popularity and only one of this model was made. Early in the decade a few metal oboes, perhaps developmental instruments based on H&S's 'XX<sup>th</sup> Century' model, were recorded in the workbooks. Subsequently, with some influence from the Boosey designs, B&H produced the 'XX<sup>th</sup> Century Artist Model' with a chrome body and silver-plated keys. It was recommended for military use and was designed 'expressly to meet the demand for an all metal instrument which is not only capable of the production of good tone, but will withstand hard usage and also remains unaffected by the impositions of extremely hot climates.'<sup>380</sup> It never gained popularity; only 18 were made between 1935 and 1939, and none thereafter.

Demand for the cor anglais was particularly low at B&H in the first five years after the merger, with only one instrument made. The small number of cors anglais produced had always reflected the infrequent orchestral use of the instrument; however, a 'new "B&H" Cor Anglais and Oboe D'Amore' was featured in their circa

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<sup>376</sup> Cottrell states that in the late 1920s the 'oboe-sax' was developed by the French firm Lorée. It was essentially a Boehm-system oboe with the keywork modified to resemble saxophone fingering. The motivation for the design was to encourage some of the many saxophone players to transfer to or double on the oboe. Cottrell, *Saxophone*. p.86.

<sup>377</sup> Reynolds transferred some of the shake-keys to the other side of the instrument. Philip Bate, *The Oboe*. p.83.

<sup>378</sup> Appendix 8.vii.a.

<sup>379</sup> Appendix 5.ii.

<sup>380</sup> B&H, Catalogue (ante 01/05/1935): JHPC. p.A29.

1935/36 catalogues.<sup>381</sup> Whether it was due to an improved model, good advertising or recovery from the recession, between 1935 and 1940 sales increased and nine instruments (including one old model) were produced. However, none was made between 1941–46, and only two in 1947. No oboes d’amore were actually made. Once again this is indicative of the company’s allocation of their resources to war work and military band instruments at the expense of orchestral instruments.

For the first few years after the merger B&H offered predominantly French system bassoons.<sup>382</sup> However, in 1935 they promoted the ‘Professional Model “H”, German system’ model, which had been originally produced by Hawkes.<sup>383</sup> British orchestras developed a preference for the large bore German bassoon during the first few decades of the twentieth century, and although it was slow to catch on, by the beginning of the War it had been adopted by a majority of British players. The change was initiated by the appointment of two Viennese bassoonists to the Hallé Orchestra<sup>384</sup> and influence from the recordings of the Berlin, Vienna and Philadelphia orchestras. However, it was the clear and effortless sound of the bassoonists of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra playing Heckel instruments during their visit to Britain in 1930 that really encouraged British players to change.<sup>385</sup>

A few British bassoonists continued to play French instruments,<sup>386</sup> but from the 1930s the popularity for the German bassoon influenced British manufacturers to change the models that they offered. B&H developed their German model, based on a Heckel instrument. Professional bassoonists were consulted during its

<sup>381</sup> Models: 1081 Cor Anglais wood, 1082 Oboe D’Amore wood. Ibid. p.A28. It was advertised as the ‘New B. & H. Cor Anglais, The Artist Model, constructed on the same lines as the Artist Model Oboe’ in B&H, *Woodwind* 1940. p.92.

<sup>382</sup> B&Co.’s Nos.127,128, ‘Perfected Model’, Hawkes’ ‘Military’ and ‘Morton’ models, a newly developed Hawkes’ ‘Professional Model “B”, French system’, the ‘Service Model’ (French system, based on the old Boosey military model with an ebonite lined wing joint and particularly robust keywork).

<sup>383</sup> B&H, Catalogue (ante 01/05/1935): JHPC. p.A45.

<sup>384</sup> Hans Richter, conductor of the Hallé orchestra (1891-1912), in 1903 and 1904 appointed to the orchestra two German bassoonists, Otto Scheider and Wichtl, who played Heckel bassoons. Scholarships were endowed for two students, Archie Camden and Maurice Whittaker, to study with Scheider at the Royal Manchester College of Music. Langwill, *Bassoon*. pp.69-70.

<sup>385</sup> Archie Camden influenced London bassoonists when he moved to London as principal of the BBC SO in 1933. According to Martin Gatt (personal communication 06/12/2008) he made a lot of money importing instruments. Among the first London players to change were W.H. Foote, Richard Newton (from Hawkes ‘Morton’ model, then Buffet) and John Alexandra (from Buffet). Baines, *Woodwind*. p.340 and Langwill, *Bassoon*. p.171 and p.176.

<sup>386</sup> Wilfred James (1872-1941) high pitch Savary, low pitch Mahillon. Cecil James (1913-1999) Morton, then Buffet. A.E. Wilson high pitch Buffet. Langwill, *Bassoon*. pp.174-182.



development; besides an extant plan of a Heckel instrument drawn in May 1934, there are notes detailing advice sought from John Alexandra and Archie Camden for the crook design. In October 1934 Camden lent the company his Adler crook, which he thought greatly improved the B&H 'H' model that he considered to be 'very defective as approved by Mr Alexandra.' Ultimately the crook was designed by averaging the Heckel and Adler measurements, and was approved by Alexandra in November. In 1935 an Adler 'Sonora' bassoon was bought in to make a comparison with their 'H' model, but it was 'condemned' by Alexandra and subsequently sold second-hand.

Demand for B&H bassoons was very low as the professionals favoured Heckel and Adler instruments, and military players retained the French system. After the initial introduction of the German model in 1934 and 1935 numbers dwindled, but in 1940 and 1941, for just two years, production rose suddenly, owing to an opening in the American market. However, Government restrictions on export affected sales of musical instruments abroad and none was made from 1942 to 1945. A letter from Brian Manton-Myatt to Langwill in 1943 explains the situation:

*Perhaps you will be interested to know that we sent a few dozen of our Almenraeder model bassoons to America about two years ago, and had some really wonderful reports on them. It was a very great disappointment to me that the Government stopped further export just as we had managed to secure a "fair hearing" for our British made bassoons, but I can only hope that the future will bring better and fairer chances for us over there than we have had in the past, when the cut-throat prices of inferior products from France and Germany etc. kept our instruments out.*<sup>387</sup>

Although both the French and German systems were promoted in the 1940 Yearbook,<sup>388</sup> after 1941 B&H manufactured only the German model, thus no doubt reflecting players' preference for it. Only one contrabassoon is recorded between 1930 and 1947; B&H bought in a Heckel for export to Siam (Thailand) on 26 May 1932. It was altered and then tested by Alexandra who discovered it required a shorter crook to obtain the correct pitch.<sup>389</sup>

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<sup>387</sup> Letter: 18/10/1943 from Manton-Myatt to Langwill. EUCHMI/L 4356.

<sup>388</sup> Archie Camden discusses both German and French systems but endorses the former in his article. Archie Camden, "The Bassoon," in *Woodwind Year Book*, (B&H, 1940). pp.35-39.

<sup>389</sup> Appendix 8.ii.a.

Within a year of the merger B&H introduced two new cornet model names: the 'Regent' and the 'Piccadilly'. These and the Hawkes 'Empire' name were sometimes applied to Boosey's B2 model which between 1934 and 1937 was also made for Lafleur and for Besson. As with the trumpet and trombone, the name 'Piccadilly' was specific to models for Lafleur. Many of the cheaper 'Regent' cornets (R718) and, from 1938, a number of 'Regent' long model cornets (R764) were manufactured mainly for export to North America. The long model continued to be more popular in America than in Britain, and in general it was designed so that players of the unfashionable cornet could appear to be playing the fashionable B ♭ trumpet.<sup>390</sup>

Traditional Bach and heralds' trumpets, which were used for oratorio, opera, coronations and state occasions, were offered in the circa 1935/36 catalogues. Aida trumpets were not included. However, two pairs in A ♭ and B natural – Verdi's scoring for *Aida* – were recorded in the workbooks in July 1934, the first listed since the merger. Developments took place the following year when a G bass and three B ♭ tenor Aida trumpets, and also a B ♭ Aida trumpet of cornet length ('Hawkes Patt.'), were made. In March 1937 a higher pitch instrument in E ♭ was introduced. This new 'family' of instruments: E ♭ soprano, B ♭ melody, B ♭ tenor and G bass was approved as standard by Kneller Hall in October 1938.<sup>391</sup> A number of these instruments were produced in 1937 for the coronation of King George VI, and from June 1938 they were recorded and known as 'Coronation Trumpets'.<sup>392</sup> Coronation trumpets have continued in use for British state occasions with many produced subsequently. They have now developed into the modern Coronation Fanfare Trumpet models which are made by Smith Watkins.

The growing demand for the German-style horn in Britain led B&H to develop some large-bore models from February 1935. A number of different designs are recorded in the workbooks, but individual model names and numbers, apart from the lower-grade 'Regent', were not noted until August 1935. B&H double

<sup>390</sup> Personal communication with Arnold Myers.

<sup>391</sup> Appendices 7.vi and 8.xii.c.

<sup>392</sup> For example: two E ♭ Coronation Trumpets were recorded in the workbook on 20/06/1938. An advertisement in *The Musical Progress and Mail* in January 1939 describes them as 'Coronation Fanfare Trumpets (Reg. Design)' stating that they were designed by Major H. E. A. Adkins for the fanfares sounded in Westminster Abbey for the coronation of George VI. "The Musical Progress and Mail: Boosey & Hawkes Advert for Coronation Fanfare Trumpets," (January 1939): HM/CA A1/9/22.

horns were essentially based on an Alexander 103 model (an early design patented in 1909) owned by Alan Hyde, and B&H continued to make Alexander 103-type instruments into the 50s and 60s.<sup>393</sup>

Three new horn models were promoted in the circa 1935/36 catalogues: 'Imperial', 'New Century' and 'Emperor'.<sup>394</sup> As stated in Section 4.7.2 the double horn, which was widely used on the continent, especially in Germany and Italy, was first adopted by a few British players in about 1910.<sup>395</sup> B&Co. had previously attempted to introduce compensating and double horns in 1912 and 1923 respectively, but there had been no demand for them. The new models gained some popularity, although the French-style instruments remained in regular use until the late 1940s.

The 'Imperial', a large bore horn in A, with F and A crooks, according to B&H was designed to produce a big tone for large ensembles and for military band use; nevertheless, horns with F and A crooks were generally intended for orchestral use, not military. The 'Emperor' was a conventional large-bore double horn in F with four rotary cylinders and an extra set of valve slides for B ♭ – the fourth valve enabling an instant change.<sup>396</sup> The advantage of this system was that by using slides, crooks were dispensed with; however, the slides gave the instrument additional weight and made it a much heavier model than the others. The large bore 'New Century' horn was a progression of Boosey's earlier design, and was much lighter in weight. It was a compensating double horn which served the same purpose as the double horn whereby the fourth valve changed the pitch from F to B ♭.<sup>397</sup> Professional horn players, besides Alan Hyde, who had custom-built instruments during this period included a Mr. Phillips, a Mr. Marshall and Thomas Busby, and one particular commission was from a film production at Elstree for three valveless French hunting horns.

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<sup>393</sup> Personal communication with Bradley Strauchen-Scherer. Compensating double rotary horn: sn146094, 04/07/1935 was copied from a 103 owned by Alan Hyde. DJB Photograph Album. HM/B&H.

<sup>394</sup> Model numbers B4049, B4050, B4051.

<sup>395</sup> Adkins, *Treatise*. p.131.

<sup>396</sup> B&H, Catalogue (post 01/05/1935): JMPC. p.25 and p.27.

<sup>397</sup> *Ibid.* p.26.

Besides producing high-quality basses, B&H developed the lower priced 'B' class range branded 'Regent' for both the home market and for export.<sup>398</sup> After the merger, sousaphones were not produced until 1936 when an average of six was made each year until the war; cheaper 'Regent' models were introduced in 1936. A number of experimental, newly developed and unusual basses were recorded in the workbooks and included in Blaikley's album.<sup>399</sup>

In 1933, B&H designed a new style G+D bass trombone (a large bore model with a rotary valve to D) in collaboration with William Betty, bass trombonist in the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.<sup>400</sup> The progression of the design and a further experimental instrument can be seen in the workbooks. An alternative valve tuning slide for C was provided for repertoire including a low A ♭.<sup>401</sup> The 'Betty' model was used by orchestral players in the 1930s but started to fall out of fashion in the 1950s. Brass bands started using them in the 1960s and 1970s when all trombone bores became wider.<sup>402</sup>

## 4.8 Music-making during wartime

War was declared on 1 September 1939. The effect was far-reaching and brought about lasting changes to all aspects of society. After an initial lull, music performance and concert-going flourished, with music of all genres boosting the nation's morale throughout the War.<sup>403</sup> Orchestral performances reached large audiences in the provinces as the major symphony orchestras left London and toured the country. However, as wartime progressed many new concert series were organised in London, including one during the 1941–42 season which was presented under the patronage of the Allied Governments and the British Council

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<sup>398</sup> Workbook records and DJB's photograph album document some instruments for export to the Maltese dealer Carabott and for Besson.

<sup>399</sup> Appendix 8.i.b.

<sup>400</sup> G+D trombones were made in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by Courtois. The bore size of the B&H 'Betty' model was 0.527 inches whereas the standard B&H bore size was 0.484 inches. Dixon, "Kidshifter."

<sup>401</sup> In 1933 a 'Betty' model was made for Frank Taylor, a professor at Kneller Hall. Eighteen 'Betty' trombones were made up to 1939 and twenty more between 1947 and 1959. Myers, "Brasswind Manufacturing at B&H." p.58.

<sup>402</sup> The first B&H trombone with a really wide bore was their 'Sovereign' model. (See Section 8.8.1) The last known 'Betty' was made in 1976 (sn590109, given out in 1976). It belongs to a British collector. Personal communication with Arnold Myers.

<sup>403</sup> E.D. Mackerness, *A Social History of English Music* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964). p.265.

by the Royal Philharmonic Society in partnership with the BBC, LSO and B&H.<sup>404</sup> The flautist Gerald Jackson recounts that there was a great music boom in London during the War with many new permanent and short-lived orchestras appearing, such as the New London Orchestra, the New Concert Orchestra and the National Symphony Orchestra.<sup>405</sup>

The Entertainments National Service Association was established to entertain the military troops, and the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts was set up to support and promote British culture and enable civilians to participate in the Arts.<sup>406</sup> This led to the formation of many concert societies and concert series. Listening to BBC wireless broadcasts and gramophone records became popular domestic pastimes, and sales of gramophone records were high, in spite of purchase tax. Broadcasts of music on the Home Programme, and entertainment and music of a lighter nature on the Forces' Programme for the troops reached a wide audience. Dance halls and night clubs thrived as people tried to enjoy life and forget the horrors of war.<sup>407</sup>

In spite of increased musical activity, the number of wind instruments required for orchestral players, and consequently produced by manufacturers, was negligible compared to those for military, brass and dance bands throughout the period. However, for most of the War wind instrument manufacture in Britain was severely diminished because of the shortage of raw materials, trade restrictions, the prohibitive rate of purchase tax, and above all the use of the factories and workforces for war work.

## 4.9 Wartime in the factory

Towards the end of the 1930s growing international tension and the changing political situation affected trade conditions and brought about a decline in the sales of musical instruments and consequently an increase in factory stock. At Besson for example, sales were down by about a third and stock was

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<sup>404</sup> Kenyon, *BBC Symphony Orchestra*. pp.170, 179.

<sup>405</sup> Gerald Jackson, *First Flute* (Dent, 1986). p.74.

<sup>406</sup> [http://www.portlandcema.org.au/cema\\_inc/background/background.html](http://www.portlandcema.org.au/cema_inc/background/background.html) Accessed 29/10/2014.

<sup>407</sup> Mackerness, *Social History*. pp.265-70.

approximately double the figure of the same period for the previous year.<sup>408</sup> With preparations for war, costly obligations were imposed upon companies by the Civil Defence Act, whereby they were required to construct air-raid shelters, to form and equip fire-fighting and first aid squads, to obscure lights in all premises, and to take out Commodity Insurance against war risks.<sup>409</sup> Also, in accordance with the government fire prevention order, companies were obliged to appoint a duty rota of employees to guard factory premises in case of air raids and incendiary bombs.<sup>410</sup>

Instrument manufacturers undertook government contracts from the Ministry of Supply and the India Office for bugles and trumpets, but prices were not remunerative. However in October 1939, at meetings of the Musical Instrument Makers Association, which were attended by B&H, Besson, Dallas & Sons and the Premier Drum Company, it was agreed that higher basic prices would be quoted for subsequent contracts.<sup>411</sup>

From the outbreak of war increasing government control was exercised over production methods, machinery, engineering skills, management, designs and raw materials used at British manufacturing companies, and many small factories were requisitioned by the Government for war work. New government departments were created to ensure maximum use of resources. The responsibility for obtaining and distributing raw materials was handled by the Raw Material Department, which became part of the Ministry of Supply, and a Ministry of Aircraft Production was created to control the manufacture of planes and accessories for the Royal Air Force. Many parts and accessories for airplanes were bought by the Air Ministry under the 'embodiment loan scheme' from smaller companies, and constructed at larger factories, some of which had previously been used for car manufacture.<sup>412</sup>

Instrument making companies, including the Salvation Army Musical Instrument Department at St Albans, reduced production of instruments in order to concentrate on aircraft work.<sup>413</sup> B&H put their efforts into obtaining war work and

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<sup>408</sup> Besson, *Shareholder Meeting Minutes* (1932-1957): HM/B&H A227/178. 18/4/39, p.65.

<sup>409</sup> Ibid. 26/10/39, p.72.

<sup>410</sup> Ibid. 12/09/40, p.83 and 27/11/40, p.84.

<sup>411</sup> Ibid. 26/10/39 and 17/04/40, p.78.

<sup>412</sup> Mary Elizabeth Murphy, *The British War Economy* (New York: Professional and Technical Press, 1943). pp.45-63.

<sup>413</sup> Besson, *Shareholder Meeting Minutes*. 01/1941, pp.87-88.

secured War Department Air Ministry contracts,<sup>414</sup> some of which they sub-contracted to Besson, who specialised in the fabrication of aircraft and engine pipes.<sup>415</sup> Although orders for instruments declined owing to a lack of support for band music in the forces and civilian bands, B&H managed to maintain some instrument production and publishing throughout the War.

War work was of great importance to manufacturers as, in June 1940, the government instigated the Limitation of Supplies Order which restricted the supply of non-essential consumer goods to the home market.<sup>416</sup> This severely affected all companies, resulting in a sudden reduction in sales. Besson recorded that the order was causing them great difficulties, and that therefore they were attempting 'to secure other business through various non-restricted sources.' Their trade association was also endeavouring 'to get the question of the limitation of supplies of musical instruments to the armed forces raised in Parliament with a view to getting some relief.'<sup>417</sup> Purchase Tax also greatly affected the sales of musical instruments in Britain during the war. It was introduced in October 1940 at a rate of 33.3% to lower spending on non-essential items and to raise revenue.<sup>418</sup>

In addition to reduced sales, companies were affected by increased wage bills. Between 1938 and 1944, as imports of food and goods declined, the cost of living rose by 50%. The government was forced to subsidise basic foods, and wages increased according to an agreement with the employees' trade union based on the cost of living scale as recorded in the Labour Gazette. Between the commencement of war and November 1940 instrument makers' wage rates were increased three times, each time by ½d per hour.<sup>419</sup> At Besson, from May 1940, salaried staff receiving a weekly wage below £7 were paid a cost of living allowance 'as an effort by the Company to share part of the burden imposed on small salaried employees' by the wartime conditions. It was not regarded as increase of remuneration and could be raised or discontinued at any time.<sup>420</sup> The

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<sup>414</sup> Work undertaken included contracts for Midgley Harmer Ltd., Gloster Aircraft Co., the Bristol Aeroplane Co. at Accrington, Armstrong Whitworth at Coventry, Aston, Napier Motor Co. and Rootes Ltd., Liverpool.

<sup>415</sup> Besson, *Shareholder Meeting Minutes*. 27/11/1940, p.84, and 27/10/1941, p.94.

<sup>416</sup> *Ibid.*, 27/11/1940, p.84.

<sup>417</sup> *Ibid.*, p.91.

<sup>418</sup> *Ibid.*, 27/11/1940, p.84.

<sup>419</sup> *Ibid.*, 27/11/1940, p.85.

<sup>420</sup> *Ibid.*, 12/09/1940, pp.82-83.

allowance was 4/6d per week for married employees and 3/- per week for single employees.

During the War, owing to the vulnerability of central London to air attack, many firms sought factory premises in safer areas of the city. Towards the end of 1941, on the recommendation of the Ministry of Aircraft Production, Besson, together with B&H, secured 'dispersal premises' at Enfield in order to further their aircraft work.<sup>421</sup> A B&H letterhead gives the location of the works as Edgware, Enfield and Brimsdown, Middlesex.<sup>422</sup> At B&H war work included the manufacture of parts for aircraft and their assembly, such as bomb-door spars, bomb-doors, Lancaster elevators and Spitfire ailerons<sup>423</sup> (Figure 18). They also made wire recorders that were supplied to all branches of the services.<sup>424</sup> The Edgware factory was reorganised and new plant installed. A letter dated 18 October 1943 from Brian Manton-Myatt to Lyndesay Langwill gives a personal account of the harsh realities of what went on at the factory:

*Unfortunately a fairly large list of foreign addresses I had compiled before the war was destroyed by the firm's workmen who demolished my tuning room one day (to make space for some very un musical war work) before I could rescue it, together with many of my papers and designs for post war new models of wood-wind. If only they had had a shade of respect for things other than objets de guerre I might perhaps have had a few more for you [...] I will do my best to trace the unfortunate instruments in our collection, but they have had disgracefully rough treatment by the workmen who removed them at the behest of the M.A.P. who have simply run roughshod over the Works and cleared out any and every thing that took space for machines. I do not even know where the collection is housed, much less in what condition it can be, and I tremble for the many interesting and excellent specimens it contained. If I can hear anything of its whereabouts I shall try and unearth it, but I dare not be sanguine in view of all that has happened here since the Government took over the Factory. I cannot be more explicit, but there have been painful moments for those of us who regarded our work as an art to be respected and preserved at*

<sup>421</sup> The premises at Embassy Hall, Eaton Road, Enfield comprised approximately 25,000 sq. ft. and was rented for £600 p.a. The administration and staffing was arranged by both houses and Sidney Michaels appointed as General Manager. Ibid., 27/10/1941, pp.93-94.

<sup>422</sup> Letter from G. Bryer, Professional Dept. to Langwill. 21/12/1943. EUCHMI/L, 4403.

<sup>423</sup> B&H, Wartime Photograph Album (1940s): HM/B&H.

<sup>424</sup> The Wirek type A was designed to be portable (571b) mainly for recording speech. [http://www.vintagerecorders.co.uk/VR\\_View\\_Page.asp?IDS=18](http://www.vintagerecorders.co.uk/VR_View_Page.asp?IDS=18) Accessed 30/12/2013.



*least as far as possible during these times which will come to an end sooner or later.*<sup>425</sup>

The purchase of the new machinery was costly; however, it was recognised that after war ended it would be useful for instrument manufacturing.<sup>426</sup> Engineers were brought in to run the factory and many women workers employed<sup>427</sup> (Figure 19). In 1943 the company's letterhead documented the firm as 'Direct Contractors to Admiralty, War Office, Air Ministry, Ministry of Supply, Office of Works, Crown Agents for Colonies. Also to the Governments of India, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Union of South Africa, Burma, Egypt, Sudan, Iraq.'<sup>428</sup> During the War there was a great shortage of raw materials, and a licence was required to obtain steel and brass for making components for contracts. Orders from the mills often took nine months to be delivered, and everything was rationed.<sup>429</sup> Rubber was a restricted substance, and this affected the use of ebonite for instrument manufacture. With much of the Edgware factory given over to war work, production levels of instrument manufacture fell and many instrument models were discontinued.

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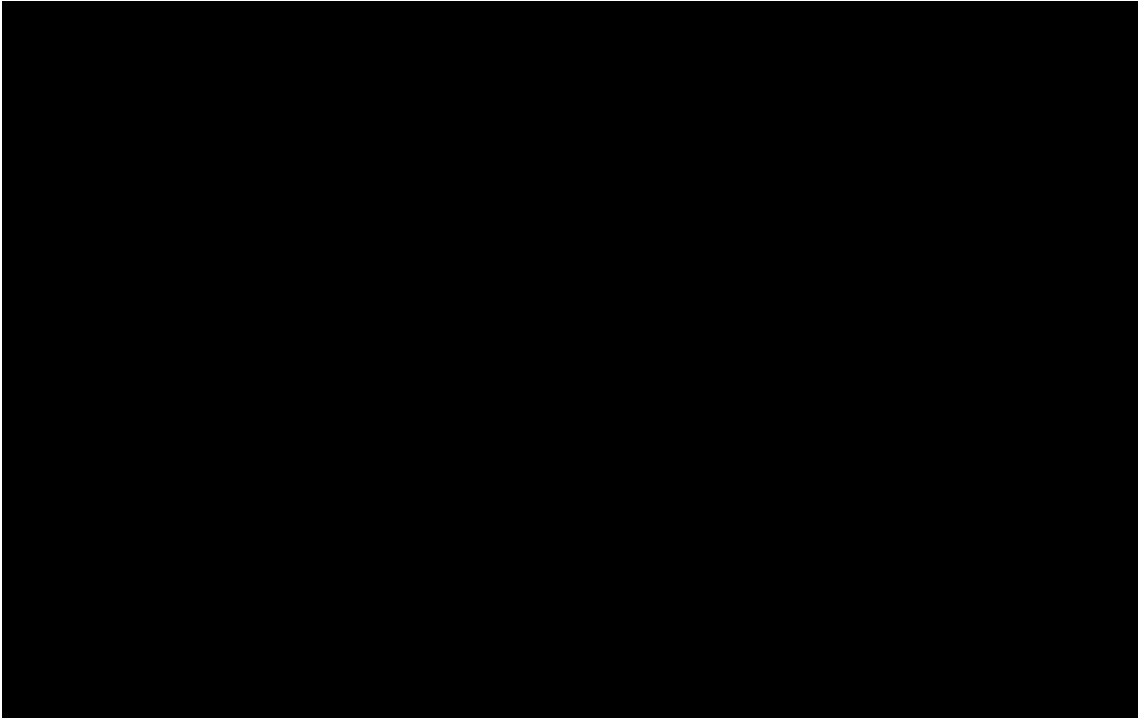
<sup>425</sup> EUCHMI/L 4356.

<sup>426</sup> Besson, *Shareholder Meeting Minutes*. 17/04/1940. p.78.

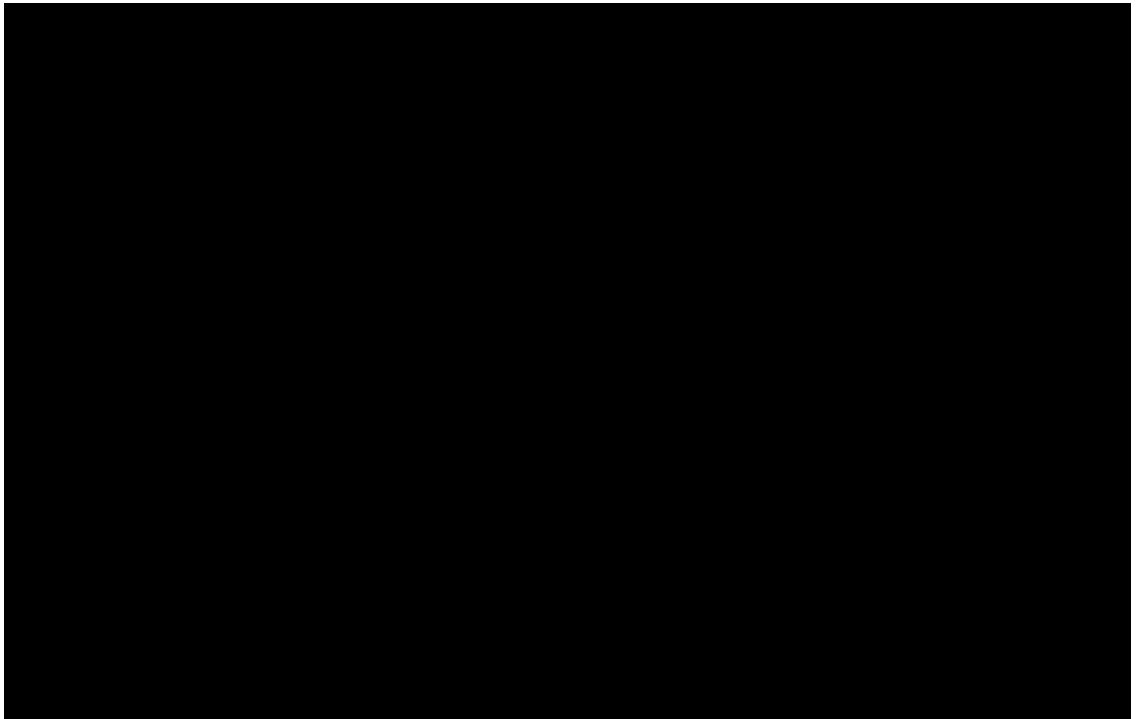
<sup>427</sup> B&H, Wartime Photograph Album.

<sup>428</sup> Correspondence from Brian Manton-Myatt to Langwill. EUCHMI/L 4356.

<sup>429</sup> Macree, in B&H, *Edgware Newsletter* (1970). p.18.



**Figure 18.** Covering and doping Lancaster elevators (HM/B&H).



**Figure19.** Heavy press shop (HM/B&H).

## 4.10 The effects of World War II on the range of models produced

B&H announced in their *Woodwind Year Book*, written in 1939, that

*the B.&H. Factory must maintain sufficient tools, machines, patterns – and a host of other things – in order to make: 63 different kinds of piccolos; 146 different kinds of flutes; 250 different kinds of clarinets; with all their variations of pitch, materials, systems of keywork, etc. (and there are also cor [sic] anglais, bassoons, bass clarinets, corni di bassetti, and various other less frequently seen instruments to be considered!).*<sup>430</sup>

This may have been the case before the War, but during it instrument manufacture was severely diminished, with considerably fewer models retained. For a few years war work dominated production using the engineering machinery that had been installed for that purpose. When instrument making was re-established towards the end of the war, this machinery was adapted for mass production of lower grade instruments such as ‘Regent’ trumpets, trombones and clarinets. The new processes and workforce brought about a radical change in production methods, and this resulted in a change in company ethos and a dramatic increase in the number of instruments made.

Several new clarinet models were manufactured during the early war years. As already mentioned in Section 4.7, regular production of the 1026 ‘Predominant’ (Boehm system) clarinet commenced in January 1940. This was followed by the 1027, which was first noted in the workbook in October 1940; only 26 of this model were made. The 926 (Boehm) clarinet (known as the ‘Imperial’ from 1946) was introduced in January 1941, and this with the 1026 and 1024 (14-key) model clarinets were the only reed instruments produced in quantity that year. Two clarinets of a new model with articulated  $g\sharp^0$  and fork  $b\flat^0$ , the 927, were made in 1944, but then no more were made until 1946.

In November 1941 the Minister of Labour, Ernest Bevin, who was responsible for allocation of the British workforce during the War, targeted a 30–

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<sup>430</sup> B&H, *Woodwind 1940*. p.111.

40% increase in the production of war equipment for the next year.<sup>431</sup> Workers were therefore transferred from non-essential production and retrained, and more women were recruited into industry. In March 1942 output rose considerably, with the rate of production in Britain and its Dominions estimated at 70–80% of that in Germany.<sup>432</sup> This move was reflected at B&H where many instrument makers were transferred to war work; the reed instrument making workforce diminished from twenty men to three as factory space was turned over to the war effort.<sup>433</sup>

Consequently reed production fell dramatically from 742 instruments in 1941 to 62 in 1942. The same effect can be seen in brass production – 1,530 instruments in 1941 to 630 in 1942 before a sudden rise when mass production commenced in 1945, with an average of 3,292 brass instruments a year between 1946 and 1955.<sup>434</sup> No new brass models were introduced during the war except for a high pitch 'Utility Trumpet' (provided with a slide for low pitch) which was produced in quantity from 1942, some cheap Class A trumpets and in 1944 an experimental B ♭ trombone.

During the 1940s B&H acquired Rudall Carte & Co. and Besson & Co., their two closest rivals who were struggling to continue in business. This consolidated the company's control of the market, increased productivity and led to a more diverse range of products. The purchase in 1943/44 of Rudall Carte enabled B&H to add professional orchestral flautists to their clientele. Until World War II Rudall Carte had manufactured brass and reed instruments as well as flutes, but brass production was discontinued in 1939 owing to lack of trade during and after the Depression.<sup>435</sup> Rudall Carte's reputation was primarily for fine quality wooden flutes, which for many years were the instrument of choice of British orchestral flautists. As Anthony Baines put it in 1957, 'among leading makers of the wooden flute – they make metal ones too – are Rudall Carte (now amalgamated with B&H), renowned as the finest British flute makers ever since they produced the first English-made Boehm flutes over a century ago.'<sup>436</sup> B&H continued to manufacture Rudall Carte woodwind instruments separately under the Rudall Carte name until

<sup>431</sup> Murphy, *British War Economy*. p.76, citing *The Economist*, 1 November 1941, pp.526-7.

<sup>432</sup> Murphy cites Geoffrey Crowther, editor of *The Economist*. Ibid. p.76 and p.78.

<sup>433</sup> *Woodwind & Percussion 9* and *Instruments Brass 17*: HM/B&H A227/020, A227/061.

<sup>434</sup> Appendix 8.xiii.

<sup>435</sup> Myers, "Brasswind Manufacturing at B&H." p.55.

<sup>436</sup> Baines, *Woodwind*. p.54.

the 1980s, but after the take-over the name was applied to cheap mass-produced models, and not to high quality instruments.<sup>437</sup>

B&H's merger with the distinguished and successful company Besson & Co. in effect took place gradually over thirty years. Although manufacturing links between the two companies commenced in 1931, Besson did not appear to become part of B&H until March 1948 when the works were removed from their factory at the old Boosey Frederick Mews premises to become part of the Edgware plant. As discussed in later chapters, Besson's instruments were consistently held in high regard by players, and B&H retained and reissued some of their models, finally rebranding themselves Besson in 2001.

## 4.11 Conclusions

The poor economic state in Britain during the Depression caused a severe decrease in the sales of musical instruments both at home and abroad. However, throughout this period manufacturers generally maintained a high level of productivity, which led to many instruments remaining in factory stock for some years afterwards. This situation forced a number of companies out of business, but the amalgamation of B&Co. and H&S enabled the joint company to survive. By consolidating their workforces and restructuring the factory, B&H, the largest instrument manufacturing company in Britain, was able to develop its design and production methods, retain a broad customer base and assume dominance of the market during this lean period. During the immediate post-merger years the new firm struggled to find a corporate identity; the image that the company projected was that of a large, scientific and mechanised business, the antithesis of the earlier companies. However, in spite of their commitment to modernity, B&H did acknowledge in their literature the importance of traditional craftsmanship.

The flourishing musical activity in Britain during the 1930s resulted in continued demand for instruments, and B&H developed many new models aimed at popular culture music. Until this time most of the instruments the company manufactured were based on French models; however, a growing move towards German and American larger-bore instruments influenced B&H to develop new

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<sup>437</sup> This can be seen in the workbooks and catalogues.

designs in an attempt to keep up with foreign competition. Once again B&H was being led by fashion rather than directing it.

Although during the Second World War there was a widespread growth in musical activity throughout all genres of music and the Arts, sales of musical instruments were limited owing to severe trade restrictions, taxation and government sanctions. Shortages of raw materials affected production, but above all it was the change-over to war work, the altered workforce and use of new machinery in the factory that irrevocably transformed the instrument manufacturing industry. Despite the hardships and changes that war brought about, B&H was one of the few companies to maintain some instrument making throughout this period. Continued musical activity in Britain ensured a small demand for wind instruments and repairs, and therefore, even though most of the factory space was taken over for making aircraft parts and munitions, they were able to continue with their musical business, albeit with a fraction of their previous output. With foresight, B&H developed designs for mass producing instruments for when war ended, utilising the newly installed factory machinery. Consequently, in 1945 the company was able to effect significant expansion into the export market, particularly to America and Canada.

Although the adoption by B&H of some modern engineering skills before the War heralded their move to mechanised instrument-making afterwards, the wartime acquisition of engineering machinery and proficiency, and the development of new processes, led to a change in the ethos and identity of the company. Since much of what had previously been undertaken by hand could now be performed by machine, craftsmen who were used to hand-crafting instruments in small batches were forced to adapt their skills to new and modern methods of working. B&H became characterised by its mass production – a modern, progressive company led by engineers, with an emphasis on scientific precision, accuracy in design and manufacture.

## Chapter 5

### The development of Besson and its acquisition by Boosey & Hawkes

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#### 5.1 Introduction

The date that B&H acquired the English firm Besson and its allied companies is generally stated as 1948.<sup>438</sup> However, in effect, the acquisition was long drawn out, progressing from competition to mutual affiliation, and eventually to complete integration. The process was gradual, with aspects of ownership and integration occurring over a period of almost thirty years. B&H did not achieve total ownership until July 1968, when the final transfer of all the remaining shares took place.<sup>439</sup>

From the second half of the nineteenth century Besson was perhaps the most esteemed and popular of all the brass instrument manufacturers in Britain, with a high reputation for fine quality instruments within brass band circles and the military profession. They consequently provided strong competition to rival firms including B&Co. and H&S. All three manufacturers thrived during their early existence and maintained their independence throughout the difficult economic times which developed after the First World War. However, the problems within the trade during the Depression, which are well documented in the Besson Directors' Minutes, led to a growing collaboration through necessity amongst the companies.

The Directors' Minutes give a detailed insight into every aspect of the company from the general day-to-day running of the business and small factory concerns, to the appointment of directors, company acquisitions and national issues such as the economy and the effects of war. By examining the extant company records it has been possible to gain an understanding of the company, relationships between directors, management and workers, and of the firm with other instrument manufacturers. When Boosey and Hawkes merged in 1930 Besson remained their greatest competitor for market share, and therefore a highly

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<sup>438</sup> The Besson works moved to the B&H factory in Edgware in 1948.

<sup>439</sup> Besson, *Register of Transfers, Annual List 1906-1968*: HM/B&H A227/190.

desirable acquisition. However, from 1931 the links between the two companies rapidly became closer and more assured. The role that Besson played in the rise of B&H to their monopoly of the British instrument manufacturing market may have been underrated in the past; the comprehensive records of share holdings and transfers show the acquisition of shares by dominant shareholders which ultimately benefited what was to become the parent company.

This chapter discusses the development of the English company Besson from its re-establishment as a limited company in 1895, through its increasing collaboration with B&H during the 1930s and the war years, the merger and removal of the company to Edgware to the final transfer of shares to B&H in 1968.

## 5.2 The early history of Besson, 1837–1895

The London Besson factory was established in 1858. However, it is generally accepted that the company was founded in Paris around 1837,<sup>440</sup> although an early letter-head, dated 1895, gives the date of foundation as 1834 whilst Constant Pierre lists it as 1838.<sup>441</sup> Gustave Auguste Besson was the son of a colonel in the French Army.<sup>442</sup> According to Charles Timms, who had been associated with Besson & Co. Ltd. from before 1900 (director and Assistant Manager from 1924, and company Chairman from 1939),<sup>443</sup> Besson commenced his business at the age of eighteen, having ‘produced and registered a new model cornet which was universally recognised as a great improvement on all previous instruments of its kind’. Timms also stated that Besson was ‘a genius in the science of acoustics as applied to the construction of wind musical instruments’.<sup>444</sup> In a *certificat d’addition* of July 1856, Besson described his new designs using elaborate acoustical and mathematical terms. Myers and Eldredge suggest that there was no satisfactory theory to support his claims at that time. It is more likely that prototypes were selected by a process whereby forty or fifty tubes were made, out of which

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<sup>440</sup> Waterhouse, *Index*. p.29.

<sup>441</sup> Besson, Letterhead of Letter to Shareholders (1895): HM/B&H A227/179; Pierre, *Facteurs d’instruments*. p.340.

<sup>442</sup> Rose, *Talks*. p.124.

<sup>443</sup> Besson, *Limited Directors’ Minute Book 1917-1932*: HM/B&H A227/183. 31/10/1924 and Besson, *Shareholder Meeting Minutes 1932-1957*: HM/B&H A227/178. 06/09/1939.

<sup>444</sup> Charles E. Timms, "It Started in 1837: The Story of a Brass Wind Instrument Maker," in *Brass Today*, ed. Frank Wright (London: Besson & Co. Ltd., 1957). p.121.



instruments were constructed and then tested, in order to discover the best designs. This practice was described in a Besson broadsheet (circa 1874–85).<sup>445</sup> However, the practice of perpetuating Besson's scientific claims was probably cultivated and perpetuated by the company for publicity purposes.

From the age of ten Besson had been apprenticed to Dujariez, a military brass instrument maker, and subsequently had worked in several other houses before establishing his own company. Besson was ambitious. He rapidly built up his business and earned a fine reputation for his brass instruments both in France and abroad; by exhibiting, he achieved international recognition. In the 1844 Paris Exposition he displayed a *cor à pistons* and a bugle, which although unfinished won acclaim. Subsequently, at the Great Exhibition in London in 1851, he achieved a second class medal and in Paris in 1855, a first class medal. In the 1867 Paris Exhibition, both the Paris and the London houses were represented.<sup>446</sup> At its outset, the firm was registered as G. Besson and from 1858 (when Gustave went to London) as Mme G.A. Besson, but from 1864 it became known as F. Besson.<sup>447</sup> It can be seen from the stockbooks that in addition to securing a large share of the British market, Besson exported a great number of instruments to Europe and America.<sup>448</sup>

Besson was one of the many instrument makers to produce innovative and new designs. During the eighteenth century there had been little brasswind manufacture in France; the main products were horns and trumpets. Motivated by a sudden increase in demand from the military during the first half of the nineteenth century, makers developed manufacturing processes which resulted in a huge increase in the types and models of instrument available.

Besson, eager to seek business abroad, opened a branch in London in 1850, the year of preparation for the Great Exhibition. His first address was at 441 Strand and 8 Lowther Arcade at the premises of instrument maker John Pask, and then from 1855 he operated from 214 Regent Street, the business of Louis Jullien, who was at that time a musical instrument dealer and importer.<sup>449</sup> Having

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<sup>445</sup> Myers and Eldredge, "Brasswind Production of London Besson." p.50.

<sup>446</sup> Pierre, *Facteurs d'instruments*. pp.340-342.

<sup>447</sup> Waterhouse, *Index*. p.30. F. Besson stands for Florentine, the name of Gustave Besson's wife.

<sup>448</sup> Besson, *Stockbooks 1868-1899*: HM/B&H A227/167-174.

<sup>449</sup> Waterhouse, *Index*. pp.30, 197 and extant Pask & Besson cornet (Andrew Houston, Private Collection).

established his London business in 1853,<sup>450</sup> in 1858 he moved to London. This move was probably encouraged by his increasing success in England, and was no doubt prompted by a wish to escape Adolphe Sax's French influence and the Sax lawsuits that he had become involved in regarding instrument design and copyright. The assets of the firm were transferred to his wife Mme Florentine Besson, who assumed control of the French business.<sup>451</sup>

Timms relates that in 1857 Besson 'took up residence in Euston Road, London, and in a large workroom at the rear of the premises commenced manufacture with the aid of three of his compatriots. Trade prospered, and later a large manufactory was erected at the rear of his house, accommodating over two hundred artisans'.<sup>452</sup> The business was able to take advantage of the great demand for instruments that had been created by the rapid growth in the popularity of brass bands.

The company was located at 198 Euston Road with, from at least 1882, the works at 16, 17 and 18 Southampton Mews in north-west London.<sup>453</sup> By 1884 the works had moved to 33, 35, 37 and 39, Euston Buildings, which were located across a lane (now Stephenson Way) behind the Euston showroom.<sup>454</sup> All of the premises were demolished and redeveloped during the mid-1930s.<sup>455</sup>

The Besson share prospectus states that Gustave Besson died in 1873.<sup>456</sup> However, both Pierre and Waterhouse give the date as 1874.<sup>457</sup> The business was continued by his widow, Florentine, and their daughters Cécile and Marthe as 'Mme. Veuve Besson'.<sup>458</sup> When Florentine died in 1877 the firm was carried on by Marthe, who in 1888 became sole proprietress.<sup>459</sup> Marthe had been involved in the

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<sup>450</sup> Besson, *Share Prospectus* 1895: HM/B&H A227/179.

<sup>451</sup> Pierre, *Facteurs d'instruments*. p.341, 342.

<sup>452</sup> Timms, "It Started in 1837." p.121.

<sup>453</sup> *Post Office London Directory. Part 3: Trades and Professional*. 1882.

<sup>454</sup> *Business Directory of London. Part 1: Alphabetical*. 1884.

<sup>455</sup> Besson moved out of the premises by April 1934. Besson, *Shareholder Minutes* 1932-1957. p.14. 196 and 198 Euston Road were redeveloped with neighbouring buildings and have become part of 200 Euston Road. There is a commemorative stone on No. 194 with the date of completion of the new building given as 09/03/1932.

<sup>456</sup> Besson, *Share Prospectus*.

<sup>457</sup> Pierre, *Facteurs d'instruments*. p.342 and Waterhouse, *Index*. p.29.

<sup>458</sup> Pierre, *Facteurs d'instruments*. p.342.

<sup>459</sup> Besson, *Share Prospectus*. Waterhouse gives the date as 1875. Waterhouse, *Index*.

many details of running the firm from an early age.<sup>460</sup> In his *Talks with Bandsmen* Rose reported that she was 'one of the most remarkable ladies connected with the brass instrument trade'.<sup>461</sup> Timms described her as having been 'a remarkably astute and business-like Frenchwoman [...] an energetic and enthusiastic worker, personally acquainted with bands and bandsmen throughout the country [...] a splendid hostess [who] was [...] hospitable to players both at the London headquarters and when present at Festivals'.<sup>462</sup> It is evident from the minutes that Mme Besson had been in the habit of giving all the workmen brandy as a bonus at Christmas; this was discontinued in favour of extra pay after the sale of the business in 1895.<sup>463</sup>

Marthe Besson proved herself to be a shrewd business woman, taking charge of all aspects of running the company including, from 1878, the many patents taken out by the firm. On her marriage in 1880 to Adolphe Fontaine, a civil servant who hated commerce and musical instrument making, Marthe took responsibility for both of the Paris and London houses.<sup>464</sup> From then the company name was changed to Fontaine-Besson. During the 1890s Marthe moved to London and sued for divorce owing to Fontaine's violent behaviour. In 1894 'his provocative conduct induced the ninety workers and five office staff in Paris to strike in protest', which resulted in a six-week lockout.<sup>465</sup>

### 5.3 Besson & Co. Ltd., London.

In 1895 Marthe Besson sold the goodwill and assets of the English part of the Besson business to Arthur Bryans, who in turn sold the company to Besson & Co., a company 'formed for the purpose of taking over as a going concern and carrying on as from the 1<sup>st</sup> of June, 1895, the old established and well known business of Besson & Co., Prototype Brass and Wood Musical Instrument Manufacturers.' Besson was registered as a limited company on 27 July 1895.<sup>466</sup>

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<sup>460</sup> Pierre, *Facteurs d'instruments*. p.342.

<sup>461</sup> Rose, *Talks*. p.124.

<sup>462</sup> Timms, "It Started in 1837." p.49.

<sup>463</sup> Besson, *Limited Directors' Minute Book 1895-1898*: HM/B&H A227/179. 17/12/1895.

<sup>464</sup> Waterhouse, *Index*. p.29.

<sup>465</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>466</sup> Besson, *Directors' Minutes 1895-1898*. 26/11/1895.

Henry Rowland Grice and Robert Crawford Lees, existing managers of long standing, were appointed joint managers of the new company for five years, and were remunerated with a fixed salary, commission on sales and 400 fully paid-up preference shares and 800 fully paid-up ordinary shares in the Company.<sup>467</sup>

The company premises comprised 198 Euston Road, and 31, 33, 35, 37 and 39 Euston Buildings, for which the rent was £460 per annum. Besson took the lease on the adjoining premises of 196 Euston Road<sup>468</sup> in April 1902.<sup>469</sup> In 1897 Besson was hopeful of finding additional accommodation; an entry in the minutes recorded that 'stabling the horse so near the Drum Factory was inconvenient and injurious to the painting on the Drums. It was decided that if no. 41 Euston buildings could be obtained on reasonable terms, it should be taken.'<sup>470</sup>

The purchase of the company did not run smoothly. In October 1895 Adolphe Fontaine, the husband of Marthe Besson, issued a writ restraining the company from completing the purchase on the basis that the business should not have been sold without his authority. In a letter to the shareholders the directors reassured them that their money was not in danger as the company had not yet paid the vendor. In the opinion of the directors this matter was 'a quarrel between husband and wife to which the company should not have been made a party.' The directors assured the shareholders that the firm was 'in a most prosperous condition, & several important projects are under consideration of the directors, having for their object the extension and further development of the business.'<sup>471</sup>

In November 1895 the solicitor, Mr Burt, stated 'Mr. Fontaine had authorised Madame to sell the business and in his opinion the litigation being carried on does not concern the Company.'<sup>472</sup> The situation was resolved in August 1896,<sup>473</sup> and 'part payment' of £18,900 was made to Arthur Bryans.<sup>474</sup> The balance owing to

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<sup>467</sup> The first board of directors consisted of Stratton Boulnois, Patrick Robertson Ross and Henry Rowland Grice, with George Smith as Secretary Besson, *Share Prospectus*.

<sup>468</sup> Ibid.

<sup>469</sup> Besson, *Limited Directors' Minute Book 1898-1902*: HM/B&H A227/180. 29/4/1902. A printed 1895 letterhead the address is given as Head Office: 198, Euston Road. Works: 31, 33, 35, 37, and 39 Euston Buildings, London NW. Besson, Letterhead.

<sup>470</sup> Besson, *Directors' Minutes 1895-1898*. 30/06/1897.

<sup>471</sup> Besson, Letterhead.

<sup>472</sup> Besson, *Directors' Minutes 1895-1898*. 26/11/1895.

<sup>473</sup> Ibid. 14/08/1896.

<sup>474</sup> Ibid. 19/08/1896.

Bryans was finally settled in November 1898, when £10,000 of debentures were created as a solution to the situation.<sup>475</sup>

## 5.4 Trade and export at Besson & Co.

During the late nineteenth century the demand for instruments was great, with the major part of sales to the military and brass band market. Trade abroad accounted for a large portion of production, and competition was fierce between rival firms. It was common for all contemporary instrument manufacturing companies to state, with pride, their military and overseas connections; they often over-emphasised the significance of these associations in order to portray themselves to be the most important and successful in the industry. The 1895 prospectus for Besson & Co. Ltd. describes Besson as having

*for many years occupied a leading position in the trade. It supplies the Army and Navy at home and abroad the Militia and Volunteers and Bands of Civil Societies, as well as private purchasers. It has Agencies in the United States, India and several British Colonies and elsewhere, and the firm's goods are sold in nearly every part of the world. More than 35 First-Class and other Awards have been obtained at various international and other exhibitions.*<sup>476</sup>

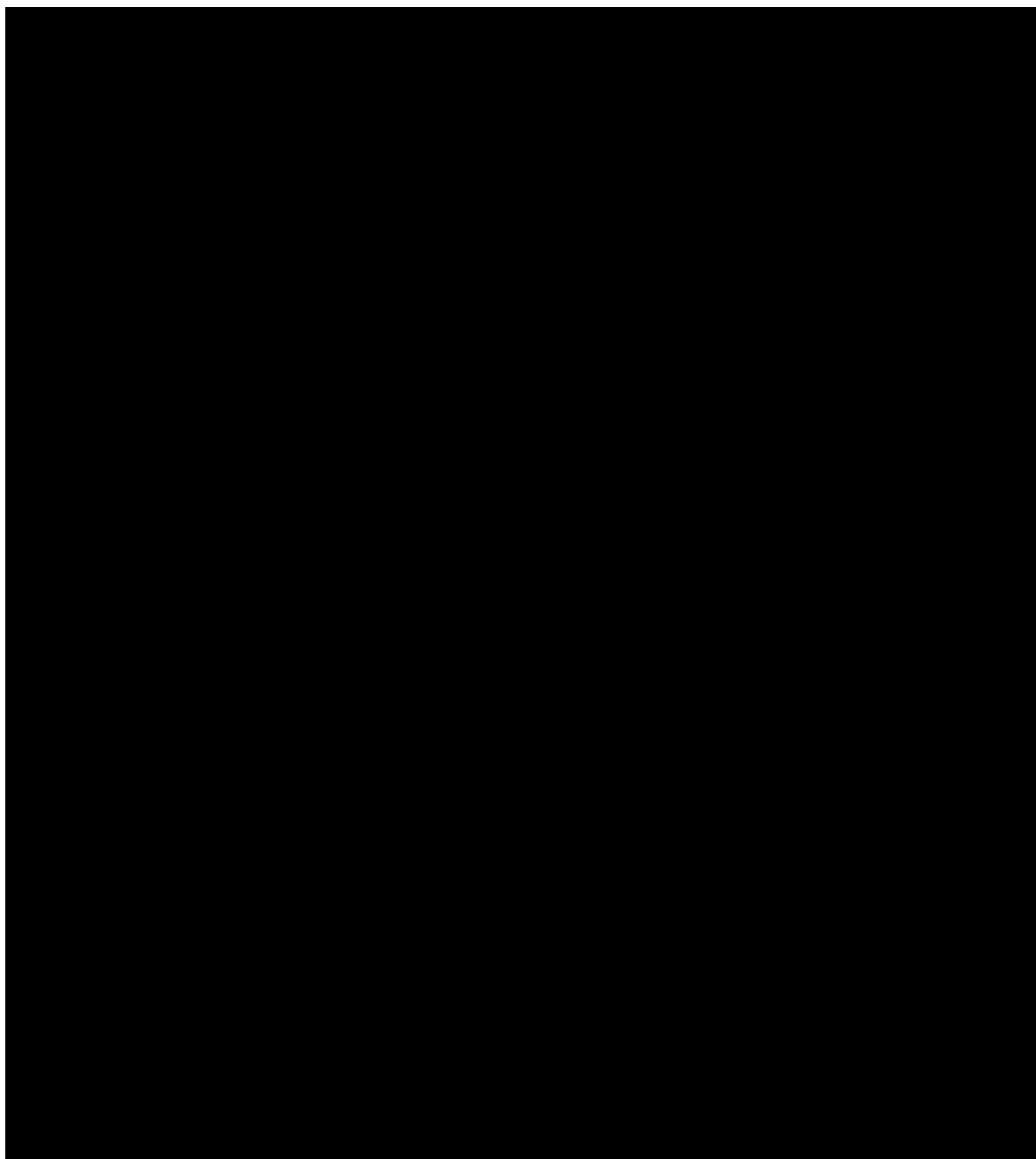
An oilcloth poster (c. 1885) of photographs of 'F. Besson & Co.'s Patent Prototype Musical Instruments' conveys the type of customer the company was targeting and the global extent of their export. They describe themselves as 'Furnishers to Her Majesty's Army and Navy, the Armies Navies and Conservatoires of France, Germany Belgium, Spain etc., by Special Appointment to the Emperors of Japan and Morocco, the Shah of Persia, the King of Siam, and the Rajas of India etc. Also to the Civil Bands and Institutions of All Nations'<sup>477</sup> (Figure 20).

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<sup>475</sup> Ibid. 23/09/1898.

<sup>476</sup> Besson, *Share Prospectus*.

<sup>477</sup> F. Besson & Co., *Patent Prototype Musical Instruments*: (c.1885): AMPC.



**Figure 20.** F Besson & Co. oilcloth poster, c.1885 (AMPC).

This also demonstrates the importance that companies attached to achieving awards at national and international exhibitions as attainment of medals created and endorsed a good reputation. Much of their trade was in export, and therefore firms went to great lengths to show their instruments abroad. Besson was a successful and highly esteemed brass manufacturer in the highest rank of instrument makers, with numerous accomplishments to its name. Besson proudly listed its achievements at every opportunity: '35 Medals of Honour from All Nations since 1837. Gold Medal Philadelphia 1876, Gold Medal Paris 1878, 1<sup>st</sup> Degree of Merit Sydney 1880, Highest Award Melbourne 1881, Gold Medal Bordeaux

1882.<sup>478</sup> An elaborate letterhead for Besson & Co. Ltd. states ‘Chicago World’s Fair 1893 – Highest Award – The Besson “Prototype” Instruments and “Victory Compensator Series” were specially commended by the international jury.’<sup>479</sup>

Besson was prolific with development of new designs, and as with other innovative manufacturers, the company was quick to register their patents. The letterhead declares Besson as ‘Inventor & Patentees & sole manufacturers of the “Prototype” contesting instruments used by the principal prize bands of all nations’ and ‘Patentees of over 50 inventions’. The Trade Mark ‘FB’ “Prototype” logo is printed on the letterhead.<sup>480</sup> The share prospectus of 1895 states that ‘Numerous successful patents have from time to time been obtained by the firm and some are still current. The Goodwill, Trade-names and eight registered Trade Marks of the firm of Besson & Co. will be transferred to the company.’<sup>481</sup>

The use of branches and agencies at home and abroad was essential for trading. Besson lists three addresses circa 1885: ‘92, Rue d’Angouleme, Paris., 57E, 91<sup>st</sup> St. New York, and 10 Perspective Newsky, St Petersburg.’<sup>482</sup> However, by 1895, their representation is listed as: a Manchester Branch at 37 Cheetham Hill Road, and Colonial and foreign branches in New York, Montreal, Hamilton, Ottawa, Vancouver, Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, Hobart, Wellington, Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin, Johannesburg, Durban, Williamstown and Calcutta.<sup>483</sup> In Britain, a new branch to cover South Wales and the west of England was opened in Cardiff in December 1895, with a Mr Edwards appointed Manager,<sup>484</sup> and in October 1896 Besson purchased the Newcastle on Tyne business of J.H. Woods to establish another branch; Woods was retained as Manager.<sup>485</sup> This was advertised in *Brass Band News*, November 1896.

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<sup>478</sup> F. Besson & Co., *Patent Prototype Musical Instruments*: (c.1885): AMPC.

<sup>479</sup> Besson, Letterhead.

<sup>480</sup> Ibid.

<sup>481</sup> Besson, *Share Prospectus*.

<sup>482</sup> F. Besson & Co., *Prototype Instruments*.

<sup>483</sup> Besson, Letterhead.

<sup>484</sup> Besson, *Directors’ Minutes 1895-1898*. 17/12/1895.

<sup>485</sup> Ibid. 09/10/1896.

Numerous entries are recorded throughout the Directors' Minutes concerning agents, with many names mentioned.<sup>486</sup> The securing of new agencies is noted, including Takata & Co. in Japan, who were appointed agents 'for the sale of instruments to the Japanese Army, to the interior and to the Imperial Household.'<sup>487</sup> Agents' terms and conditions are also discussed and noted, as is other information and offers regarding sales outlets; in 1898 repairing plant was dispatched to Messrs Knight Weymouth & Co., Bombay,<sup>488</sup> and the offers of Higgins & Co. in Dublin declined and Potter & Co. in Aldershot 'to be further enquired into.'<sup>489</sup>

The expansion in military music-making throughout the world during the second half of the nineteenth century resulted in British firms supplying large numbers of instruments to the Colonies. Foreign agents generated much trade in spite of the extremely high import duties; an almost prohibitive rate of 45% gave protection to US manufacturers. However, on account of the low wages that Mme Besson paid her workforce, she had been able to enter into low priced contracts with America,<sup>490</sup> In spite of this, in 1899, the 'crushing duty placed upon English manufactured goods by our friends the Americans' is blamed for a decrease in the company's turnover, and the directors resolved to look to the Dependencies and Colonies for further trade.<sup>491</sup>

One of Besson's most lucrative but most troublesome agencies in the United States was Carl Fischer in New York. According to Arnold Myers, the substantial sales through Fischer's agency amounted to about a quarter of all Besson manufacture; frequent consignments to Fischer are recorded in the stockbooks from 23 March 1885.<sup>492</sup> Fischer was a tough businessman, and many negotiations took place between him and Besson. When Besson & Co. was established in 1895, it seems that Carl Fischer was proposing that Besson open a factory in New York,<sup>493</sup> but would not 'comply with an essential condition of the

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<sup>486</sup> For example: Paling: Australia, Marshall & Sons: Adelaide, Sykes: Melbourne, Latham & Co: Bombay, Bevan & Co. and Harraden & Co: Calcutta, Burton and Claxton: Toronto, etc.

<sup>487</sup> Besson, *Directors' Minutes 1895-1898*. 01/09/1896.

<sup>488</sup> Ibid. 13/01/1898.

<sup>489</sup> Ibid. 06/01/1898.

<sup>490</sup> Ibid. 13/05/1897.

<sup>491</sup> Besson, *Directors' Minutes 1898-1902*. 17/08/1899.

<sup>492</sup> Myers and Eldredge, "Brasswind Production of London Besson." p.49.

<sup>493</sup> Besson, *Directors' Minutes 1895-1898*. 30/06/1896.



proposed contract viz. subscribing for £5000 of the Company's shares.<sup>494</sup> Nothing came of this scheme. The idea is mentioned again in 1898 when 'information with regard to the cost of manufacturing Prototype Instrs in the US' was presented to the Board.<sup>495</sup> This and a further proposal in 1926 were not progressed.<sup>496</sup>

In May 1897, new terms were introduced with Fischer cancelling the arrangement made between Fischer and 'the late proprietor [...] including the annual subsidy to the 'Metronome' and the gift of 4 instruments for advertising purposes.'<sup>497</sup> Stock sent to America was heavily discounted, and the minutes of 19 May note that 'after the execution of the present orders no further business should be done at anything over 45% discount and no allowances for advertising should be made.'<sup>498</sup> Fischer's influence was great, and Besson's dependency on trading through his agency evident. A week later the terms had changed; a letter confirming Fischer's position as agent in New York states that he would be entitled to 'a discount of 47½% for prompt cash from the list prices of our Class A instruments.'<sup>499</sup>

There was much tension in the relationship between Fischer and Besson, with Fischer often disregarding the rights of Besson's Trade Mark in America. In 1897 Carl Fischer ordered instruments from Fontaine at Besson in France on the grounds that he was giving the English firm Besson & Co. 'the opportunity of testing the legality of our position and excluding Mr. Fontaine's Inst's from the United States Markets.'<sup>500</sup> This was just the beginning of ongoing, high-cost legal proceedings, and by January 1898 'an *ad interim* injunction had been obtained against Carl Fischer... the whole of the music trade and Musical Papers throughout America had been advised thereof.'<sup>501</sup> Over the years the protection of the Besson Trade Mark in America proved to be a constant concern and struggle, with much costly litigation incurred.

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<sup>494</sup> Ibid. 15/10/1895.

<sup>495</sup> Ibid. 06/01/1898.

<sup>496</sup> Besson, *Directors' Minutes 1917-1932*. 01/04/1926.

<sup>497</sup> Besson, *Directors' Minutes 1895-1898*. 27/5/1897.

<sup>498</sup> Ibid. 19/05/1897.

<sup>499</sup> Ibid. 27/05/1897.

<sup>500</sup> Ibid. 19/08/1897.

<sup>501</sup> Ibid. 06/01/1898.

In 1909 Besson noted a significant three-year decline in American sales – especially of the larger instruments, in comparison with the increased figures for Canada, Australia and New Zealand. A representative (Mr Edwards) was sent to New York to assess the situation. He reported that there were three causes: prices ‘so high as to be almost prohibitive [...] the American taste for basses of exaggerated proportions regardless of tonal quality or tune’ and ‘the advance which has been made by American manufacturers in producing instruments to compete with the imported article.’ There were, at this time, a number of successful wind instrument manufacturers in America, who were producing high quality and successful instruments, the most notable being C.G. Conn, J.W. Pepper and H.N. White.

Fischer’s shop prices no doubt reflected the high import duty placed on instruments by the American Government to protect American manufacturers. It is not clear whether this was the reason for the inflated charges, or whether they were caused by Fischer’s keen sense of business. However, it was pointed out to Fischer that he did not have the capability to cover the Pacific side of the country, where their agents Sherman Clay & Co. in San Francisco ‘are recognised as the most fitted to handle the trade in our instruments, but they declare their inability, on the terms you allow them, to push the sale of even the smaller “Prototype” Instruments.’<sup>502</sup>

When the question of establishing an American Besson factory arose again in 1926 economic conditions in Britain were becoming increasingly unfavourable and uncertain.<sup>503</sup> Besson’s trade with the USA represented £2,000 with a very low profit margin. Besson came up with a proposal to sell Fischer the sole US rights of the Besson Trade Mark. This scheme seemed guaranteed to be successful given the potential vast American market, the reduction of factory costs by mass production and no 45% duty charges.<sup>504</sup> However, once again nothing came of this matter and business with the Fischer agency continued on similar terms to other agencies.<sup>505</sup> When in 1932 Fischer attempted to merge with the Continental Music Co., owing to opposing interests, Besson withdrew, but when this failed, trading

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<sup>502</sup> Besson, *Directors’ Minutes 1906-1912*. 23/10/1909.

<sup>503</sup> Besson, *Directors’ Minutes 1917-1932*. 24/09/1925.

<sup>504</sup> *Ibid.* 01/04/1926.

<sup>505</sup> *Ibid.* 07/10/1926.

continued and Fischer 'undertook to make strong efforts to increase the sale of Besson instruments in America'.<sup>506</sup> This arrangement continued until Besson were looking towards foreign markets again after the War in 1949, when it was agreed that they 'were free to deal with any trading house in the USA'.<sup>507</sup> In 1950, American trade developed further with the establishment in Texas of the company Besson Inc. to sell Besson instruments. Initiated by Geoffrey Hawkes and set up between Milton Fink and B&H Inc., it had the exclusive right to use the name 'Besson' and Trade Mark 'Prototype'.<sup>508</sup> On 17 August it was reported in the minutes that 'substantial orders were being booked in the USA and the formalities of covering the formation of the trading company were nearly complete'.<sup>509</sup>

## 5.5 Besson & Co. and its collaboration with other manufacturers in London

The period from the foundation of Besson & Co. Ltd. in 1895 until the mid-1920s was one of prosperity and expansion with sustained productivity during the First World War. Professional links were maintained between London musical instrument manufacturing companies who, when confronted by difficulties within the trade, canvassed each other's views and positions in order to maintain a consolidated approach; the main issues discussed were catalogue prices, attendance at exhibitions and wage rates.

When catalogue prices were set, certain areas of the market, such as agents and the military, were granted discounts. With competition between rival companies high, firms often tried to undercut each other, a practice that had a detrimental effect on business. On occasion, the different musical instrument manufacturing firms conferred with each other over catalogue prices, recognising that a unified approach was more advantageous than attempting to out-price each other. In January 1918 Boosey sent a letter to Besson 'suggesting that the gross catalogue prices of all instruments should be increased by 25% and providing that the other houses in the trade agree, it was resolved to so increase our catalogue

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<sup>506</sup> Ibid. 06/04/1932.

<sup>507</sup> Besson, *Shareholder Minutes 1932-1957*. 25/09/1949.

<sup>508</sup> Ibid. 30/04/1950.

<sup>509</sup> Ibid. 17/08/1950.

prices.<sup>510</sup> In January 1920, to keep up with the cost of rises in wages, Boosey, Hawkes, Rudall Carte, and Besson all agreed to increase their list prices by 50% rather than 33.3%<sup>511</sup> and again in October 'by a further 26%, making 75%, with a reduction in the discount to 10% for cash, and shortening terms of credit allowed to Civil bands.<sup>512</sup>

The importance to companies of attending exhibitions alongside their rivals is highlighted when, in 1899, London instrument manufacturers made preparations to exhibit at the Paris Exposition the following year. Owing to the hostile attitude of the French press towards Britain's involvement in the Boer War, Besson was uncertain whether they would be attending; however, they were reluctant to withdraw unless Boosey also decided not to attend. After collaboration between Besson's chairman and C.T. Boosey, Boosey advised that they would not exhibit in Paris, subject to Besson withdrawing also.<sup>513</sup> Again, in January 1911, a similar approach was made regarding the Crystal Palace Exhibition.<sup>514</sup>

The most frequent difficulties experienced in the trade that invited communication between firms concerned unrest in the workforce over pay issues. During the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century Trade Unions became more prevalent and significant in factories. There was a move away from the patriarchal relationships that existed between management and workers in many firms, and a developing self-consciousness amongst the workforce who were gaining an increasing understanding of their rights. The Besson Directors' Minutes give good insight into the collaboration between the firms of Boosey, Hawkes and Rudall Carte when confronted by issues concerning the workers or the trade in general. The directors of these companies met on a number of occasions to ascertain a united approach in negotiations with representatives of the Military Musical Instrument Makers Trade Union.

Over the years Besson experienced many problems over workers' pay. When Marthe Besson sold the company the wages were considerably lower than at other London firms. Consequently, Besson had been able to enter into contracts

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<sup>510</sup> Besson, *Directors' Minutes 1917-1932*. 24/01/1918.

<sup>511</sup> Ibid. 30/01/1920.

<sup>512</sup> Ibid. 30/09/1920.

<sup>513</sup> Besson, *Directors' Minutes 1898-1902*. 23/11/1899, 30/11/1899.

<sup>514</sup> Besson, *Directors' Minutes 1906-1912*. 26/01/1911.

with agents in America and the Colonies at a low price, in spite of the heavy duty (45%) designed to protect the American manufacturers. The low rate of pay caused unrest in the factory, resulting in a decision in June 1896 that the workmen should be classified 'according to their own individual abilities', and that 'a scheme involving an increased scale of pay to the amount of about 30% per annum be offered.'<sup>515</sup>

The discontent continued the following year, and after deputations from the Musical Instrument Makers Union (MIMU) committee, the directors called a meeting of the workforce to explain the situation – that the company had taken on 'all Mme. Besson's contracts based upon the wages rate that prevailed up to June 1896 with this result: owing to the rise in wages with no corresponding advance in our selling prices, the profits for the half year ending 31 December last, fell very short of anything they had been before.' However, the directors agreed to increase wages by one halfpenny an hour, as the previous increase had not met the standard rate for skilled workmen.<sup>516</sup> The Society consequently undertook not 'to disturb the arrangement now entered into nor permit any application or agitation for a general increase in the schedule rate now accepted' from the following June for the next three years.<sup>517</sup> This dispute re-emerged in November and continued for over a year.

The next period of unrest between MIMU workers and Besson that is recorded in the Besson Minutes started in July 1912. In October 1913 Besson directors Grice and Leckie met with Charles Boosey and William Hawkes to discuss the situation. It was decided to refuse the wage increase demanded on the basis that the wage rates were 'the same as in other equally skilled trades and in some instances higher.'<sup>518</sup> It was also recognised that the profits of the company were not high enough to allow an increase. The letter exchanged between Boosey, Hawkes and Besson undertook 'not to employ any union men for a period of 6 months belonging to the other houses and in the event of a strike being declared against either of these Houses that we would lock out those of our men who remain

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<sup>515</sup> Besson, *Directors' Minutes 1895-1898*. 10/06/1896.

<sup>516</sup> Ibid. 13/05/1897.

<sup>517</sup> Ibid. 17/05/1897.

<sup>518</sup> Besson, *Limited Directors' Minute Book 1912-1917*. 31/10/1913.

members of the union.<sup>519</sup> These steps were also approved by the Salvation Army, who agreed to the other issues under discussion as well: the length of the working week to be 54 hours with overtime at time and a quarter, payment according to production, i.e. piecework to be continued, apprentices to be able to learn large and small work with a larger proportion of apprentices than one to ten, and 1½d extra to be awarded to Improvers.<sup>520</sup> A concession of ½d an hour was given on the basis that, since 1901, increases in wages had been lower than the cost of living according to the Board of Trade returns.<sup>521</sup> A letter outlining the employers' conditions was sent to MIMU from Besson, Hawkes and Boosey, and the situation was eventually settled at a meeting of the men on 30 January 1914, when they withdrew their strike notices and agreed the terms imposed.<sup>522</sup>

During the First World War the rates of wages and salaries at Besson fluctuated between periods of reduction caused by decreased trade<sup>523</sup> and rises owing to war bonuses given.<sup>524</sup> Economic conditions in Britain had declined, with the number of goods manufactured for sales overseas very low, and the trade in coal abroad much diminished. By the end of the War importers had found alternative markets to Britain, with Germany supplying 'free coal' to Italy, and to France, a previous British export destination, as wartime reparations. The reintroduction of the gold standard and rise in interest rates instigated by the Government did little to help Britain's economy. Industry was in a poor state with many companies making redundancies, reductions in working hours and wage cuts. Unemployment rose and there was much unrest and hardship amongst workers and their families. In 1916 an entry in the Besson Minutes stated that 'initiative and resource' was 'shown by Mr Grice in imposing new methods to overcome the adverse trade conditions due to the War whereby a substantial profit was earned for the last financial year.'<sup>525</sup> However, these methods were not recorded in the extant literature.

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<sup>519</sup> Ibid. 30/10/1913.

<sup>520</sup> Ibid. 18/11/1913.

<sup>521</sup> Ibid. 28/11/1913.

<sup>522</sup> Ibid. 12/02/1914.

<sup>523</sup> Ibid. 01/10/1914.

<sup>524</sup> Ibid. 29/06/1916.

<sup>525</sup> Ibid. 28/08/1916.

A period of industrial strikes started in Britain in 1918, and the strength of a union alliance among the miners, dockers and railway workers escalated the problems, which caused the government considerable difficulties. By the end of the year the MIMU was agitating again, and once more Besson, Boosey and Hawkes collaborated to produce a proposal for an offer. The conditions remained in place for a year, until January 1920,<sup>526</sup> when terms for a new arrangement were negotiated with Besson, Boosey, Hawkes and Rudall Carte.

The general economic conditions and unrest in Britain worsened throughout the first half of the 1920s. Trade was in a depressed state and businesses were experiencing great difficulties. The next meeting of employers recorded in the Minutes was in May 1923, when weekly working hours were reduced to forty-four and new wage-rates instigated.<sup>527</sup> All instrument manufacturers were struggling with insufficient sales, and the general adversity encouraged even more consultation and solidarity between the directors of Besson, Boosey and Hawkes on various issues. Besson outlined the problems to the shareholders at the Annual General Meeting on 14 October 1925: owing to lack of trade, it had been necessary to reduce factory working hours to below the standard time, which, if further reduced, might lead to the loss of prime workmen; therefore it was of utmost importance to provide regular employment despite an unnecessary increase in stock.<sup>528</sup>

The situation of unrest in Britain reached a climax in May 1926 when the mine owners attempted to cut wages and lengthen working hours to keep profits high. This resulted in the Trades Union Congress bringing about the General Strike in May 1926, in which employees in industries such as the railway, transport and docks, printers, iron and steel workers refused to work. The problems were universal. The General Strike from Monday 3 May 1926 caused the Besson factory to shut for a week owing to the lack of electricity,<sup>529</sup> and in August a further reduction in working hours was discussed.<sup>530</sup> In July 1927 an agreement was made with David Blaikley from B&Co. and Geoffrey Hawkes from H&S for the three companies to reduce their factory working hours by eight hours a week, and 'not to

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<sup>526</sup> Besson, *Directors' Minutes 1917-1932*. 23/01/1919.

<sup>527</sup> *Ibid.* 01/05/1923.

<sup>528</sup> *Ibid.* 14/10/1925.

<sup>529</sup> *Ibid.* 20/05/1926.

<sup>530</sup> *Ibid.* 22/07/1926.

take on any man from either firm working short time.<sup>531</sup> This arrangement was followed by a letter from Henry Grice of Besson to Boosey and to Hawkes, outlining the grave situation at that time and suggesting that there should be an

*understanding between the three houses in order to avoid the suicidal policy of price cutting at present pursued by each of us. Our instruments are sold at prices which do not give anything like the rate of profit which obtains for similar high class profits in other departments of industry and which you will agree, is quite inadequate in view of current high costs.*

*We suggest that we have it in our own hands to remedy this state of things, not only to the advantage of each of us traders, but, as employers of labour we should be in a better position to satisfy the just demands of our work-people and make our industry a more prosperous, a more stable, and a more contented one.*

*We recognise the difficulties and objections to a rigid and binding contract between the houses as to terms etc. and having in mind previous unsuccessful attempts to come to a working arrangement on such basis, we suggest, as a practicable step towards an increase in our profits that the present rate of cash discount should be reduced by each and all of us by 10%, i.e. Civilian Bands and general discount from 25% to 15%. With regard to Military Bands, Government Contracts, Agents and Export discounts, we suggest that a 5% reduction should be brought into operation as soon as practicable, and your views on this point are invited so that an agreement may be arrived at, but as a very large proportion of our trade is with Civilian Bands and musicians on the 25% basis, we may at once, if the suggestion is adopted, enjoy the advantage of the reduced discount as far as this branch of our sales is concerned.*

*It is hopeless to attempt to dictate or fetter the action of either house in any particular transaction: we neither of us reduce our price unless we know, or think we know, we cannot secure the business on our normal terms, but any concession which is made in such circumstances will be from a higher starting point, and as a net result we may hope that the competition in prices will not be so disastrous in its results as it is at present.*

*Ultimately we may be forced to recognise the necessity of the pooling of our resources under pressure from American competition but I shall be glad in the*

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<sup>531</sup> Ibid. 13/07/1927.



*meantime to have the views of your Board on the suggestion embodied in this letter.*<sup>532</sup>

The content of this letter foreshadowed the justification that Leslie Boosey and Ralph Hawkes gave for the merger of their companies in 1930.

With no improvement in economic conditions during the following years, in February 1930 representatives from Boosey, Hawkes and Besson met at the offices of the Federation of British Music Industries in Great Portland Street to discuss a mutual policy for exhibiting and presenting instruments as prizes at band contests. A decision was made to reduce the number of instruments exhibited, and only to present prizes at six important contests, Belle Vue (May, July, September), Crystal Palace, Leicester and Cornwall, in return for facilities for exhibiting. Prizes should be restricted to a maximum gross value of three guineas, and at all other contests the gift in return for advertisement space on the programme should be 'one medal or goods of a gross value of half guinea.' It was also decided that four times a year, 'each House should submit to the other two, lists of old instruments of their respective makes and invite offers for them.'<sup>533</sup>

## **5.6 Changes of directorship and capital reduction at Besson & Co.**

The economic situation worsened during 1930. At Besson, factory hours were further reduced and all employees of the company, workers, office staff and directors were forced to accept a temporary reduction of pay, saving the company approximately £2,500 per annum.<sup>534</sup> Owing to ill health, two of the long-standing directors Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Henry Grice, directors of the company since at least 1913<sup>535</sup> and 1895 respectively, resigned from the Board – Conan Doyle in December 1929<sup>536</sup> and Grice in December 1930. In December 1930 Charles Timms, the remaining director, was urgently charged with the task of appointing

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<sup>532</sup> Ibid. 06/07/1927.

<sup>533</sup> Ibid. 20/03/1930.

<sup>534</sup> Ibid. 25/09/1930.

<sup>535</sup> Besson, *Directors' Minutes 1912-1917*. 10/01/1913.

<sup>536</sup> Besson, *Directors' Minutes 1917-1932*. 18/12/1929.

replacements for them and finding a source of fresh capital for the company.<sup>537</sup> Within two weeks Besson were approached by their solicitors with a proposition from unknown clients who were prepared to introduce further capital as and when required, and were willing to join the board provided that they could secure a majority holding of shares by purchasing 'from any of the shareholders of the company who might desire to dispose of the whole or a portion of their holding, stating their purchase price as Ordinary shares @ 3/- each and preference shares at 7/- each, up to a total of 13,000 of the former and 12,500 of the latter.' This offer was immediately submitted to the shareholders because of 'the unsatisfactory condition of the business, the uncertainty of its future and the need for further capital in the future and the necessity for the appointment of new directors.'<sup>538</sup>

The new directors were father and son, Walter Barrington Beare and John Wodehouse Beare. They were second and third generations of the firm Beare & Son and its Canadian subsidiary, successful wholesale importation and musical instrument distribution businesses. The Beares purchased 50.3% of the Ordinary shareholding.<sup>539</sup> At the next meeting on 15 January 1931<sup>540</sup> Walter Barrington Beare took the Chair.<sup>541</sup> From his arrival at Besson, Beare actively forged close links with B&H, whose merger had taken place less than four months previously.

It seems that Beare's appearance may not have been purely coincidental. The availability, at one time, of such a large quantity of shares for purchase from multiple shareholders must have taken much organisation. It appears possible that, even from this early stage, the Beares may have acquired their shares as nominees of B&H. Although from 1931 the Beares' private address (32 Rathbone Place) is given in the registers, from 1944 the initials B&H were noted in the place of the address.<sup>542</sup> It is clear from the final listing of shareholders in 1967 that this form of notation was an indication of B&H's nominees. Ultimately, the Beares' shares were transferred to B&H in 1957, which gave the company a 51.1% majority in its own name.

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<sup>537</sup> Ibid. 19/11/1930.

<sup>538</sup> Ibid. 02/12/1930.

<sup>539</sup> Besson, *Ordinary Shares Certificates 1-250, 1913-1951*: HM/B&H A227/192: 158,159,174. 20/02/1931.

<sup>540</sup> Besson, *Directors' Minutes 1917-1932*. 15/01/1931.

<sup>541</sup> Beare resigned his directorship in 1939 and went to Canada for the duration of the War. Besson, *Shareholder Minutes 1932-1957*. 26/12/1939.

<sup>542</sup> Besson, *Register of Transfers*; Besson, *Dividend Account Book: Preference Shares 1943-1965*: HM/B&H A227/196; Besson, *Dividend Account Book: Ordinary Shares 1943-1965*: HM/B&H A227/197.

W.B. Beare was proactive in his leadership. At his first directors' meeting it was reported that he had conducted conversations with Messrs B&H Ltd. 'with a view to securing closer co-operation in trading and co-ordination of interests in manufacturing.'<sup>543</sup> He also stated that

*investigation of the system of works management [at Besson] showed that the results for a number of years had been most unprofitable and taken in conjunction with the very serious position of the business, he had come definitely to the conclusion that a complete change of method policy and factory administration must be inaugurated; and [...] he would without doubt, very shortly be able to engage the services of a competent works organiser with a complete knowledge of the requirements of the business.*<sup>544</sup>

Conversations between Charles Timms and Bourne, the Works Manager, regarding factory reorganisation and co-operation in manufacturing with B&H are recorded in the minutes.<sup>545</sup>

This may have been a contrived situation as Frank Maurice, who was reported to be leaving the service of B&H, was appointed Works Director from 1 October.<sup>546</sup> Maurice immediately became involved in the relocation of B&H drum and leather case-making departments, along with their existing foremen and staff, to the Besson factory. The arrangement was seen as 'primarily a co-operative manufacturing scheme for our mutual benefit'. Within two months additional workmen had been employed in order to keep up with the orders received from B&H.<sup>547</sup>

It is apparent from the minutes of the directors' meeting on 18 August 1931, that the Depression and the poor economic conditions in the late 1920s had a serious effect on the financial state of Besson. It was decided that the company should undergo Capital Reduction to reduce the growing burden caused by inability to pay the preference shareholders annual dividends.<sup>548</sup> Dividends had been paid

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<sup>543</sup> Besson, *Directors' Minutes 1917-1932*. 15/01/1931.

<sup>544</sup> Ibid.

<sup>545</sup> Ibid. 27/01/1931 and 15/01/1931.

<sup>546</sup> Ibid. 18/08/1931.

<sup>547</sup> Ibid. 25/11/1931 and 08/12/1931.

<sup>548</sup> According to Company Law, a company is owned by the Ordinary Shareholders. Dividends are paid at the discretion and recommendation of the Directors and approval of the shareholders. Preference Shareholders own only the right to the dividends at the stated rate of interest (and ultimately repayment of

every year until 31 December 1926. However, the next half-year payment to 30 June 1927 was not made until 1931.<sup>549</sup>

In 1932 Besson underwent Capital Reduction. This was done with approval of both the shareholders and the Chancery Division of the High Court. The proposal was agreed at an Extraordinary General Meeting of all the Shareholders on 4 November 1931, and also at an Extraordinary General Meeting of Preference Shareholders on 24 February 1932. The nominal value of the issued share capital was reduced from £50,000 (24,075 Preference Shares at £1 and 25,925 Ordinary Shares at £1) to £23,750 (30,000 Preference Shares at 10/- and 35,000 Ordinary Shares at 5/-).<sup>550</sup> After Capital Reduction had taken place the shareholders received the arrears in two yearly instalments until 1938 when annual dividends were paid. No ordinary share dividends were paid between 1925 and 1937.<sup>551</sup>

## 5.7 Company acquisitions

Over the years Besson acquired the businesses of J.G. Abbott & Co., Wheatstone & Co. Ltd. and the French Besson company. Waterhouse states that Besson purchased Quilter, woodwind instrument makers in circa 1925; however, there is no evidence to support this.<sup>552</sup> In April 1931 Besson were approached by A.C. Della Porta of the Premier Drum Company with a view to merging his business with Besson. Although it was considered that it would be of mutual benefit,<sup>553</sup> the merger did not take place.

Negotiations commenced in April 1932 with the banjo and guitar making firm J.G. Abbott & Co. to form a private limited company in which Besson would have a fifty percent shareholding.<sup>554</sup> John G. Abbott had been manufacturing in his own name from 1905 at 97/99 Hampstead Road, London NW1 and from circa 1928 at

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the shares held, when sold). Usually, dividends for Preference Shares must be paid annually. However, in general, if annual dividends cannot be paid, the amount owed is carried forward to the next year. Accumulated unpaid dividends must be paid to Preference Shareholders before any dividends are paid to the Ordinary Shareholders. Therefore, if dividends are not paid, the financial liability for the Company increases with each year.

<sup>549</sup> Besson, *Preference and Ordinary Dividends 1912-1940*: HM/B&H A227/191. pp.115-120.

<sup>550</sup> Besson, *Shareholder Minutes 1932-1957*.

<sup>551</sup> Besson, *Dividends 1912-1940*. pp.121-127 and pp.193-197.

<sup>552</sup> Waterhouse, *Index*. p.30.

<sup>553</sup> Besson, *Directors' Minutes 1917-1932*. 21/04/1931.

<sup>554</sup> *Ibid.* 18/04/1932.

44 Chalton Street, Euston Road.<sup>555</sup> The company moved into the Besson premises in August 1932, leasing a position for £140 per annum. Abbott & Co., described in the minutes as selling 'high class fretted instruments', had a capital of £2,000. Besson invested £350 for its one thousand fully paid shares which were allotted to directors C.E. Timms (nine hundred and ninety nine shares) and W.E. Shephard (one share). 'Messrs. Abbott' retained one thousand shares.<sup>556</sup> After the move, the company ceased making banjos and concentrated on producing guitars with the model name 'Aristone'. John Abbott stopped working in 1936 owing to ill health.<sup>557</sup>

Besson's next acquisition took place in 1943 when, towards the end of the war, they were looking at ways in which to develop business when hostilities ceased. In October 1943 it purchased C. Wheatstone & Co. 'the old established and well known manufacturers of English Concertinas' and mouth organs on the death of their manager, Edward Chidley.<sup>558</sup> Wheatstone, having been very successful throughout the 1930s, was struggling with the continuing fall in sales of concertinas owing to a decline in their popularity and the restrictions on instrument manufacture during the War. Concertina production ceased whilst war work was undertaken.<sup>559</sup> However, Besson considered that after the war there would be good opportunities to develop concertina and mouth organ production.<sup>560</sup>

The main attraction of Wheatstone was the freehold of 15 West Street, the company premises since 1905,<sup>561</sup> which were located near Charing Cross Road, a favourable area for instrument sales. On acquisition, they were adapted as a retail department for Besson, later becoming their designated company headquarters and Registered Office when the Besson works moved to Edgware in 1948.<sup>562</sup> The purchase comprised

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<sup>555</sup> Terry Holland, "British Banjo Site: British Banjo Makers Part 1, <http://www.whitetreaz.com/vintage/brit1.htm> Accessed 28/05/2011.

<sup>556</sup> Besson, *Directors' Minutes 1917-1932*. 10/08/1932.

<sup>557</sup> Holland, "British Banjo Makers."

<sup>558</sup> Besson, *Shareholder Minutes 1932-1957*. 02/10/1943.

<sup>559</sup> Neil Wayne, "The Wheatstone Concertina," *The Galpin Society Journal* 44: 117-149 (1991). Wheatstone had been founded in 1750.

<sup>560</sup> Besson, *Shareholder Minutes 1932-1957*. 24/08/1943.

<sup>561</sup> C. Wheatstone & Co. Ltd., *Wheatstone Concertinas and Aeolas* (1947): <http://www.concertina.com/pricelists/wheatstone-anglo/index.htm> Accessed 28/05/2011.

<sup>562</sup> Besson, *Shareholder Minutes 1932-1957*. 06/02/1944, 27/02/1948.

*the goodwill and assets of the business including Stock in Trade, Plant, Furniture, Fixtures and Fittings; the acquisition of the shares of C. Wheatstone & Co. Ltd., a private Limited Company incorporated in 1942, and the equity of redemption of a mortgage of £2,500 on the Freehold premises, No 15 West Street, Charing Cross Road: the total cost including the redemption of this mortgage being £5,750. This was considered very satisfactory, as, apart from other considerations it put us in possession of very valuable freehold premises in the musical centre of London for the development of our own business.*<sup>563</sup>

In April 1944 the intention was to transfer all Wheatstone manufacture to the Besson factory, 'where the mouth organ department already installed was making good progress'.<sup>564</sup> There is no record of when this move actually took place, but the address of the Wheatstone factory and export department is given as Frederick Close, Stanhope Place, Marble Arch, London W2, England in the 1947 catalogue.<sup>565</sup> The catalogue contains information on twenty-five different models for sale. However, in 1959 Henry Minting wrote 'it was not until about 1949 that the Wheatstone Concertina was being made as before the war.'<sup>566</sup> Wheatstone relocated to 3/5 Ives Street, Chelsea in January 1952,<sup>567</sup> and according to Neil Wayne shared the premises with flute makers Lafleur.<sup>568</sup> In 1959 Wheatstone moved again, this time with Rudall Carte and Co. Ltd., to premises at 15 Duncan Terrace, Islington (behind Angel station). Henry Minting, the last manager of Wheatstone reported that 'the house, built about 1850 has not been changed in external appearance but is now converted into offices and assembly work rooms. The manufacture of the 1,500 parts that go to make a 48-key English concertina takes place in the factory at the back of the house.'<sup>569</sup>

After the Second World War there was an increased demand for concertinas. They were used in diverse locations, from the Salvation Army to clubs

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<sup>563</sup> Ibid. 02/10/1943. Service Agreements and restrictive covenants, for ten years, were agreed with the former managers of Wheatstone, Kenneth Vernon Chidley and Gifford Marcus Chidley, and with Percy Chidley, 'the surviving partner of the original ownership.'

<sup>564</sup> Ibid. p.127.

<sup>565</sup> C. Wheatstone & Co. Ltd., *Concertinas and Aeolas*. The Besson factory relocated from Euston to Frederick Mews in 1933.

<sup>566</sup> Henry Minting, *The House of Wheatstone 1750-1950* (1959): Wayne Archive, C1065.

<sup>567</sup> C. Wheatstone & Co. Ltd., *Fingering Systems of The "Wheatstone" Concertina* (ante 1956): <http://www.concertina.com/pricelists/wheatstone-anglo/index.htm> Accessed 28/05/2011; Besson & Co., *Shareholder Meeting Minutes 1932-1957*: HM/B&H A227/178. p.267.

<sup>568</sup> Wayne, "Wheatstone Concertina."

<sup>569</sup> Minting, *House of Wheatstone*.

and theatres, and sales were augmented by a revival of interest in British folk song and dance.<sup>570</sup> However, the post-war concertina models introduced by Henry Minting were low quality, budget instruments, inferior to the pre-war products.<sup>571</sup> Manufacturing problems were experienced and standards consequently fell. In December 1954, owing to a limited supply of concertina reeds from Italy, 'an alternative source of the supply of reeds for the cheap concertina' was sought, a possible source being Germany.<sup>572</sup>

Wheatstone's productivity declined as the demand for concertinas gradually diminished. In 1961 the Duncan Terrace premises were sold and Wheatstone were moved to B&H at Edgware, where a limited production of new instruments was maintained until the last employee died in 1974.<sup>573</sup> The remaining plant, machinery, stock and trading name were finally sold in 1975 to a small company owned by Steve Dickinson, an established concertina maker.<sup>574</sup>

In July 1951 Besson purchased the almost bankrupt French company F Besson in Paris, 'in order to protect the name and rights of the London house.' A new company was formed by Editions Hawkes (est. 1924) and Couesnon S.A, as a subsidiary of Editions Hawkes, with Directors to be included from Besson Inc. in Texas, USA. In a memorandum from Geoffrey Hawkes setting out the arrangements agreed for the new company at a meeting in Paris on 21 May 1951, shares were allocated 40% to Couesnon and 60% to Editions Hawkes, with 7% of each holding made available for E. Stoecklin of Couesnon to buy. E. Stoecklin was to be appointed director.<sup>575</sup>

## 5.8 Retail premises

The location of showrooms for retail purposes was of great importance to manufacturers. Until their move to Frederick Close in 1933, Besson were well placed next to Euston station, the main railway terminus for the North and the Midlands. Owing to its situation,

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<sup>570</sup> Henry Minting, *Dates of Concertinas* (c.1960s): Wayne Archive, C1045.

<sup>571</sup> Wayne, "Wheatstone Concertina."

<sup>572</sup> Besson, *Shareholder Minutes 1932-1957*. 08/12/1954.

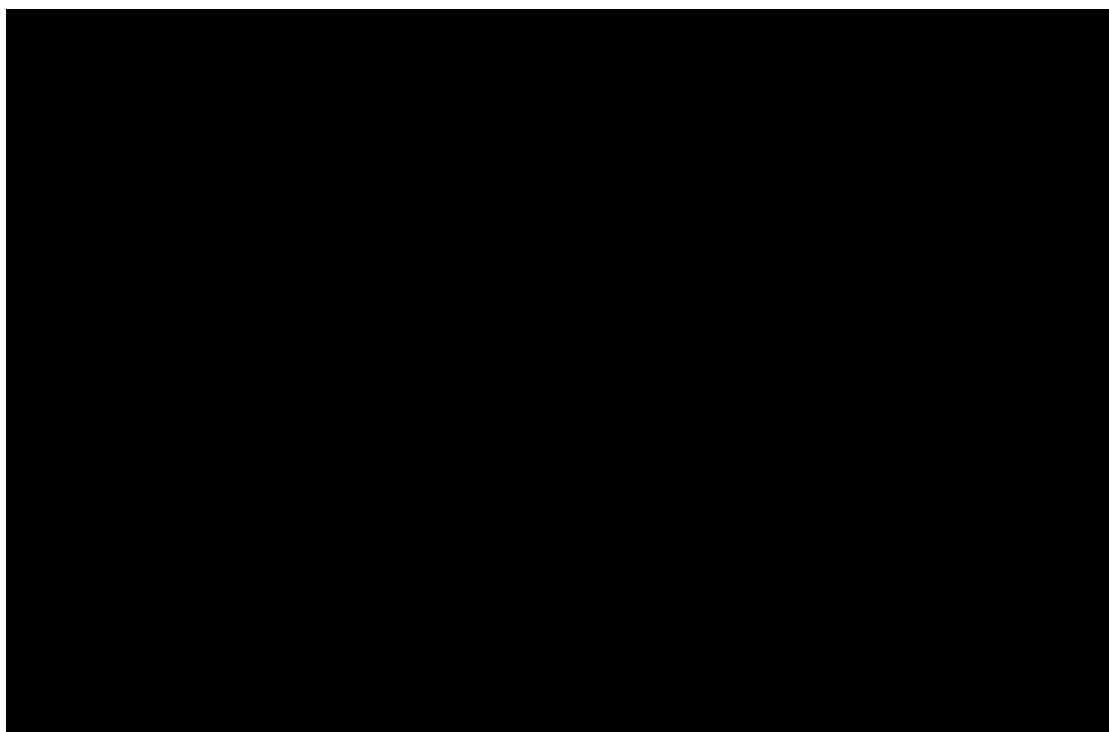
<sup>573</sup> Wayne, "Wheatstone Concertina."

<sup>574</sup> <http://www.concertinamuseum.com/CM00036.htm> Accessed 20/03/2010.

<sup>575</sup> Besson, *Shareholder Minutes 1932-1957*. p.253.

*the business became a place of call for all bandsmen visiting London. On the great Crystal Palace Contest days it was the scene of noise and excitement which would hardly be tolerated by the authorities today. From early morning to the time of their departure for the contest, bands from the North and Midlands congregated in and around the premises, practising their test pieces in the forecourt, in the various factory workrooms, and in any open spaces available in the locality, encouraged and applauded by their followers and others. Special police were engaged for the occasion, but there was never any unpleasant incident.*<sup>576</sup>

The shop sign outside the front of the premises was an impressive sight: 'a huge Monster Bass, handsomely gilt, and three times the size of a normal BB ♭'.<sup>577</sup> This instrument, a copy of one made for Jules Rivière's monster concerts at the Jardin d'Hiver in Paris,<sup>578</sup> in later years, was also displayed over the main entrance to the B&H Edgware Factory. It can now be seen in the Music Gallery at the Horniman Museum (Figure 21).



**Figure 21.** 'A huge Monster Bass, handsomely gilt, and three times the size of a normal BB ♭' (HM/B&H).

<sup>576</sup> Timms, "It Started in 1837." pp.122-123.

<sup>577</sup> Ibid. p.122.

<sup>578</sup> Rivière, *Musical Life*. p.116. Besson's 'trombotonare' was described by Rivière: 'They were deep bass notes, indeed that issued from that giant bombardon, on which, I well remember, only one man in Paris could effectually play. He was a musician named Dortu, belonging to the band of the Garde de Paris.'



In 1921 the lease of the Wardour Street premises, stock and goodwill of Mahillon & Co. became available for £2,500. Although it was thought to be an attractive proposition, the Besson directors considered that it was 'extremely inconvenient to lock up capital at this time.'<sup>579</sup> From April 1932, 57 Compton Street was obtained as a showroom which was operational until new and larger premises for retail were found in December 1934 at 12 Archer Street. These were maintained until August 1938.<sup>580</sup>

From 1944 the Wheatstone premises at 15 West Street provided a central location for sales with, in 1949, parts of the building leased to the Bandsmen's Club, and to the Central School of Dance Music. In July 1952 a sales department was opened there for A.K. Hüttl, a German manufacturing firm that had relocated to Williamstown, South Wales after expropriation in 1945.<sup>581</sup> Hüttl was run under joint directorship from its factory in Wales and B&H at Edgware.<sup>582</sup>

In August 1957, owing to Besson's increasing turnover, consideration was given to the reorganisation of the wholesale and retail departments, and to finding larger and more prominently placed premises. The options presented were:

- a. The removal of the Wholesale department to another address such as the Edgware District in order to operate in closer proximity to the Factory.*
- b. The procuring of shop premises in the West End more favourably situated than West Street, say Charing Cross Road or Shaftesbury Avenue.*
- c. The disposal of the West Street Premises.*<sup>583</sup>

New premises were found at 156 Shaftesbury Avenue<sup>584</sup> – 'The Saxophone Shop' owned by John Pausey.<sup>585</sup> This purchase was recorded in the Accounts for 12 September 1957, with £2,250 paid to J.T. Pausey for goodwill and furniture, and

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<sup>579</sup> Besson, *Directors' Minutes 1917-1932*. 21/10/1921.

<sup>580</sup> Ibid. 06/04/1932 and Besson, *Shareholder Minutes 1932-1957*. 05/12/1934 and 22/09/1938.

<sup>581</sup> Waterhouse, *Index*. p.186. The East German town of Graslitz became part of Czechoslovakia and was renamed Kraslice after the War and all German speaking people were forced to leave. The remaining musical instrument factories were nationalised and became the co-operative 'Amati'.

<sup>582</sup> A. K. Hüttl Ltd., Letter on Headed Notepaper (1952): HM/B&H A227/178.

<sup>583</sup> Besson, *Shareholder Minutes 1932-1957*. 17/7/1956.

<sup>584</sup> Besson, *Private Journal, 1919-1962*: HM/B&H A227/202. p.120.

<sup>585</sup> D. Gelly, *Grafton's Sax Appeal*: [http://www.woodwindcourse.co.uk/user/image/dave\\_gelly\\_grafton.doc](http://www.woodwindcourse.co.uk/user/image/dave_gelly_grafton.doc) Accessed 28/05/2011. See Section 4.9, fn.450.

£932.15.0d. for purchase of stock. 15 West Street was sold for £18,500 in December, 1958.<sup>586</sup>

## 5.9 The developing association between Besson & Co. and Boosey & Hawkes

In September 1933 Besson took on the lease of the former Boosey factory in Frederick Mews, Stanhope Place, and it was from this time that links between Besson and B&H really started to develop.<sup>587</sup> In 1932 the economic situation in Britain remained poor and the Chairman had reported that 'the long hoped for revival in trade generally had not materialised.'<sup>588</sup> Besson's lease of the Euston factory was due to expire in June 1934 and there was much concern about the considerable expense which would be incurred in finding and equipping new premises.<sup>589</sup>

By March 1933 it had been found that 'rents of suitable premises were generally prohibitive', but they had discovered that the old Boosey factory might be available 'and inspection showed that it would be admirably suitable for us'. It was decided therefore to make Boosey an offer of £700 per annum for a lease of this factory.<sup>590</sup> The offer was accepted and a lease, drawn up by the Boosey Trust Ltd. and Besson & Co. Ltd. for twenty-one years from 29 September 1933 was signed and sealed.<sup>591</sup> The move was completed and the Euston Road premises surrendered by April 1934, with the sum of £1,000 paid for dilapidations.<sup>592</sup> The street name of Frederick Mews was changed to Frederick Close and a sign with Besson's name was put on the archway leading to the factory from Stanhope Place. Relocation was expensive with the cost of removal, change of address publicity and production of a new catalogue estimated at approximately £2,000.<sup>593</sup>

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<sup>586</sup> Besson, *Private Journal*, 1919-1962. p.120 and p.129.

<sup>587</sup> Besson, *Shareholder Minutes* 1932-1957. 21/09/1933.

<sup>588</sup> *Ibid.* 29/12/1932.

<sup>589</sup> *Ibid.* 06/12/1932.

<sup>590</sup> *Ibid.* 02/03/1933.

<sup>591</sup> *Ibid.* 19/04/1933, 21/09/1933.

<sup>592</sup> *Ibid.* 18/04/1934.

<sup>593</sup> *Ibid.* 13/12/1933.

After the move in April 1934, the Directors approved the continued running of B&H's drum and percussion department; however, in July Besson's Managing Director, Charles Timms, concerned that the only return to the company would be the rent and that financing the extensive stock would provide little return, proposed that a separate company called Drumcraft Ltd. should be set up. The new company rented 'a position of our factory for works storage – approximately one quarter of the area' for £20 per month from 2 July, and Besson undertook to buy all their required percussion from them.<sup>594</sup> Drumcraft was run as a subsidiary company with one of the Besson directors acting as its Managing Director.<sup>595</sup> Arrangements were also made for both houses to pursue a mutual scheme for a second-hand instrument department.<sup>596</sup>

The liaison between Besson and B&H was assisted and encouraged by Geoffrey Hawkes, who was clearly interested in his rival company and eager to offer assistance. His association with Besson began when he bought 37 ordinary and 95 preference shares in Besson & Co., which were registered in 1939.<sup>597</sup> This token number remained the same up to his death in 1960. Hawkes was instrumental in assisting and forging increased links between B&H and Besson. His name is first mentioned in the Directors' Minutes of April 1940 with reference to securing war work and sub-contracting to Besson.

By 1940, owing to the Second World War, economic conditions were unsettled and trade had fallen. According to the Besson Minutes, orders for musical instruments had diminished both in the military and civilian markets 'owing to a lack of support for band music both in the forces and amongst the Civilian Bands. So far, Bands had not been called for and the only active department in this direction was the equipping of the Bands of the Royal Navy [...] and some useful orders from the Royal Naval School of Music.'<sup>598</sup> Besson, like other companies, put their attention to finding war work, and aircraft work was secured for them by Geoffrey Hawkes for the duration of the War. Various orders were subcontracted through B&H including an Air Ministry contract through Messrs Midgley Harmer Ltd., an order for a range of aircraft tubes for Rootes Securities Ltd. and work for the

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<sup>594</sup> Ibid. 02/07/1934.

<sup>595</sup> Ibid. 28/04/1943.

<sup>596</sup> Ibid. 13/12/1933.

<sup>597</sup> Besson, *Register of Transfers*; Besson, *Shares Certificates*.

<sup>598</sup> Besson, *Shareholder Minutes 1932-1957*. 17/04/1940.

Gloster Aircraft Company and Bristol Aircraft Company.<sup>599</sup> Most of Besson's war work was making pipes for aircraft.

The changeover to war work from instrument manufacture had a great impact on the running of the factory. It necessitated essential new plant, re-arrangement of the factory and clearance of some of the workshops and stores. The second-hand and other stores were consequently taken over by B&H and relocated to a building secured for the purpose at Edgware.<sup>600</sup> As a result of the increasing collaboration with B&H during the war years, in December 1942, Besson decided to change the date of their annual accounts from 30 June to 30 December to coincide with that of B&H.<sup>601</sup>

Discussions for post-war return to instrument manufacture commenced in August 1943. The Managing Director's views were 'that we should leave no stone unturned in order to arrange our programme [...] and make all possible preparations so that we could be in a position to get down to production of new instruments, models and cases at the earliest date possible after the end of the war.'<sup>602</sup> Planning for the future continued at subsequent meetings, and on 24 October 1944 it was decided that no further pipe contracts would be accepted.<sup>603</sup>

Geoffrey Hawkes was first invited to attend a Besson Directors' Meeting on 12 January 1944.<sup>604</sup> The directors of Besson looked to Hawkes for his support, and Hawkes, in turn, saw the opportunity to forge stronger links between the companies. He continued to attend the Directors' Meetings regularly; this was noted until the end of the extant records of minutes in March 1957.<sup>605</sup>

The liaison with B&H was strengthened with the engagement in May 1944 of William Culley, an employee of B&H, to work part-time at Besson. During the ensuing six months Culley's involvement in the company rapidly increased, and arrangements were made with B&H for Culley to devote part of his time to the

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<sup>599</sup> Ibid. 27/11/1940.

<sup>600</sup> Ibid. 17/04/1940.

<sup>601</sup> Ibid. 30/12/1942.

<sup>602</sup> Ibid. 24/08/1943.

<sup>603</sup> Ibid. 24/10/1944.

<sup>604</sup> Ibid. 12/01/1944.

<sup>605</sup> Ibid. 27/03/1957.

secretarial and accountancy work of the company.<sup>606</sup> At the directors' meeting on 13 June Culley was noted as being in attendance and was appointed responsibility 'for inaugurating a new Factory Costing scheme as from 31<sup>st</sup> May last',<sup>607</sup> on 1 November 1944 he assumed the position of Company Secretary.

Geoffrey Hawkes offered to provide staff to help with the production of new instrument designs and planning for the re-commencement of manufacturing instruments. He transferred Jack Howard from B&H in Manchester to give managerial support, and Sidney Martin from Edgware for a period of six months, to assist with the arrangements for production.<sup>608</sup> A major change took place in May 1945 with reorganisation of the management. Jack Howard was appointed a director of Besson, and Leslie Guyatt, a Besson director, transferred to B&H.<sup>609</sup> With the increasing assistance and intervention of B&H Besson were gradually losing their autonomy. All developments were presented as being of mutual benefit. However, the advantages, more often than not, appear to have been weighted towards B&H.

Trading arrangements were made between the two companies with, in May 1946, a policy established between Besson and B&H giving Besson an entitlement to a trade discount of 33.3% plus 10%, 'except in specific cases where further discount would be negotiated.' Besson was to purchase instrument piece-parts from B&H for assembly in their own factory at Frederick Close. There was also a charge made by B&H to Besson for their assistance with developing the production of Besson instruments after the war and the marketing and trading arrangements that they had negotiated for them.<sup>610</sup> When Besson needed to purchase a new capstan lathe in December 1946, they turned to Geoffrey Hawkes, submitting samples of all capstan-turned parts to give the Edgware factory the first opportunity of manufacturing one for them.<sup>611</sup>

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<sup>606</sup> Ibid. 16/05/1944.

<sup>607</sup> Ibid. 13/06/1944.

<sup>608</sup> Ibid. 01/11/1944.

<sup>609</sup> Ibid. 27/05/1945, 01/05/1945.

<sup>610</sup> Ibid. 01/05/1946.

<sup>611</sup> Ibid. 03/12/1946.

In February 1948 there was concern amongst the Besson directors about the future direction of the Company. The contemporary economic climate was not favourable, and they forecast that

*general international conditions, coupled with Government restrictions, would bring about a recession in trade sometime during 1948, which may continue for a year or two. The Company's products carried high prices and in view of the gradual diminution in Export orders which had taken place during the last few months, it was felt that steps should be taken now to prevent the Company from facing a crisis. Present restrictions on sale in the home market prevent any alleviation of the situation from that direction.*<sup>612</sup>

There was also concern about the impending expiry of the Frederick Close factory lease in 1954. Aware of the potential benefits to Besson & Co., the Directors discussed the possible removal of Besson's manufacturing operations to the B&H Edgware works and invited B&H to outline their proposals to them.<sup>613</sup>

B&H replied to Besson in a letter of 27 February 1948, signed by John Little, Company Secretary. It forcefully presented the situation as an opportunity that Besson should not refuse. B&H endorsed the contemporary government policy that 'it is of the utmost importance to industry generally, that immediate steps be taken to reduce present manufacturing costs' and pointed out that the lease of the Frederick Close factory (currently at a favourable rate) was due for renewal in six years when they would be forced to increase the rent. They suggested that, consequently, Besson's 'products at that time would tend to become unmarketable either at home or abroad, and we suggest therefore that now is the time for taking steps to meet the situation'.<sup>614</sup>

B&H undertook to accommodate the Besson works as a separate operation, retaining their workforce and transferring the firm's machinery, tools, furniture & fittings, motors and stock to Edgware. They would purchase any items no longer required by Besson, and considered that this plan would be of mutual benefit as it would offer

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<sup>612</sup> Ibid. 06/02/1948.

<sup>613</sup> Ibid. 06/02/1948.

<sup>614</sup> Ibid. 27/02/1948.

*an overall saving in Rent and general Factory services, coupled with the participation in our general development plans, and supplies from other departments, which we feel can be handled better and more efficiently with the production all under one roof, than would be the case were we to continue to maintain our separate Factories as hitherto.*<sup>615</sup>

Besson accepted B&H's offer but at the same time maintained their independence, moving their Registered Office to 15 West Street, with the first Directors' Meeting held there on 12 May 1948.<sup>616</sup>

The move to Edgware proved costly for Besson and, after eight-and-a-half months, a loss of £8,289 was recorded.<sup>617</sup> In autumn 1948 some of the product lines were cut to allow the company to concentrate on the sale of brasswind instruments and accessories,<sup>618</sup> the stocks of drums, percussion and guitars were liquidated.<sup>619</sup> By August 1949 it was proving too expensive to run the Besson lines independently. From 1 January 1950 the Besson workers were merged into the B&H production sections and B&H gradually took over manufacturing the Besson range of instruments, parts and accessories for contract prices.<sup>620</sup> Some of the Besson stock was sent to West Street for retail, but most was bought by B&H.<sup>621</sup>

Integration took some years with the Besson serial number sequence being finally discontinued and replaced by the B&H sequence in October 1954. Besson operated two series of numbers. The highest-numbered valve instrument recorded (i.e. the latest stamped) in the Besson 'Stamping Book' is a B ♭ cornet – number 146292, and the highest-numbered slide instrument is a B ♭ tenor trombone – number 17207; both were made by Sheridan, who was in charge of much mass production.<sup>622</sup> From this time some models of instrument were common to both brands, differing only in name; for example the Besson 'Westminster' trombone was the same as the B&H 'Regent'.

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<sup>615</sup> Ibid. 27/02/1948.

<sup>616</sup> Ibid. 12/05/1948.

<sup>617</sup> Ibid. 02/06/1949, 31/12/1948.

<sup>618</sup> Ibid. 13/10/1948.

<sup>619</sup> Ibid. 29/11/1948.

<sup>620</sup> Ibid. 25/08/1949.

<sup>621</sup> Ibid. 14/12/1949.

<sup>622</sup> Besson, *Stamping Book 1948-1954*: HM/B&H A227/176. 13/10/1954.

## 5.10 The acquisition of Besson & Co. shares by Boosey & Hawkes

Whereas the merger of B&Co. and H&S was a mutually beneficial union brought about by the conviction of both companies that their amalgamation would reduce competition and give them strength to survive the difficult economic climate, the subsequent acquisition by B&H of Besson was more complex. The evidence initially suggests that B&H were opportunists, fostering links between the two companies with their paternal offers of help and support for the struggling firm. However, it is clear that their business behaviour became increasingly aggressive as they steadily procured the Besson company shares, thus revealing their determination to take-over the company.

From the foundation of Besson & Co. Ltd. in 1895 there was a large representation of company directors amongst the shareholders, and all shares were registered to shareholders at their private addresses; these were noted in full in the *Register of Transfers*. However, after 1944 only the town or city is recorded, and it appears that in some cases Besson shares were held in directors' names, with shares ascribed to them both at their home addresses and at B&H corporate addresses.<sup>623</sup>

It is not known whether the acquisition of multiple shares by the Beares in 1931, and their consequent directorships, was an aggressive business move initiated by B&H to obtain a control of the company, or whether the Beares were shareholders in their own right. However, in the absence of any corroborating evidence it may be suggested that B&H were instigating a gradual take-over of the company. This is later substantiated by information which suggests that from at least 1944 B&H maintained a majority shareholding of Besson & Co. Ltd. through their nominees.<sup>624</sup> W.B. Beare, J.W. Beare and a Miss W.B. Blackney, together, from as early as 1937, held 62.3% of the ordinary shares.<sup>625</sup> In the *Dividend*

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<sup>623</sup> Besson, *Register of Transfers*.

<sup>624</sup> Appendix 9.

<sup>625</sup> Besson, *Dividends 1912-1940*.



*Account Books*,<sup>626</sup> from 1944–1966, the initials ‘B&H’ are recorded in place of the address for some of the directors, retired directors and for Miss Blackney, who joined B&H in 1930 just after amalgamation, and was appointed Geoffrey Hawkes’ private secretary in 1934.<sup>627</sup> (But, in the *Register of Transfers*<sup>628</sup> and *Loose Transfers of Share Certificates*,<sup>629</sup> Miss Blackney’s private address is given.)

From December 1955 B&H started to acquire Besson shares in their own name; the first transfer of 100 ordinary and 160 preference shares was made by James Little, a director of B&H. In December 1956 they augmented their holding with 360 preference shares and in October 1957 increased it further by acquiring the 13,048 ordinary and 12,245 preference shares previously held by W.B. and J.W. Beare.<sup>630</sup> This gave B&H a total holding, in the company’s own name, of 51.1% (75% including nominees) of the total ordinary shareholding and 53.1% of preference shares.<sup>631</sup>

By 1964 B&H held 52.2% (82.9% including nominees) of the total ordinary shares and in 1966 52.8% (83.5% including nominees). In 1967, B&H made an offer to the Besson shareholders to buy all the remaining shares. At this point B&H Ltd. and nominees are recorded as still holding 83.5% of the total number of ordinary shares.<sup>632</sup> The registration of transfers took place in April with the final few transactions in July 1968.<sup>633</sup>

It is clear from the *Summary of Register of Members – 4<sup>th</sup> August 1967* that some of the directors of Besson, who were shareholders of the company, were considered nominees of B&H.<sup>634</sup> The evidence, in conjunction with the previous notation of ‘B&H’ in place of shareholders’ addresses, indicates that B&H, by acquisition of shares through its nominees, had control of the company from 1944,

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<sup>626</sup> Besson, *Dividends: Preference Shares*; Besson, *Dividends Ordinary Shares*; Besson, *Dividend Book: Ordinary and Preference Shares 1966-1967*: HM/B&H A227/198.

<sup>627</sup> Macree, B&H, *Edgware Newsletter* (1970). p.16.

<sup>628</sup> Besson, *Register of Transfers*.

<sup>629</sup> Besson, *Loose Transfers of Share Certificates 1937-1967*: HM/B&H A227/194.

<sup>630</sup> Besson, *Register of Transfers*.

<sup>631</sup> Appendix 9.

<sup>632</sup> Besson, *Dividends: Ordinary and Preference*.

<sup>633</sup> Besson, *Register of Transfers*.

<sup>634</sup> Besson, *Dividends: Ordinary and Preference*.

and possibly earlier. In its own name, B&H had a corporate majority shareholding from 1957, culminating with total ownership in 1968.

To conclude, from 1930 onwards Besson became more dependent on B&H, and the company's directors progressively resigned to their assertive and dominant leadership. This appears to have been necessary for the continuation of the struggling company, and it must be considered whether Besson as an individual business would have survived without help from B&H. After the War Besson had to make decisions based on the prevailing economic environment, and therefore the amalgamation of the company with B&H must have been seen at the time to offer a more stable future for both the workforce and shareholders. Whilst the integration of Besson was of great benefit to the parent company, the independent firm lost its individual identity, but the strong Besson brand was retained, and remained an asset to B&H.

## **5.11 Conclusions**

The sudden appointment in 1931 of W.B. and J.W. Beare as directors and major shareholders of Besson is significant. It is not known whether their unsolicited interest in the company had been prompted by B&H; however, on his arrival at Besson, W.B. Beare immediately forged connections between the two companies. These links were increased in 1939 when Geoffrey Hawkes, from his first involvement with Besson, took every opportunity to steer it towards becoming part of B&H. Besson, no doubt motivated by concerns about future economy and trade, gradually accepted the potential advantages of being a part of one large musical instrument manufacturing firm.

From the beginning of the War Besson developed an increasing reliance on B&H, gradually relinquishing its corporate independence from as early as 1944. The provision of sub-contracted war work, and subsequently the staff transfers of William Culley and Jack Howard from B&H to assist with the re-commencement of instrument production, led to an alliance between the two companies which continued to develop until 1948 when B&H saw the opportunity to incorporate Besson at their Edgware works.

Although the emphasis always seemed to be on the mutual benefits attainable, the implication is that B&H, in its 'persuasive' letter of February 1948, sees itself very much as the dominant company. In physical and practical terms, a gradual merger of Besson and B&H took place over the course of some years; the most significant events were the relocation of Besson's manufacturing operations to Edgware in 1948 and the amalgamation of the workforce and integration of product lines in January 1950, although for ownership the majority shareholding must be considered the main factor. From 1944 B&H, by virtue of nominees alone, can be considered to have had control of Besson. It is surely no coincidence that Geoffrey Hawkes started to attend the Besson Directors' Meetings in January 1944. From February 1955 B&H are recorded in the financial statements included in the minutes as the 'Parent Company' rather than as previously, 'B&H Limited',<sup>635</sup> and this corresponds with the first date of the acquisition of shares by B&H in their corporate name.<sup>636</sup>

The acquisition of Besson by B&H was, in effect, a lengthy and gradual process from mutual affiliation to complete integration. There are a number of different aspects and stages of the merger which make it difficult to give a definite date of acquisition. The sudden recognition in 1944 of existing shareholders as nominees with a majority, the removal of Besson production to Edgware in 1948, the consolidation of product lines from 1950, and the corporate majority shareholding of B&H in 1957 are all significant. However, Besson remained a separate organisation with its own directors until 1968, when B&H purchased the remaining shares, thus achieving total ownership.

The poor economic state of the music industry in the late 1920s had led, in 1930, to the amalgamation of Boosey and Hawkes, when Leslie Boosey and Ralph Hawkes recognised that the only way to survive the effects of the Depression was to eliminate competition by combining businesses. Therefore it is probable that the directors of the new company set about acquiring rival businesses in order to maintain their dominant position in the market. Besson, the only British firm that provided serious competition, was thus perceived to be an attractive and necessary acquisition. By the removal of all its major competitors B&H achieved monopoly of

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<sup>635</sup> Besson, *Shareholder Minutes 1932-1957*. 28/02/1955.

<sup>636</sup> At first B&H holding was only 0.7% of the total holding; however, in 1957, they attained a majority of 51.1%.

the market and had succeeded in becoming one of the largest and most successful instrument manufacturing companies in the world. It is perhaps significant that when, in the summer of 2001, B&H ceased most of its manufacturing and relocated the only flourishing part of its range, brass instruments, to Croxley Green in Watford, the company was re-branded with the name 'Besson', possibly in recognition of the lasting reputation of Besson and its fine quality instruments.

## Chapter 6

### 1945 to 1959: Recommencement of manufacture after the War

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#### 6.1 Introduction

After the war the return of B&H to musical instrument manufacture was strengthened by the company's gradual acquisition of Besson. By integrating the two workforces, consolidating product lines and removing competition through a shared customer base B&H added to the development, expansion and success of the firm during a period of depressed economy, new technology and regeneration in Britain.

By the end of the War the B&H Edgware factory had been transformed from traditional workshops with workers hand-crafting instruments aided by a few mechanical devices, to what was essentially an engineering works with machine operators running industrial production lines on the 'factory floor'. The acquisition of over £100,000 worth of 'the most modern plant'<sup>637</sup> and a team of engineers to carry out war work under the leadership of Frederick Draper, Works Manager, led to a complete change of ethos within the company.<sup>638</sup> By adapting the machinery for instrument making the company was able to commence mass production of many low-priced models, therefore dramatically increasing the number of brass and woodwind instruments made at the factory. This enabled the company to enter new export markets and satisfy the rapidly growing demand for instruments at home.

During the 1950s Britain experienced great economic expansion and a rise in consumerism. The recording industry rapidly developed throughout the decade, fuelled by the sudden growth of popular music culture and teenage spending. This and a sustained interest in classical music resulted in many professional musicians being required to record both classical works and backing-music, thus maintaining the market for professional quality instruments.<sup>639</sup> At the same time demand for

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<sup>637</sup> B&H, *Brass by Boosey & Hawkes* (1951): AMPC. p.B5.

<sup>638</sup> B&H Engineers Limited, "Sounding Brass." p.16.

<sup>639</sup> Ehrlich, *Music Profession*. p.225.

student models increased as the development of music education in schools brought about the introduction of recorders and percussion instruments into classroom lessons at many primary schools; B&H led the way in producing a range of instruments for this purpose.<sup>640</sup> Some children progressed to learning other instruments, and schools began to offer limited instrumental tuition, ensemble-work and orchestral playing to pupils.

This chapter discusses the effects that the new mechanised manufacturing processes and mass-production had on instrument design, factory output and the workforce, and the changing market and increased customer demand for instruments after the War. Short biographical notes on players are included in Appendix 4.

## 6.2 The effect of the War on factory mechanisation

After the War B&H displayed a noticeable change in its approach to marketing. In their post-merger literature of the 1930s they had promoted the company's increasing use of machinery and new production processes, emphasising scientific and mechanical developments rather than traditional craftsmanship. However, after the War, although the use of machinery in the factory was much further advanced and widespread than before, with the majority of instruments mass produced, the company still highlighted the employment by workers of hand-crafted methods of production which required a high degree of craftsmanship and involved 'many man hours of patient work'.<sup>641</sup> B&H also stressed the importance of the continuation of traditional skills and knowledge throughout generations of employees. In the catalogues individual workers were named, and their personal commitment, expertise and years of service to the company detailed.<sup>642</sup> The company retrospectively considered that during the pre-war period no very great progress had been made with mechanisation in British and European factories, but they realistically acknowledged that some progress had taken place in America.<sup>643</sup> However, the actual advances in innovation and development in British

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<sup>640</sup> B&H, *Educational Musical Instruments by Boosey & Hawkes* (c.1951): EUCHMI 3033.

<sup>641</sup> F.C. Draper, *The Design and Manufacture of Musical Wind Instruments* (London: H&S, 1957). p.12.

<sup>642</sup> B&H, 1951 brass catalogue. pp.B6-7.

<sup>643</sup> Draper, *Design and Manufacture*. pp.11-12.

factories had been negligible in comparison to those made at companies such as Conn.

Towards the end of the War British instrument companies had eagerly planned and advertised their return to instrument manufacture. B&H and Besson independently regularly posted adverts in the *British Bandsman* describing the preparations within their factories, promoting the skill and innovation of their craftsmen and their new manufacturing processes. B&H announced that they were

*Looking Forward! The quality of B&H's Instruments was born of technical knowledge of high degree. Skilled craftsmen and brilliant designers were blended together into a team, and their efforts became known the world over. Wartime has found its uses for these clever brains and hands – but that is a story not to be told now. From the different tasks now performed has come a wealth of technical knowledge, and when victory is here this knowledge is going to be invaluable in our own post war development. Fresh ideas; even better production methods – these will go to the making of B&H's Instruments. We know that our Instruments set a standard by which all others are judged. We are proud in the knowledge, and we are going to raise that standard even higher.*<sup>644</sup>

The new machinery and the presence of engineers in the factory after the War provided B&H with the means for rapidly progressing the developments already made in the company during the 1930s. A different approach to production and a changed workforce, which now included a large number of female workers, influenced the direction of instrument design and manufacture, accelerating the adoption of mechanised methods for making instruments. The majority of employees in the factory after the War were engineers and technicians; only a small number of experienced instrument makers remained.<sup>645</sup> Craftsmen who were used to hand-making instruments in small batches were forced to adapt their skills to new and modern methods of working, with most of the original hand-work performed by machine. The management decided that as

*only a nucleus of the original workers skilled in the trade was available and much of the production equipment had been dispersed [...] a new approach would be necessary as far as production methods were concerned [...]*

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<sup>644</sup> *The British Bandsman*. 2210 (22/07/1944). p.3.

<sup>645</sup> Letter, W.J. Golbourn, Boosey and Hawkes Engineers Ltd. to C. Monk. 20/03/1958: EUCHMI/M 6145.

*Operators had to be rapidly trained and a high rate of output on an economical basis was essential if advantage was to be taken of the potential export market. A careful study was therefore made of the production requirements, and a development programme, involving the installation of the necessary machine tools, jigs, and fixtures was put into hand progressively.*<sup>646</sup>

Former instrument makers were appointed managers of assembly lines of workers, with clarinets recorded as mass produced and brass instruments as 'line produced'. Line production began with trumpets in October 1945, followed by tenor trombones in 1946, cornets in 1950, and basses in 1953.<sup>647</sup>

Draper and a team of engineers led the development. Eric McGavin, Woodwind Tuner, reported that

*certain engineers who came in during the war remained in the factory and others came in, so that by 1946 the transition began in earnest. Mr. F.C. Draper, M.I.Mech.E., took over the engineering direction of the project, besides a vast scheme for revolutionizing technique for manufacturing brass instruments.' G. Hawkes was the driving force, supported on the engineering side by A.W. McCrann (Production Manager), H. Bradstock (Chief Engineer), R. Fraser (tooling and jigs), R. Alloway (wood problems and tooling for quantity production), K. Pengelly (general engineering), W. Slaughter (assembly of quantity produced clarinets).*<sup>648</sup>

B&H set up a tool room specifically for designing, building and maintaining 'special purpose machinery exclusively devoted to the making of musical instruments.'<sup>649</sup> Many machines for hydraulically expanding, dimpling, stretching and bending metal and for particular manufacturing processes were made in-house, such as a chain draw-bench with two dies so that two tubes could be re-drawn at the same time, and a screw draw-bench.<sup>650</sup> Hydraulic forming processes were first used for making

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<sup>646</sup> B&H Ltd., "Hydraulic Forming Techniques Applied to the Manufacture of Musical Instruments," Reprinted from *Machinery* (12 and 26 June 1953): HM/B&H. p.3.

<sup>647</sup> Appendix 10.i.

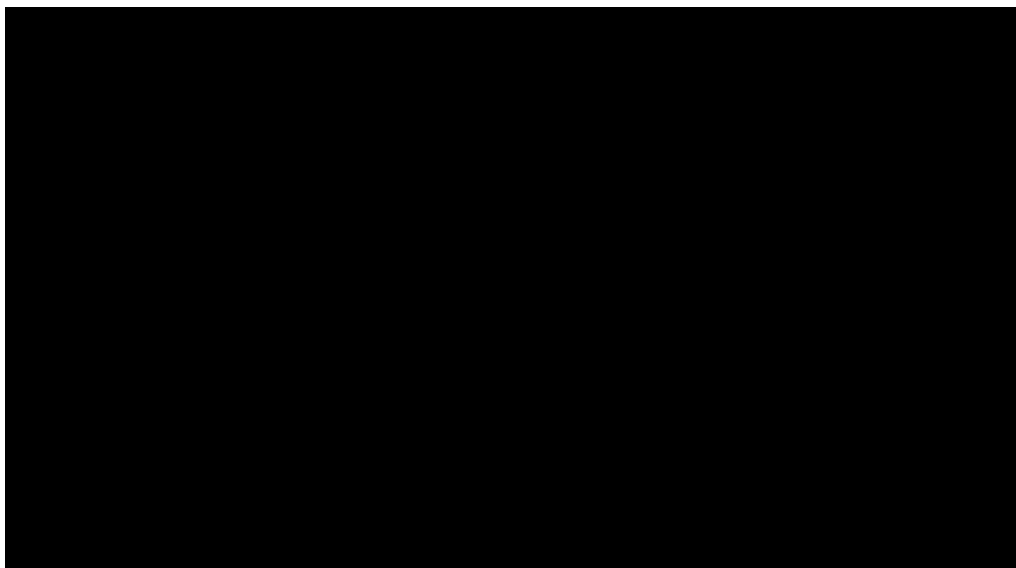
<sup>648</sup> Eric McGavin, "Craftsmanship in a New Setting," in *Woodwind Book 1957-8*, ed. Brian Manton-Myatt (B&H Ltd., 1957). p.30.

<sup>649</sup> There are many extant plans of machines and components in the B&H archive. HM/B&H.

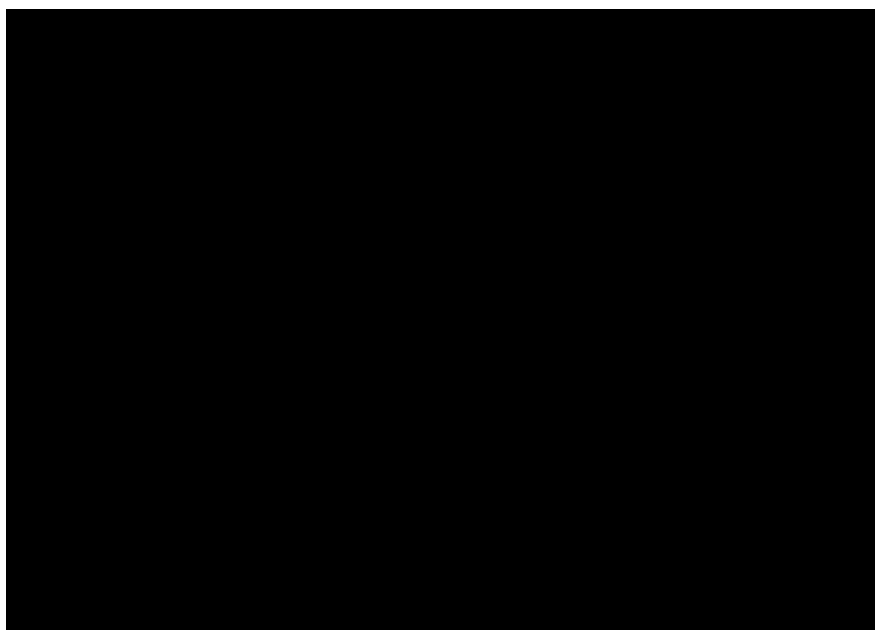
<sup>650</sup> B&H Engineers Limited, *Sounding Brass*. p.3. By 1958 B&H had formed a subsidiary company, Boosey and Hawkes Engineers Ltd., for this purpose. (Directors G. Hawkes., L.A. Boosey, J.S. Little, F.C. Draper, [F.W.W. Bagot - crossed out], C. McCrann, W.J. Golbourn, K.T. Pengelly.) Letter from W. J. Golbourn, Boosey and Hawkes Engineers Ltd. to A. W. Monk. 20/03/1958. EUCHMI/M 6145.



branches for BB  $\flat$  and EE  $\flat$  basses in September and November 1950 respectively. This method of production was subsequently employed for B  $\flat$  euphonium first branches, and 'Regent' E  $\flat$  bass and B  $\flat$  euphonium first and second branches.<sup>651</sup> The application of hydraulic forming techniques was greatly extended and underwent much development with B&H constructing a single machine for performing all of the tube bending procedures automatically<sup>652</sup> (Figures 22 and 23).



**Figure 22.** Hydraulic expansion press. B&H 1951 catalogue (AMPC).



**Figure 23.** Dies for hydraulic expansion (HM/B&H).

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<sup>651</sup> Appendix 10.ii.

<sup>652</sup> B&H Engineers Limited, *Sounding Brass*. p.3, p.9.

Although a number of mechanised processes employed and built by B&H integrated machinery made by other firms,<sup>653</sup> by designing and making their own and devising their own manufacturing procedures B&H were able to keep expenditure down. Hydraulic forming processes for brass instruments saved many man hours of skilled labour. For example, with mechanisation, the manufacture of the largest of the four main branches for a bass tuba, which had previously taken about nine hours to make by hand, took a semi-skilled operative only 20 minutes.<sup>654</sup> According to Draper the cost of the tools required for making larger components could be recovered in the first batch of about 100 components.<sup>655</sup> In 1953 B&H produced 58 different types of brass instruments in the factory, 'each incorporating a variety of bends'.<sup>656</sup> A new time-saving machine, designed for the manufacture of the piston assembly or valve box, was also developed during the second half of the 1950s.<sup>657</sup>

B&H applied modern manufacturing techniques to making a few other products including acoustic gramophone pick-up arms under sub-contract for a British gramophone manufacturer. The company designed a press die and tool especially for this purpose.<sup>658</sup> Although acoustic gramophones were long out of fashion in Britain, a large number were made for use in parts of the world without electricity.

With the increased use of unskilled machine operators in the factory and the diminishing role of skilled craftsmen, many employees had no knowledge of the instruments that they were producing. Therefore, in the early 1950s the directors decided that the manufacturing staff should 'acquire some ability to play the instrument that they made' as was the case at factories on the continent and in America. A course of talks on sound and the elements of the theory and playing of music was given by company employees Brian Manton-Myatt, George Savage and

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<sup>653</sup> See B&H Ltd., *Hydraulic Forming Techniques*. p.6, p.11, and B&H Engineers Limited, *Sounding Brass*. p.3, p.8, p.16.

<sup>654</sup> Draper, *Design and Manufacture*. p.18.

<sup>655</sup> The main item of the cost was making the die which was cast in white brass (zinc 84%, copper 12%, and aluminium 4%). Steel dies were used for producing 'the smaller components made from parallel tube [...] which may run into hundreds of thousands during the course of time.' These were generally manufactured in batches of 1,000 or 2,000 lots. Cast resin was used for dies for small quantities of non musical instrument components. Draper, *Design and Manufacture*. pp.19-20.

<sup>656</sup> B&H Ltd., *Hydraulic Forming Techniques*. p.5.

<sup>657</sup> *Ibid.* p.24.

<sup>658</sup> B&H Engineers Limited, *Sounding Brass*. p.8.

Eric McGavin.<sup>659</sup> Frederick Draper also targeted the sales and technical staff with his book entitled *The B&H Compensating System Fully Explained*. It was intended to 'assist the Sales Staff in further popularising the Company's Compensated Instruments' by describing 'the errors of intonation inherent in brass wind instruments and the extent to which the most serious of these errors can be improved.'<sup>660</sup> Although reminiscent of Victorian paternalism, this was a necessary and realistic training policy given the nature of the post-war workforce.

The scale of operations at B&H increased dramatically during the decade after the War, and the company used descriptions of its expansion to fuel their publicity. During the war period about 300 workers had been employed in the factory which covered an area of 150,000 square feet.<sup>661</sup> By 1953 the workforce had more than doubled to 700 employees. B&H continued to state that they were the largest factory in Europe making wind and percussion instruments.<sup>662</sup> This may have been true as by this time the workforces in the large French factories were much reduced, but the newly nationalised factories in East Germany and Czechoslovakia were expanding rapidly. In 1955 B&H claimed that 'nearly 1,000 employees under the personal direction of Mr. Geoffrey Hawkes' were manufacturing brass and woodwind instruments 'at the greatly expanded and modernised factory at Edgware,'<sup>663</sup> but by 1958 they once again acknowledged 700 workers.<sup>664</sup>

With this large-scale mass production of mainly student grade instruments for home and abroad, manufactured mainly by unskilled workers operating machines, B&H were hardly employing the hand-crafted production methods that they professed. Although some of the top-grade instruments were still hand-made, many processes were performed by machine. Quality control began to diminish and the company started to lose sight of the high standard of their top range instruments and the requirements of their professional clients.

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<sup>659</sup> *Talks to Staff* c.1954, handwritten script, probably by B. Manton-Myatt. HM/B&H/McG. Brian Manton-Myatt was in charge of woodwind design at Edgware c.1924-54. George Savage was brass tuner 1950-72. Eric McGavin was woodwind tuner from 1950 and Educational Advisor 1965-70.

<sup>660</sup> F.C. Draper, *The Boosey & Hawkes Compensating System Fully Explained* (B&H (Sales) Ltd., 1953): AMPC.

<sup>661</sup> B&H, 1951 brass catalogue. p.B5.

<sup>662</sup> B&H Ltd., *Hydraulic Forming Techniques*. p.3.

<sup>663</sup> B&H, *Musical Instruments and Accessories* (1955): HM/B&H. p.iii.

<sup>664</sup> B&H Engineers Limited, *Sounding Brass*. p.2.

Besides the acquisition of Rudall Carte & Co. during the war and the removal in 1948 of Besson to Edgware, in about 1950 B&H obtained an interest in a small German firm A.K. Hüttl (see Section 5.8).<sup>665</sup> At first, the company was run under joint directorship from Wales and Edgware with a separate sales department set up in July 1952 at the Besson West Street showroom.<sup>666</sup> However, in January 1953 the Hüttl factory was closed down and absorbed into B&H at Edgware;<sup>667</sup> the removal of the sales department and transferral of all records and accounts from West Street was completed by June.<sup>668</sup> From 1950 Besson models were occasionally recorded in the B&H workbooks, but during 1954, as company lines became integrated, all instruments produced by Besson and Hüttl were included, with distinct B&H and Besson models often replaced by common models.<sup>669</sup>

## 6.3 Marketing

After the War B&H were keen to attract customers to Edgware as they recognised that visitors could be used as ‘natural propaganda’ for the company. However, in order to achieve this it was important to ensure that visitors’ first impressions were in accordance with their perceived prestige of the firm.<sup>670</sup> During the reorganisation of the factory consideration was given to furnishing and equipping a woodwind tuning department with the aim of drawing visitors who were interested in products into the factory. The public were to be excluded from the tuning room used for export models and mass-produced instruments as they would be more impressed by the ‘finest specimens’. The company also considered that ‘there may be reasons of state why the general public should not know everything about our cut-price lines,’ and above all they did not want any interruption to the tuning of mass produced instruments as this might delay despatch. The General Woodwind Room was to have up-to-date equipment and photographs of eminent

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<sup>665</sup> Waterhouse, *Index*. p.186.

<sup>666</sup> A.K. Hüttl Ltd., Letter on Headed Notepaper (1952): HM/B&H A227/178.

<sup>667</sup> Besson, *Shareholder Minutes 1932-1957*. 25/02/1953.

<sup>668</sup> *Ibid.* 21/07/1953.

<sup>669</sup> For example: Besson ‘Westminster’ and B&H ‘Regent’ only differed in engraving. Appendix 10.iii.

<sup>670</sup> Memo, B. Manton-Myatt to F.R. Williams (28/06/1945): HM/B&H/McG.

players who used B&H products on the walls, as it was thought that this would particularly impress provincial customers and military musicians.<sup>671</sup>

In the 1951 catalogue customers were offered a full service, with highly paid testers and factory staff on hand 'to prescribe and to diagnose any trouble which the artist-musician may be suffering from.' Purchasers of the top quality instruments were invited to the factory for 'personal fitting' and adjustments. The company particularly targeted band custom, arrogantly asserting that the 'B&H works alone in the world are capable of fitting a complete band, or a complete orchestra with every instrument not only most superbly manufactured, but also individually suited to the player.'<sup>672</sup>

Endorsement of instruments by professional musicians and successful bands continued to be a major marketing strategy, and owing to broadcasting and good general access to music performance, public awareness of B&H was greater than ever before. Wind instruments made by B&H and their subsidiary companies Besson and Rudall Carte were the predominant choice in Britain, and were rapidly becoming more widespread abroad. B&H recognised this and used it in their marketing, observing for example that

*The B&H name and reputation have been established for well over 100 years; and famous musicians the world over are playing B&H Woodwind – their testimonials and recommendations having been both a spur and an encouragement. They can be heard every day on radio, gramophone, and in every kind of band or orchestral entertainment.*<sup>673</sup>

## 6.4 Export market

The reduction of British wealth and Britain's diminishing Imperial authority during the War led to withdrawal from India in 1947 and the gradual decline of the Empire during and after the 1950s; consequently B&H experienced a sudden fall in trade with colonial military bands. This and the effects of the prohibitive rate of

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<sup>671</sup> Ibid.

<sup>672</sup> B&H, 1951 brass catalogue. p.B7.

<sup>673</sup> B&H, Woodwind by Boosey & Hawkes (1951): HM/B&H. p.W5.

purchase tax on musical instruments bought at home caused a severe reduction in sales and forced B&H to expand export trade outside the Empire.<sup>674</sup>

Restrictions during and after the War had altered world trading patterns, and Geoffrey Hawkes saw the opportunity to enter American and Canadian markets providing low-priced student models for university and school bands.<sup>675</sup> Previously these countries had imported most of their instruments from Europe, where labour was low paid and instruments were generally hand-crafted. Brass instruments were obtained from Germany, Czechoslovakia and Italy, and woodwind from France and Italy, with a small number from Germany.<sup>676</sup> Owing to the greatly increased productivity and reduced factory costs of mass production, B&H were able to compete successfully with foreign suppliers and claim a large share of this trade. New instrument designs were drawn up according to American specifications and the company entered the world market.<sup>677</sup> B&H's export trade was so successful that, for some time, production was not high enough to satisfy the demand. However, whilst there was an opening for sales of student models in America and Canada, most high quality instruments for these countries were produced by their own manufacturers.

In January 1956 B&H announced in a press release that in spite of competition from the 'large and powerful domestic factories as well as importations from all over the world', within ten years the company had built up sales to become firmly established in this new market. This fact they felt 'might well be borne in mind by some of our players in this country who are only too ready to assume that there is nothing to touch American Brass and Continental Woodwind.'<sup>678</sup> The harsh reality was that many British professional players favoured instruments made

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<sup>674</sup> During the war purchase tax on instruments was set at 60%. Subsequently, the rate sometimes varied but gradually decreased. (1951 43.3%, 1955 33.3%) Geoffrey Hawkes, in a letter dated 07/07/1958, referred to the current rate of purchase tax as 30%, rather than the previous rate of 60%. He suggested that, to escape paying purchase tax on a custom-made a sackbutt (sn275512) 'an indefinite "on loan" account' should be opened on the understanding that it would be paid off 'by way of advertisement, say in three equal annual instalments'. Letter from Geoffrey Hawkes, Boosey and Hawkes Engineers Ltd. to C. Mark sic. [C. Monk]. 07/07/1958. EUCHMI/M 6145.

<sup>675</sup> B&H, *Woodwind Yearbook* 1957-8. p.29.

<sup>676</sup> Draper, *Design and Manufacture*. p.13.

<sup>677</sup> Ibid. p.34.

<sup>678</sup> Press releases by John Gardner, Publicity Manager, *Dollars for Notes* (January 1956): NF/156/1, and *British Instruments for North America*, NF/156/2. HM/B&H/McG.

abroad, even though B&H worked hard to attract their custom by copying and developing popular foreign models, and by offering a personal service.

Exports became the major part of B&H's trade with hundreds of mass-produced instruments leaving the factory for abroad every week. Orders from America and Canada during 1956 for over 10,000 woodwind and 11,000 brass instruments (including 4,000 trumpets) were worth around \$717,000 (£256,000). This represented a substantial increase over the preceding year.<sup>679</sup> In 1957 orders rose to about \$900,000,<sup>680</sup> and export continued to grow in subsequent years. Over a period of about ten years factory output had increased more than five-fold, although wage and material costs had risen to at least twice those of 1946.<sup>681</sup>

Between 1946 and 1955 new subsidiary companies were established in Bonn, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Cape Town and Madras (in addition to those already existing in Toronto, Sydney and New York), and distributing agents were appointed in New York and San Antonio, Texas.<sup>682</sup> In 1955 B&H attempted to consolidate their international advertising efforts with a booklet entitled 'Vintage Wood'.<sup>683</sup> The image that B&H wanted to portray was the reality of a British post-war, modern, mechanised factory with many women workers. However, this did not match the American ideal – an archaic picture of craftsmen in aprons hand-making instruments in old-fashioned workshops. The Juhl Advertising Agency in New York approved the layout produced at Edgware, but requested that a finished copy should be returned 'for examination from the American market point of view.' They considered that 'factory scenes showing women at the work bench' should be eliminated as

*imported clarinets in this market are generally regarded as the product of painstaking craftsmanship – men who have learned their skills over generations of workers in the family. Let's not destroy this conception of clarinet making by showing women on assembly assignments – or by revealing a lot of automatic machines. If factory shots are to be used, stick to dramatic close ups of*

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<sup>679</sup> Ibid.

<sup>680</sup> B&H Engineers Limited, *Sounding Brass*. p.2.

<sup>681</sup> Draper, *Design and Manufacture*. p.35.

<sup>682</sup> Appendix 10.v.

<sup>683</sup> B&H, *Vintage Wood*, Unpublished draft (1955): HM/B&H.

*individual craftsmen or at most a very small group. The “factory look”, in other words, is definitely undesirable.*<sup>684</sup>

The sudden changeover to mass production led to a steep annual rise in the number of clarinets manufactured, and to an increased ratio of mass-produced instruments to those that were hand-crafted. By the early 1950s most of the mass-produced instruments were destined for export, with models designed specifically for certain countries. The first references in the workbooks to trial 14-key and ‘1026’ (Boehm) model ‘Regent’ clarinets were in August 1946, with the first batch of 100 instruments made at the Enfield factory in October.<sup>685</sup> Subsequently this design was sold under many different names abroad. In 1947 over 2,500 clarinets were mass produced, of which over 800 were sent unassembled to New York.<sup>686</sup> Only about 120 were hand-made.<sup>687</sup> During the 1950s many thousands of mass-produced clarinets were exported. The first evidence of mass-produced flutes was in 1951 when one thousand one-keyed ‘Regent’ flutes were manufactured, probably for band use abroad. These were followed by 875 one-keyed B ♭ flutes in 1952–3, most of which were sent to Canada.<sup>688</sup>

From 1947 clarinets were stamped: ‘Regent’, ‘Revere’, ‘Lafleur’, and ‘Triumph’, and some ‘J. Grey’ for a dealer of that name. Some were recorded ‘unstamped’. However, by 1948, as export to America increased, many models were given names that sounded either typically American or distinctively English, the latter perhaps to give the impression of a truly British product to impress and encourage the American market. Names included ‘Berkeley’, ‘Berkeley “Honer”’, ‘Edgware’, ‘Marlborough’ and ‘Westminster’, and from 1950, ‘Marathon’, ‘Frisco’, ‘Hershman’, ‘Victor’, ‘Gaylord de Luxe’, ‘Embassy’, ‘Buckingham’, ‘Whitehall’ and ‘Besson’. Between 1951 and 1953, two thousand metal clarinets, made mainly for the American and Canadian market, were stamped ‘American Leader’, ‘Gaylord’, ‘Alden’, ‘Commodore’, ‘Embassy’, ‘Royal Artist’ and ‘Oxford’. Later batches from 1956 were named predominantly ‘Stratford’ and ‘Edgware’.

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<sup>684</sup> Letters, John Gardner, Advertising Manager, Frederick Close to Geoffrey Hawkes, B&H Inc., New York, 7/3/55 and from Juhl Advertising Agency to Geoffrey Hawkes, 295 Regent Street, 22/04/1955. HM/B&H/McG.

<sup>685</sup> Appendix 10.iv.

<sup>686</sup> Appendix 10.vi. The export of unassembled instruments indicates that labour costs may have been lower in America than Britain.

<sup>687</sup> B&H, *Woodwind and Percussion 9*: HM/B&H A227/020.

<sup>688</sup> Appendix 10.vi.



In 1955 a cheap clarinet model, the '77', was introduced for export. It had keys made of Mazak, an inexpensive zinc alloy with a low melting point that was easy to cast. Many of these instruments were produced but few have survived as Mazak ('pot metal') was weak and unstable and consequently bent and broke. Another new design was noted at the beginning of 1956: two clarinets were recorded in the workbook as 'Mark II To New York' although it is not known which model was being developed.<sup>689</sup>

Some brass instrument models detailed as being to American specification were designed particularly for the North American market,<sup>690</sup> but it appears that until the mid-1950s the number of brass instruments compared to woodwind that were produced for export was far lower. During the late 1940s and early 1950s only a small number of brass instruments in very small batches were recorded for America and Canada; however, in 1955 there was a slight increase, with some also noted for Australia. Instruments that were developed specifically for the North American market included cornet models (some recorded with red brass and with tungum bells),<sup>691</sup> piston bugles in G for the widespread American 'drum corps' movement, and a range of instruments designed with the bell pointing forward (based on the 'recording' bass) for the flourishing American high-school and college marching band movement. Most of these models were sold under the trade mark of 'Besson',<sup>692</sup> probably because the name was longer established in America than that of B&H.

During the late 1950s a new range of models with the name 'Starline' was produced for export to certain European countries.<sup>693</sup> These instruments were marketed under the Rudall Carte name, and the first experimental trumpets were sent to Sweden in May and June 1956. 'Starline No.1' clarinets were exported to dealers in Germany, Belgium, Sweden and Switzerland (from June 1956), Norway (from 1957) and Holland (from 1958). Many 'Starline' models were also recorded for the dealer Barnes & Mullins, and a number of clarinets were sent to Australia from December 1956 to 1958. Trumpets were produced in two models: 'Starline

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<sup>689</sup> Ibid.

<sup>690</sup> Appendix 10.vii.

<sup>691</sup> Tungum is a strong, light-weight, non-corrosive alloy of nickel, aluminium, silicon and brass which when polished looks like gold.

<sup>692</sup> Letter, Geoffrey Hawkes to C. Mark *sic*. [C. Monk]. 07/07/1958. EUCHMI/M 6145.

<sup>693</sup> Appendix 10.viii.

No.2' (model 100) and 'Starline No.1' (model 101), and were sometimes marked with a green or blue star, the significance of which is presently unknown. A 'Starline No.1' trombone was also developed. In 1958 many 'Starline' flutes were recorded for Barnes & Mullins, and other exports included a number of 'Edgware' metal flutes sent to New York, South Africa, Canada, W. Germany and Sweden, and six Hüttl '623' design clarinets to Sweden.

One of the most notable and successful export models that B&H made was the '8-10' clarinet. It was developed towards the end of 1957 specifically for North America. This entirely new design had a smaller bore than the 'Edgware', with an extended parallel section. It was made to be compatible with standard French and American mouthpieces, and enabled production of a 'more focused' tone according to the American tradition of playing. The model was designed around the use of the 'Edgware' model keywork and tone hole positions, although hole sizes were altered with some undercut for tuning. The standard tapered cutter employed in the manufacture of '926' clarinets was used to make the flare in the bottom joint.<sup>694</sup> The first batch of nine instruments was sent to Canada stamped 'Stratford', but the very many subsequent instruments of this new model were recorded as '8-10'.<sup>695</sup> In November 1958, Avraham Galper, principal clarinet in the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, related in a letter to Brian Manton-Myatt that he had recently come across the '8-10':

*It's very good. I personally think it has a very good chance of competing with the other French and American makes. The tone quality is of course distinctly different from both the 'Imperial' and (especially) the 'Symphony'. I think it will find great favour amongst Americans, and of course the main thing is – to sell the goods.*<sup>696</sup>

Galper also requested an A clarinet in the same bore;<sup>697</sup> however, although Eric McGavin was keen to develop one, he recounted in a letter to Brian Manton-Myatt

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<sup>694</sup> Eric McGavin hand written notes. HM/B&H/McG.

<sup>695</sup> Appendix 10.ix.

<sup>696</sup> 02/11/1958 Letter, Manton-Myatt to McGavin. HM/B&H/McG.

<sup>697</sup> 07/11/1958 Letter, McGavin to Manton-Myatt. HM/B&H/McG.

that he felt that it would not be a considered a priority in the factory.<sup>698</sup> No '8-10' A clarinet was ever made.

Although the main export market after the War was in student models, an increasing number of handmade 'Imperial' instruments were sent abroad.<sup>699</sup> The earliest consignments included four oboes, two cors anglais and a bass clarinet for the Bulgarian symphony orchestra in 1949, clarinets and bassoons exported to Canada in 1950 and 1954, and clarinets to New York in 1951. In 1956 a number of 'Imperial' clarinets were noted as dispatched to New York, including some for the British clarinettist, Reginald Kell for use by some of his students.<sup>700</sup> From June 1956 export of clarinets to Canada increased, and batches of six conservatoire oboes and four bass clarinets represented just the beginning of US sales of a number of handmade woodwind instruments. From 1957 many 'Imperial' instruments were exported to the USA, Canada, West Germany and B&H Bonn, and from 1958 to B&H South Africa.

## 6.5 Home market

After the War British wind players continued to follow the general trend towards large-bore instruments. B&H responded to this demand by developing their own models based on large-bore foreign designs. Some brass instruments were based specifically on American models by Conn and Olds, and many clarinettists played B&H's wide-bore '1010' clarinets to match the larger tone of German-system bassoons and horns which had become ubiquitous by the early 1950s. B&H discontinued French bassoon models in favour of their German-system instruments and further developed their 'Imperial' double horn to keep up with the increasing popularity of Alexander horns,<sup>701</sup> which had been adopted by most British professional horn players by the 1950s. Dennis Brain was one of the last professional players to change in 1951.<sup>702</sup>

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<sup>698</sup> 16/12/1958 Letter, Manton-Myatt to McGavin. HM/B&H/McG.

<sup>699</sup> Appendix 10.x.

<sup>700</sup> Norman Nelson, *Unpublished Transcription of Diana Kell Interviews* (26-27 November 1999, 8-12 June 2000 and phone conversations June 2001): EUCHMI.

<sup>701</sup> Appendix 10.xi.

<sup>702</sup> Brain adopted an Alexander single B ♭ horn. Pettitt, *Dennis Brain*. pp.115-116.

The adoption of German models caused much discussion in musical circles owing to the gradual loss of the tone-colour of French instruments in orchestral playing. Players had diminishing regard for producing the 'right' national tone quality for the repertoire, and strong opinions were held within the music profession concerning the different sounds of the French and German models. A letter to *The Daily Telegraph* in 1953 concerning the use of natural horns and German horns sparked a lively debate about the different tone-colour produced by players. Philip Cranmer explained that the preference of Brahms for writing for pairs of natural horns – one in the key of the piece and one in another key – rather than for the new valve horn, was to make use of as many open notes on the instrument as possible, which produces a better tone quality than using valve notes. But he considered that valve notes were 'much better than the old hand-stopped notes.'<sup>703</sup> Major W. Drake Brockman described the German horn as a 'new orchestral monstrosity', but acknowledged that it enabled more flexibility and accuracy in pitch. However, he thought that its tone was 'quite incomparable with that liquid and silvery, almost human tone of the horn originally made in France.'<sup>704</sup> The discussion then continued concerning bassoon tone. Peter Garry and Cecil James (who played French system in the Philharmonia Orchestra) considered that 'a more serious debasement of instrumental timbre' had taken place in the last twenty five years by the adoption of German bassoons by British players, and that although they 'may be mechanically perfect' the tone of the French instruments was far superior.<sup>705</sup> A critical reply from RPO cellist John Kennedy stated his preference for the bassoon sound of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, where its players Archie Camden and Gwydion Brooke used German instruments.<sup>706</sup> However, Camden (one of the first English advocates of the German bassoon), whilst defending his colleagues by expressing his respect for 'the fine Philharmonia Orchestra and for its two excellent bassoon players, even though they do belong to the unrepentant few,' pointed out that the German instrument had now been adopted by 'players in all Austrian, German and Dutch orchestras and almost all of the leading players in this country

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<sup>703</sup> Philip Cranmer was a lecturer at Birmingham University 1950-54, Professor at Queen's University Belfast 1954-70, Manchester 1970-75, and Secretary at the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music 1974-1983. Philip Cranmer, "Horns and Brahms," *The Daily Telegraph* (10/09/1953).

<sup>704</sup> Major W. Drake Brockman, "Bombastic Horn," *The Daily Telegraph* (11/09/1953).

<sup>705</sup> Peter Garry and Cecil James, "Debased Bassoon," *The Daily Telegraph* (17/09/1953).

<sup>706</sup> John Kennedy, "Sharing a Clef," *The Daily Telegraph* (22/09/1953).

and America.<sup>707</sup> Even so, another proponent of the French bassoon, Lt.-Col. George J. Miller, considered that the 'muffled and woolly quality' of the German bassoon did not match the 'beautiful "reedy" tone' of the French 'Fagotte', which 'harmonised and became assimilated far more readily in sound quality with the other double-reeds.'<sup>708</sup> In spite of personal preferences, the contemporary orchestral trends led players to choose large-bore German-style instruments and manufacturers to make them.

B&H's sales in Britain covered all areas of the market, and models ranged from high-priced, hand-crafted instruments to the cheaper mass-produced range. Mass production (besides supplying the export market) enabled B&H to maintain competitive prices, and in 1958 they reported that 'manufacturing costs on all instruments which have been tooled have been reduced considerably. In fact some instruments which sell in relatively high volume have been held at the pre-war selling price in the home market, despite purchase tax.'<sup>709</sup>

### 6.5.1 Orchestras and bands

Orchestral musicians and bandsmen generally chose hand-made models which were manufactured by craftsmen with the help of some machine processes. The high class instruments were mostly branded 'Imperial' and were promoted as representing

*the finest of the company's products. These are all craftsman-fashioned throughout to the highest standards of musical excellence with the traditional aim of the craftsman's perfection, irrespective of the time and effort involved. Such instruments never were and never will be competitive in price.*<sup>710</sup>

However, with the exception of clarinets, the top professional orchestral and jazz players generally favoured the foreign models that had originally influenced B&H designs.

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<sup>707</sup> Archie Camden, "Waspish Bassoon," *The Daily Telegraph* (17/09/1953).

<sup>708</sup> Lt.-Col. G.J. Miller, "Woolly Bassoons," *The Daily Telegraph* (28/09/1953). Lt.-Col. George J Miller was the late Senior Director of Music Brigade of Guards.

<sup>709</sup> B&H Engineers Limited, *Sounding Brass*. p.16.

<sup>710</sup> B&H, 1951 woodwind catalogue. p.W5.

From May 1944 until June 1945 the '926' clarinet (designed for the professional player) was once again the principal clarinet produced, and from February 1946 it was made under the 'Imperial' name.<sup>711</sup> However, thereafter almost exclusive manufacture of the mass produced '1026B' commenced.<sup>712</sup> Although B&H emphasised that 'Imperial' instruments were handcrafted and high quality, this was not always the case. In 1949, on Geoffrey Hawkes' instructions, 'Imperialisation' of mass produced clarinets took place; 'Imperial' clarinets were created out of mass-produced parts in stock that had been made for the mass-produced instruments. Hawkes emphasised that the cheapest components should be used, and that if they were 'not all good enough [...] they must be made good enough wherever they fail.'<sup>713</sup> Prior to this, a number of the 1945 mass-produced instruments had been 'converted to Imperial' in 1948. In 1953, 'line production' was trialled for making 'Imperial' clarinets.<sup>714</sup> However, this method of manufacturing what were described as 'handmade' clarinets was not continued; subsequent instruments were recorded in the workbooks as before, with the maker's name.

The one B&H instrument model that gained and retained its popularity amongst professional musicians was the '1010' clarinet, which continued to be the choice of most of the prominent British players between the 1930s and 1980s. Thus it was for many years synonymous with the English clarinet sound. The '1010' was reintroduced in 1950,<sup>715</sup> although players in the first instance sought the older pre-war instruments rather than the downgraded post-war '1010s'.<sup>716</sup>

Other woodwind instruments were hand-made in very small batches. 'Imperial' concert flutes and piccolos were manufactured in wood (cocus in 1951, African blackwood in 1955), ebonite and a non-corroding metal alloy with sterling silver keys, and in 1955 metal models were made with 'new metal' head and foot joints, or were available in precious metals on application. 'Imperial' oboes, cors

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<sup>711</sup> A small number of instruments were also made with 18 keys and 7 rings, and with 20 keys and 7 rings (full Boehm model).

<sup>712</sup> Appendix 10.xi.a.

<sup>713</sup> This coincided with a Mr Large taking over the operations of the old wood shop in the office block from Len Taylor (head of wood shop in 1939). 14/01/1949 Confidential memo from Geoffrey Hawkes to Mr A. Large. '*Imperialisation*' of clarinets. HM/B&H/McG.

<sup>714</sup> Appendix 10.xi.a.

<sup>715</sup> Ibid.

<sup>716</sup> For additional details on the history of the '1010' see Brand, *From Design to Decline*.

anglais and oboes d'amore were produced in 'Conservatoire' and 'Artist' models, and were available in wood or ebonite.<sup>717</sup>

B&H's high-quality brass instruments were bought mainly by band musicians. Only a very small proportion was used for orchestral playing. During the War brass bands had continued their community role but, with many men at war, numbers of bandsmen were depleted and major contests suspended. Sales of instruments were low and B&H eagerly anticipated the end of war with the promise of new Victory models:

*Getting Nearer... The pace of events encourages us to hope that before long we can make a start towards getting back to normal, and although some period must elapse before all the things we desire can come into being, our Band Instrument Designers are busy with their post-war plans, so look out for the new Victory Models. These will be the result of intensive research, and when we are able to put them on the market you will agree that they will have been well worth waiting for.*<sup>718</sup>

However, this was a hollow promise; pre-war models were continued in production and no 'Victory' models were actually made. After the War instruments were not available for the home market until 1946. B&H announced in the May edition of the *British Bandsman*:

*New Instruments at Last! The most exciting music news for years! The let-up from restrictions you've been waiting for. A home quota – which means you are free to buy the new instrument you've dreamed of. Now you can let yourself go – but gently – as only a limited quantity is available. The B&H range ready for immediate delivery is: alto saxophones, clarinets, trumpets, trombones, bass drums, side drums.*<sup>719</sup>

Most British bands chose B&H 'Imperial' and Besson models, and in 1951 the company proudly promoted 'The Invincible Imperial', stating that 'Year after year the winners of contests are players of "Imperial" instruments'. They added that if it were only one or two winning bands that played 'Imperials' it might be coincidence,

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<sup>717</sup> B&H, 1951 woodwind catalogue, and B&H, *Musical Instruments, Accessories* (1955).

<sup>718</sup> *British Bandsman* (31/03/1945).

<sup>719</sup> *British Bandsman* (04/05/1946).

but when so many bands playing them 'win so many contests we may be excused for claiming that they are a distinct contribution to success'.<sup>720</sup>

In 1948 a new model trumpet in B ♭ and A was developed for orchestral use; this evolved in 1951 into the 'Imperial Model 23' and after further experimentation into the "'23" Model MK. VI' which was available in 1955.<sup>721</sup> Modifications continued to be made to the rotary horn model 4051, and various experimental trombone models were made, including developments of the 'Imperial 4040' model and Besson's W1134 and W1135 models.<sup>722</sup> Several new trombones were offered in the 1955 catalogue: the '4040' with medium large bore and 7" bell flare, the 'Symphony Model' (4041) with large bore, outer slide locking attachments and 'specially set back bell section for easy mute manipulation',<sup>723</sup> and a B ♭ and F model with rotary cord action change, 0.523" bore and red brass bell with 8" flare.<sup>724</sup> This last model with its very large bore and bell was developed by Hüttl, probably based on a copy of a trombone made by the American firm Conn.<sup>725</sup> The 'Betty' bass trombone continued to be popular for orchestral use in Britain, and the 'Empire' and 'Imperial' instruments were often slightly remodelled.

### 6.5.2 Dance Bands

The popularity of dance and swing bands endured after the War and throughout the 1950s, with many instruments manufactured for this use. Influence from America continued to affect the design of new models. Almost all post-war alto saxophones were mass produced, and in the workbooks the initials CRC are written under the heading 'Workman's Name', but it is not known what this denotes. Mass production commenced in May 1945 with 100 'New Century' alto saxophones,<sup>726</sup> and this accounted for 27.5% of reed production for the year. In subsequent years, the number of saxophones produced annually increased to

<sup>720</sup> B&H, *Brass by Boosey & Hawkes*, 1951. AMPC. p.B33. See Appendix 10.xi.b.

<sup>721</sup> B&H, *Musical Instruments, Accessories* (1955). p.PL3. Appendix 10xi.e.

<sup>722</sup> Appendix 10.xi.

<sup>723</sup> This may have been the 'American Position' design. Appendix 10.xi.d.

<sup>724</sup> B&H, *Musical Instruments, Accessories* (1955). pp.PL3-PL4.

<sup>725</sup> Appendix 10.xi.d. Trombone design had changed drastically since c.1918 when they were made with a small bore and bell diameter of less than six inches. Letter, W.J. Golbourn, B&H Engineers Ltd. to C. Monk. 23/06/1958. EUCHMI/M 6145. See Appendix 10.xiii for a list of comparative bore sizes.

<sup>726</sup> The 'New Century' model had previously been made only in 1935. Appendix 10.xi.f.



several hundred. The name 'Imperial' was first noted against some of the 'New Century' saxophones in 1946. Although B&H stated in their 1951 catalogue that 'Imperial' saxophones had been redesigned since the war, it appears that they were essentially the 'New Century' model; the only difference between them was that the 'Imperial' had nickel silver keys, even though the new 'Imperial' alto saxophone was described as having a 'considerably enlarged bore, resulting in a round, powerful tone and ease of producing essential overtones.' Although B&H claimed that 'literally thousands of experiments were made under actual playing conditions' in its development, with the prototype instrument 'used for two years for all types of playing', there is no evidence to support this.<sup>727</sup> However, a prototype 'New Century' tenor saxophone was recorded in January 1945 as having been made at Edgware with no other tenor saxophones manufactured until October 1947. The first batch was produced in 1948.

During the late 1940s and early 1950s some experiments were made on the long model cornet which was only really used in dance and traditional jazz bands in Britain.<sup>728</sup> From 1948 B&H renamed it the mezzo-cornet, and it was offered in 'Imperial' 4014 and 'Regent' 764 models until about 1953, after which it was only available in the latter.

In 1945 and 1946 the budget-priced range of trumpet models was developed based on the basic standard and utility trumpets. Line production of 'standard' trumpets commenced in 1945, and 'utility' trumpets in 1946. These instruments, the Mark III standard, Mark II utility, Mark III utility and subsequently 'Regent' models were widely produced. A number of experimental designs were recorded including one noted as 'American position' (based on a Conn trumpet), a standard Mark IV and a 'Regent'.<sup>729</sup> Some B&H 'Regent' instruments were branded 'Besson Westminster'. The higher quality trumpet models – 'Edgware', 'Imperial' and instruments with 'FVA' – 'Floating Valve Action' (previously known as 'New Valve Action', later known as 'Fast Valve Action') which were line produced in modest numbers, were also developed. However, they were superseded in circa 1951 by the 'Imperial Model 23'.

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<sup>727</sup> B&H, 1951 woodwind catalogue. pp.W19-W20.

<sup>728</sup> Appendix 10.xi.b.

<sup>729</sup> Appendix 10.iii. 'American position' may have referred to the position of the valves closer to or further from the player's face.

Certain trombone models continued to be developed after the War for dance band use. Large batches of instruments with 'medium' bore were produced, although at this time medium bore would have been considered to be large.<sup>730</sup> Trombones were recorded in the workbooks without a model number, as B4039 (the old 'Artist' model, now described as 'Imperial') or R717A (the Regent model of similar design). A number of experimental instruments were made including a 'Mark III Regent' and a 'Cabaret', the once fashionable old H&S model; however, the 'Cabaret' was not developed further to production. In 1946 two batches of six 'American Position' B ♭ trombones were made in 'Imperial' and 'Regent' models. They were recorded as having been line produced under the experienced trombone maker Downing, and it is probable that they were trial models for the export market. The 'position' may refer to the wrap and the placing of the bell close to the player to facilitate the use of mutes. In 1958 B&H produced on average 107 trombones in a number of different models each week.<sup>731</sup>

### 6.5.3 Education

After the War, instruments for education came to represent a major part of B&H home trade. During the 1950s there was a rapid growth in music education in Britain with instrumental tuition and music-making available through the Rural Music Schools' Association and The Schools' Music Association.<sup>732</sup> The purpose of the Schools' Music Association, which was founded in 1938,<sup>733</sup> was to raise standards of musical instruments and equipment for schools, and to run musical activities.<sup>734</sup> Its influence led to the foundation of a British Standards Institution specification for certain instruments and equipment, and greater improvement of services by local music shops and dealers to children, schools and authorities.<sup>735</sup>

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<sup>730</sup> Appendices 10.xi.d. and 10.xiii.

<sup>731</sup> Letter, Golbourn to Monk (23/06/58).

<sup>732</sup> The idea of making practical music available for all commenced in 1929 in Hertfordshire where the first Rural Music School was established, and by 1950 there were an estimated 7,000 children and adults taking weekly music lessons in Britain at nine Rural Music Schools: Bedfordshire, Dorset, Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Kent, Norfolk, Sussex, Suffolk and Wiltshire, and a successful Music Association in South East London run on rural music school lines. Mary Ibberson, "Twenty-One Years," *Souvenir Programme 1929-50 Rural Music Schools Association 21st Birthday Celebration* (1950). pp.8-9.

<sup>733</sup> The Schools' Music Association originated in the non-competitive music festival movement which started in 1927 and was originally called the National Schools' Music Festivals Association.

<sup>734</sup> Activities included the British Youth Symphony Orchestra and conducting courses for teachers.

<sup>735</sup> Literature for The British Youth Wind Orchestra Course (1969): HM/B&H/McG. p.3.

B&H responded to market demand and increased their ranges of student models and instruments for school use. These instruments, promoted as 'representing today's outstanding value', were affordable and made the learning of musical instruments accessible to many people.<sup>736</sup> B&H thus became renowned for their student and educational instruments of which thousands had been produced for the British market by the late 1950s.

The 'Regent' models became perhaps the most popular and best known low-priced instruments. They were robust, and were developed in the full range of woodwind and brass. As already detailed in Section 6.4, 'Regent' clarinet production commenced in 1946. It was continued until 1981 when the company purchased the French firm Buffet who were predominantly clarinet makers. At first the name 'Regent' only applied to a wooden model; however, from the 1960s many were manufactured in 'Sonorite', a type of plastic. The wooden model, also available with an ebonite barrel and bell, was sold as the 'Marlborough' and in an ebonite version under the Besson 'Westminster' name.<sup>737</sup>

The first small batches of 'Regent' flutes were recorded between 1948 and 1950. These were followed by a batch of 200 in 1950 stamped 'Regent', 'Lafleur' and 'Edgware'. The 'Regent' concert flute was described as having been 'designed and produced on the same principle as the famous Regent Clarinet' and as 'a flute of wonderful accuracy at a medium price.' The head, body and foot-joint were made of drawn, seamless nickel tubes that were silver plated, and the tone holes 'drawn up by a special process.' The lip-plate was designed to facilitate embouchure and give 'ease of blowing.'<sup>738</sup>

'Regent' brass models were manufactured in the full range of instruments, and the development of designs continued, with a number of trial instruments recorded in the workbooks.<sup>739</sup> Between 1950 and 1953 some experimental 'Regent' trumpets were produced, culminating with a new model numbered '1703'. Some of the instruments were branded 'Oxford', possibly for export. From October 1954

<sup>736</sup> B&H, *Musical Instruments, Accessories* (1955). p.PL5.

<sup>737</sup> B&H state in their catalogue that "The Regent", "Marlborough" and "Westminster" ranges have been designed and produced in order to bring B&H Woodwind within the purchasing power of all. In their manufacture the skill of the craftsman has been allied to that of the machine-tool designer and the production expert.' B&H, 1951 woodwind catalogue. p.W5.

<sup>738</sup> *Ibid.* p.W13.

<sup>739</sup> Appendix 10.iii.

many Hüttl '869' model trumpets were recorded, and in 1955 these were also noted with this number. Post-war 'Regent' trombones were developed from 1948 with the manufacture of a number of experimental models leading to the new model '1717'. B&H also included low-priced imported instruments branded 'Lafleur' and 'La Couture' in their catalogues, asserting that they were 'made to Boosey and Hawkes quality and specification and exclusively distributed by them.'<sup>740</sup> They were available in the full range of woodwind instruments, trumpet and trombone. Occasionally some of B&H's cheap models were branded 'Lafleur'.

'Emperor' orchestral instruments were promoted in the 1955 catalogue as 'a new line of fine-quality orchestral instruments in medium price range [...] designed and manufactured in our Edgware factories' for the serious student and progressive player.<sup>741</sup> The 'Emperor' clarinet was the first 'student' model to be available both in B♭ and A,<sup>742</sup> with the first two instruments recorded in a batch of mass produced clarinets in 1952; regular production commenced 600 instruments later. The starting price of £12 was obviously considered to be too high as one month later the charge to Regent Street was reduced to £9, about £1 higher than other mass produced clarinets.<sup>743</sup> 'Emperor' trumpets and trombones were developed and first produced in 1953, with the trumpet promoted in the 1955 catalogue as having 'the latest style top springing valve action' and the trombone having a medium large bore, 7 $\frac{1}{8}$ " bell flare, slide locks and a new style octagonal balance weight.<sup>744</sup> In 1956 some were branded 'Oxford de Luxe' and with the Besson 'Stratford' name, probably for export.

In 1950, as there was a shortage of reasonably priced bassoons, Geoffrey Hawkes was keen that the company should develop a cheap bassoon designed for beginners. Eric McGavin considered that there should be a similar model to 'the cheap Boehm clarinet' which, although not acceptable for first-class players, he would recommend for a student 'because it has an accurate bore, very good intonation and has nothing about it which might injure the foundations of clarinet

<sup>740</sup> B&H, *Educational Musical Instruments* (c.1951); B&H, *Musical Instruments, Accessories* (1955). p.PL5.

<sup>741</sup> B&H, *Musical Instruments, Accessories* (1955). p.PL4 and Appendix 10.xii.

<sup>742</sup> B&H, *Woodwind 1957-8*. p.111.

<sup>743</sup> sns78330-31 charged to Regent St. 28/11/1952, sns78962-84 charged to Regent St. £12. 09/10/1952. Recharged at £9 13/11/1952. *Instruments Reed 12*: HM/B&H A227/025.

<sup>744</sup> B&H, *Musical Instruments, Accessories* (1955). p.PL4.

playing.<sup>745</sup> In 1951 Buffet bassoons cost £200 including purchase tax, and Heckel bassoons £500. This prohibitive cost prevented schools from changing over from the French to the German system, and many young musicians going into the profession, who were studying with teachers that played on German system bassoons, wanted them too.<sup>746</sup> McGavin submitted a report on the situation to Hawkes.<sup>747</sup> However, it was not until 1957 that the new model was developed; it received full approval from the bassoonist, Gwydion Brooke.<sup>748</sup>

## 6.6 Wartime repercussions

The impact of the War on B&H was great, with various financial problems affecting the profitability of the company in post-war years. After the War the company had undertaken the restoration of Covent Garden Opera House from dance hall to its original use for opera and ballet. This had required substantial investment and, when the five year lease expired in 1952, B&H found themselves faced with dilapidations to pay that ultimately led to significant losses.<sup>749</sup> Whilst productivity and sales of musical instruments were high, a sudden decline in sales of sheet music, which according to Leslie Boosey was attributable to the increased sales of televisions, also affected the company. However, by 1958 the company's success in the education market led to the opening of an engraving and printing department specifically for producing company supplies and school music.<sup>750</sup>

Although after the War the number of product lines that B&H manufactured was reduced, the reorganisation of the factory and staff and the adaptation of machinery for instrument manufacture after the War led to a rapid rise in output.<sup>751</sup> The average number of woodwind instruments that B&H made a week rose from about 13 in 1946 to over 400 in 1957. The growth in brass production was just as dramatic, from around 50 instruments a week in 1946 to more than 600 of 50

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<sup>745</sup> Letter, McGavin to Langwill (28/12/1950): L6584. EUCHMI/LA.

<sup>746</sup> Letter, Langwill to McGavin (06/03/1951): L6585. EUCHMI/LA.

<sup>747</sup> Inter-departmental communication from Geoffrey Hawkes to McGavin: 'I am greatly obliged to you for the report which [...] is an expert summary and survey of the situation in relation to bassoons.' (31/12/1951): HM/B&H/MCG.

<sup>748</sup> Letter, Manton-Myatt to McGavin (05/01/1957): HM/B&H/McG.

<sup>749</sup> Ernst Roth, "The Vision of Ralph Hawkes," *Tempo, New Series* No.78 (Autumn 1966).

<sup>750</sup> "Their Work Enables the World to Make Music," *The Wembley Observer and Gazette*. pp.3-4. (29/09/1960).

<sup>751</sup> *Woodwind & Percussion 9*: HM/B&H A227/020. Appendix 10.iv.

different types by 1958, when company literature stated that over 1,000 brass and woodwind instruments were produced each week.<sup>752</sup>

## 6.7 Conclusions

The rebuilding of the British manufacturing industry after the War was rapid, with companies developing their businesses using the machinery and new practices that had been introduced into their factories for war work. In spite of shortages of materials and the poor economy, output from British firms was high with many products destined for export. These changes irrevocably altered the brass and woodwind instrument manufacturing industry, and at B&H the adoption of new production methods and staff resulted in a complete change in company ethos. The introduction of mechanised factory processes, with engineers, operating technicians and mass production taking over the bulk of manufacture from skilled craftsmen traditionally hand-making individual instruments, enabled the company to increase dramatically the number of instruments made, and to respond to rapidly growing market demand. However, this came at a price, with falling standards of quality control continuing the gradual decline that contributed to the company's demise.

The late 1940s and the 1950s were a time of sustained economic growth in Britain, although at first the home market was depressed owing to an extremely high rate of purchase tax. Expanding sales at B&H developed in two major areas – export and education. The advent of mass production enabled the company to take particular advantage of the growing export market in North America and various European countries by making very many low-priced student-range instruments for sales abroad. B&H also recognised that music education in Britain was lagging far behind that in America, and seeing an opening in the home market, the company successfully encouraged and directed the move for increased instrumental music in schools; this led to the manufacture of specific product lines to satisfy the demand.<sup>753</sup>

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<sup>752</sup> B&H Engineers Limited, *Sounding Brass*. p.2.

<sup>753</sup> B&H, *The Boosey & Hawkes Group Main Dealer Educational Instrument Catalogue* (1966): EUCHMI/R L4; B&H, *Musical Instruments in the Making* (1968): AMPC.

Development of new models remained an important part of the company's operations with continued experimentation in design intended to cater for all the different areas of export and home markets. Although mass-produced budget instruments dominated manufacture, higher-class instruments were developed for professional orchestral, jazz and dance band musicians. Competition from abroad continued to influence B&H to accede to popular demand and base new model designs on those made by American and German firms. However, most eminent professional musicians, whilst sometimes endorsing the B&H brand, still chose to play the original American and continental models.

From the mid-1950s the replacement of the distinct Besson, Hüttl and B&H models with models common to all three marques led gradually to the development of two basic classes of instruments: the 'Imperial' range which was promoted with an emphasis on hand-crafted manufacture, and the cheaper mass-produced 'Regent'-type instruments. However, whilst many of the top-quality instruments were promoted as being 'hand-made', in reality many of the instruments were mass or line-produced.

The importance of national identity to B&H is demonstrated by the names assigned to their instrument ranges: Imperial, Emperor, Regent, Westminster, Whitehall, Oxford, and Cambridge etc. By employing references to the British Empire, seat of government and internationally-recognised 'traditional' cities, the company endeavoured to project a quintessentially British image and promote the Britishness of their products.

Although B&H experienced financial problems during the post-war years, by 1956, owing to the growth in export sales of musical instruments and increased revenue from broadcasting, performance and hire fees, prosperity returned, with the company attaining sufficient profitability to be listed on the London Stock Exchange.<sup>754</sup> By 1960, strengthened by its acquisition of Besson and Rudall Carte, the company returned with vigour to monopolise markets both at home and abroad. B&H instruments, the predominant choice of British players, could be heard daily, broadcast on radio, played at concerts, in bands and in schools; B&H had become a household name.

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<sup>754</sup> Wallace, *Publishing Story*. pp.81-2.

## Chapter 7

### 1960s and 1970s: diversification, expansion and globalisation

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#### 7.1 Introduction

By the end of the 1950s B&H had developed from a traditional craft-based business to a modern mechanised industry, and high productivity continued throughout the next two decades. By 1960 many thousands of instruments were made at the Edgware factory each year. Anthony Boosey, eldest son of the vice-chairman Leslie Boosey, was reported to have said:

*As regards factory production, [...] a revolution in method has been successfully carried through during the past ten years [...] The factory produces anything up to 1,000 wind instruments of one kind or another in a week, as well as drums. Sixty percent of these are exported, with the United States at times taking up to 300 clarinets, 100 trumpets and 100 other brass instruments in one week.*<sup>755</sup>

However, despite high productivity and success, the company was experiencing financial problems which were attributed to losses made by the manufacturing division. Profits had declined from £188,290 in 1959, to £52,176 in 1960, and this caused resentment in the publishing division who felt that they were inadequately represented on the Board, and that their profits were always invested in the 'high profile' manufacturing division. Consequently, in 1960 the company was restructured with separate boards of directors established for each side of the business.<sup>756</sup> This resulted in improved relations, and in 1970 B&H announced in their annual newsletter to staff that the 'co-operation between the Music Publishing Department and B&H Sales [the instrument division] has steadily increased to the undoubted benefit of the Music Trade in general and the Company in particular.'<sup>757</sup> The company reached the height of its success during the 1970s, with their most

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<sup>755</sup> *Their Work Enables the World to Make Music*. pp.3-4.

<sup>756</sup> Wallace, *Publishing Story*. pp.105-106. Disagreements amongst members of the Board and Boosey and Hawkes family members continued between 1958 and 1964 and many changes in senior personnel occurred. For further information see Wallace: Chapter 7.

<sup>757</sup> M. Hall, in B&H, *Edgware Newsletter* (1970). p22.



profitable year, 1976, recording sales of roughly £17 million and a declared profit of £2 million.<sup>758</sup>

This chapter describes the expansion that took place in the manufacturing division at B&H during the 1960s and 1970s; it discusses the company's diversification of products, the development of its role as a dealer for supplying specific instruments for the popular music and education markets, and its increased trading overseas.

## 7.2 Diversification and expansion of trade

The change in international trading patterns and the growing strength and dominance of other countries in world markets after the Second World War left Britain struggling to maintain a place as a world power. European countries and Japan underwent economic reconstruction, and, in spite of Britain's devastated economy and declining empire, extensive economic reform resulted in rapid growth and expansion into the 1960s and 1970s.

As British industry regenerated, the basis of the British economy moved away from manufacturing and towards the service sector. This was clearly evident at B&H, where efforts were concentrated on marketing and diversification. Low unemployment and high productivity in Britain led to a rise in disposable income and increased living standards, which encouraged a growth in consumerism. This undoubtedly affected the demand for instruments at B&H for the home market, as well as influencing the direction that the company chose to pursue.

B&H, drawn along by the expansion of the 1960s, developed their trade by buying in many instruments of all types, and accessories for the education and popular music markets for resale through their expanding dealer network. Products bought in included guitars, recorders, percussion and stringed instruments, Hammond and Diamond organs, Laney amplification equipment, and Leslie speakers.<sup>759</sup> B&H had been sole British distributors for Hammond organs since

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<sup>758</sup> Wallace, *Publishing Story*. p.165. Wallace states that this was a false figure partly owing to insurance money claimed for fire damage at the Edgware factory.

<sup>759</sup> Leslie speakers were developed by Donald Leslie in Los Angeles specifically for use with Hammond organs. They consisted of an amplifier that modified the sound by rotating the sound source, thus creating

about 1938,<sup>760</sup> but in 1961, owing to a sudden growth in their use in popular music, in the home and in churches, the company established a department for their assembly under licence; parts were sent over from America, and the casings were constructed at Edgware. Hammond organs defined a certain type of popular music and gained great popularity in the 1960s and 1970s. They became a major area of sales at B&H. Hammond organs had initially been designed and introduced in America in 1935 as an alternative to church pipe organs, but had been adopted by jazz and blues artists during the 1950s and later rock and reggae musicians.<sup>761</sup> Although few people during the 1960s would have associated the distinctive sound of the Hammond organ with B&H, through their importation and construction of these instruments, the company was shaping the sound of this genre of music in the same way that they had in the past for orchestral and band music.

Although B&H had diversified their product ranges and were importing various wind instrument models, they still maintained the same high levels of production of brass and woodwind instruments in the factory. They proudly declared in 1966 that 750 employees were 'engaged on the manufacture and distribution of all types of musical instruments', emphasising in their literature that they operated from 'the largest and most up-to-date factory in Europe.'<sup>762</sup>

Overseas trade continued to flourish throughout the 1960s, with additional models designed specifically for certain countries. Trade with North America was thriving, and by the middle of the decade about two thirds of brass and woodwind instruments made at Edgware were exported (one third to America).<sup>763</sup> Nevertheless, B&H were struggling under growing pressure of competition from foreign companies that, like B&H, were expanding rapidly. Selmer in America, and Yamaha in Japan were developing their businesses by merger and acquisition,<sup>764</sup>

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tremolo effects. Hammond was not interested in selling them, so from 1941 they were available separately and often sold to be used with Hammond organs.

<sup>760</sup> B&H advert in brochure for the Bath Music Festival 26/03/1938-02/04/1938: 'Sole Distributors for Great Britain', 'demonstrations of the Hammond Organ at the Pump Room during the festival': HM/CA; also B&H letterheads from 25/04/1938: EUCHMI/L 2761.

<sup>761</sup> For example: Jimmy Smith, and organists in the group Toots and the Maytals.

<sup>762</sup> B&H, *Educational Instrument Catalogue* (1966); inside front cover. B&H, *The Boosey & Hawkes Group Main Dealer Educational Instrument Catalogue* (1967): JHPC.

<sup>763</sup> B&H, *Musical Instruments in the Making* (1968).

<sup>764</sup> In 1963 Selmer purchased Buescher Band Instrument Company and Vincent Bach Corporation, 1965 merged with Bundy, a subsidiary company that had been established in 1958 and in 1968 bought Leshner Woodwind Company. <http://www.saxophone.org/museum/saxophones/manufacture/1/history/0> Accessed 25.05.2016.

and producing high quality wind instruments for export, which were increasingly favoured by British players. The B&H Export Division adopted a proactive approach, sending sales representatives to countries all over the world. This resulted in increased demand for instruments (but consequently, often delayed delivery dates) with exported instruments reaching record numbers in 1969.<sup>765</sup> The Chairman of the company, Kenneth Pool,<sup>766</sup> reported that exports had doubled in ten years.<sup>767</sup>

Despite this success, diversification and expansion came at a cost to B&H. It may have generated substantial short-term profits, but whilst the company concentrated on extending their dealerships and breadth of sales, they lost sight of their established customers and standards within the factory. With hindsight it can be seen that B&H were swept along by the general movement of British industries into global markets. Although it was important for B&H to move with the times, it could be suggested that with better management the company might also have maintained their attention on their traditional market.

## 7.3 Marketing

The integration of the Besson and B&H product lines was complete by the early 1960s, with many of the instrument models marketed by both firms under different names. Both company names were well regarded, and whilst the two companies retained their own individual identities they displayed a unified corporate focus and offered the same services. Although both firms produced a number of the same models for the same markets, the advertising emphasis in their catalogues was slightly different. Besson appeared primarily to target brass band custom (Figure 24), captioning photographs of bands equipped with Besson Brass instruments as ‘the choice of the champions’ and pronouncing that ‘The best play Besson’, whereas B&H professed to supply ‘The World’s finest Musical Merchandise’, subtly including images mainly of military bands.<sup>768</sup>

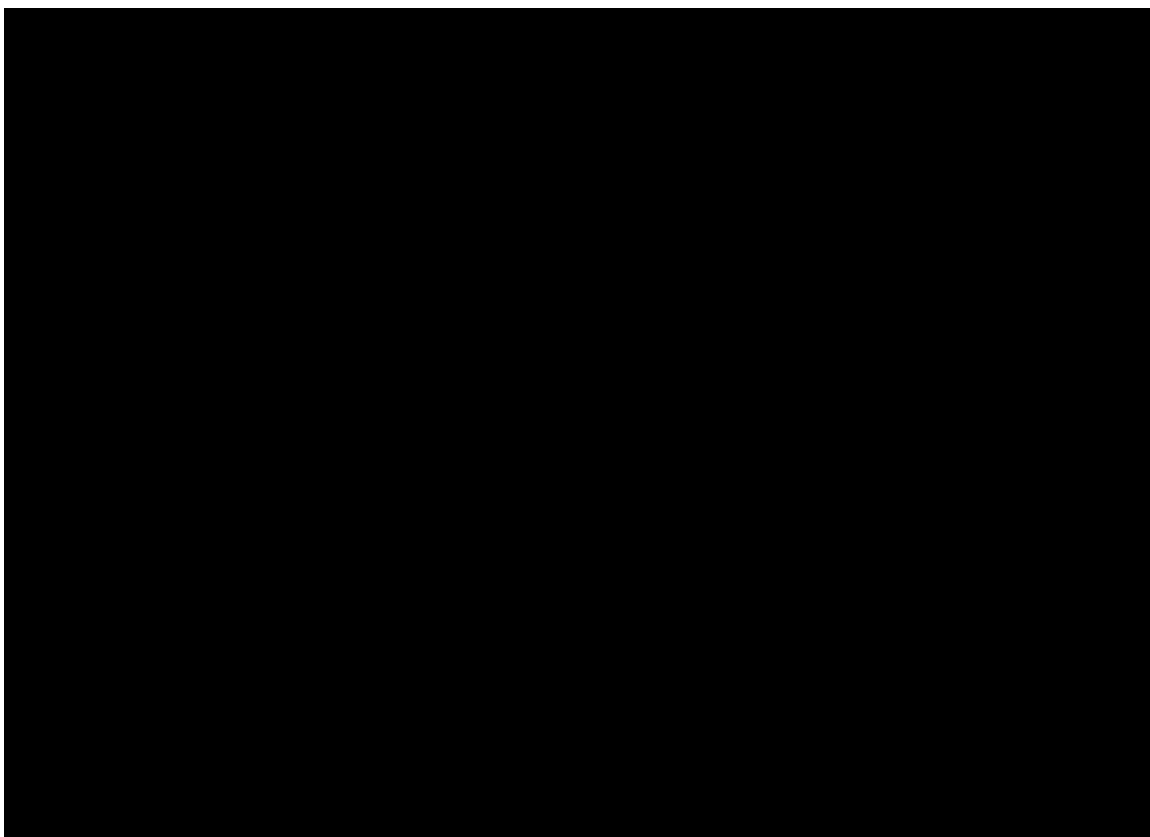
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<sup>765</sup> B&H, *Edgware Newsletter* (1969). p.4

<sup>766</sup> Kenneth Pool, husband of Ralph Hawkes’ wife’s sister, and the only surviving trustee of his Trust, was appointed to the Board in 1961 after the death of Geoffrey Hawkes, and became Chairman in 1964. Wallace, *Publishing Story*. p.112.

<sup>767</sup> B&H, *Edgware Newsletter* (1969). p.6 and p.3.

<sup>768</sup> B&H, *The Best Play Besson* (c.1963): HM/B&H; B&H, *Besson for Brass* (1969): AMPC.



**Figure 24.** Bands that play Besson instruments in *The Best Play Besson* c.1963 (HM/B&H) and *Besson for Brass* 1969 (AMPC).

Instrument sales were organised through the now widespread UK dealership network, at the B&H showrooms in Regent Street and at Aldershot (which was maintained to serve the many musicians based at the garrison there), and at new premises acquired in 1964 in St. Giles High Street, WC2.<sup>769</sup> A contracts division based at Regent Street specialised in the requirements of military bands.

The establishment of a 'Main Dealer Plan' in August 1966 was a shrewd move by B&H to target, above all, the specific needs of school music.<sup>770</sup> It was designed to unite the company, retailers and customers, with local music shops acting as the link between the company and their customers – schools and students. Potential dealers were vetted by a 'Plan Administrator' to ascertain their suitability, and once selected they were obliged to offer a full service, from the sales of instruments and sheet music to repairs and maintenance. Sales and repair staff were required to attend training schemes and were expected to employ corporate

<sup>769</sup> Macree, in B&H, *Edgware Newsletter* (1970). p.14.

<sup>770</sup> B&H, *Educational Instrument Catalogue* (1967). p.3.

selling techniques. Dealers had to display the “Main Dealer” Window Sticker and Certificate – Signs of Efficiency and Guaranteed After-Sales Service’ for customers to see. Comprehensive catalogues were produced for the dealers, to whom a large range of brochures and leaflets of different product lines was available ‘at very low prices’ for distribution to potential customers.<sup>771</sup> Dealers were also offered a free advertisement block service for use in their own advertisements and catalogues and were given advice on layout, plus help with the cost of advertising for major schemes. Two colour films that showed the making of a trumpet from a sheet of brass to finished instrument, and a clarinet from block of wood to final testing were available for hire, and were recommended for window display or school promotion.<sup>772</sup>

In 1966 the company renamed itself the ‘B&H Group’ and a new corporate logo was adopted – three black circles arranged horizontally or vertically, bearing the names B&H, Besson and Lafleur (Figure 25). The rise in importance of the Lafleur name was indicative of the significance that B&H were now giving to imported instruments. Whereas until this time B&H had maintained the parent company status, the new logo implied parity between the three companies, and the dilution of B&H. ‘Main Dealer Educational Instrument Catalogues’ aimed at schools were produced annually. These contained the full range of B&H, Besson and Lafleur student brass, woodwind, string and classroom percussion instruments and accessories. The catalogues included charts of replacement parts, lists of tutor books and wall charts for schools.<sup>773</sup>

Marketing and sales did not stop here. The company proudly offered customers the guarantee of after-sales service: ‘The Unique B&H 5-Star Deal for Musicians’. This consisted of free instrument insurance against loss for a year, a two year guarantee, easy access to economical repairs and servicing and to the ‘finest technicians in Europe’s largest musical instrument factory’, also a somewhat superfluous second guarantee with free insurance through approved B&H Group

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<sup>771</sup> B&H, *Musical Merchandise* (1963): B&H, *The Best Play Besson* (c.1963).

<sup>772</sup> B&H, *Musical Merchandise* (1963).

<sup>773</sup> B&H, *Educational Instrument Catalogue* (1966). B&H, *Educational Instrument Catalogue* (1967). Also catalogues from other years.

Main Dealers throughout the UK. This same 'exclusive' deal was also offered by Besson as '5 Great "Extras" for every Besson Customer.'<sup>774</sup>

## 7.4 Consultants

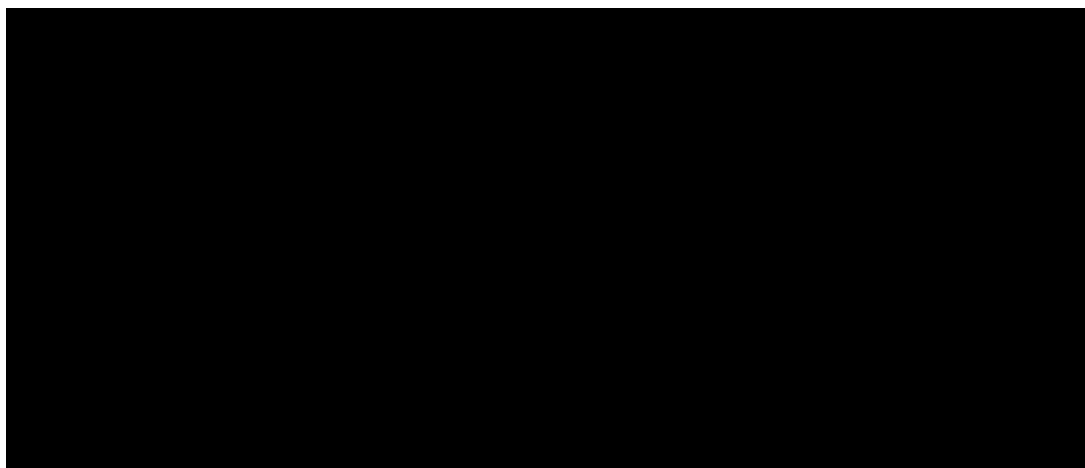
The use of experienced and well regarded professional musicians as consultants and endorsers remained important in the development and testing of new models at the factory; B&H asserted in their circa 1968 booklet *Musical Instruments in the Making* that 'new models are under review at all times in order to improve on the exacting standards of brass players throughout the world, most of whom have visited the factory at one time or another.' Photographs of musicians from all genres of music continued to be included in sales brochures, from classical players Gervase de Peyer, Jack Brymer and John Wallace to dance band trumpeters Ernie Watson, Grisha Farfel, and jazz players Kenny Baker (trumpets) and George Chisholm (trombone). Players were often present at trade shows and promotions to give demonstrations and lectures.

Dealers were encouraged to take advantage of these 'live' promotions or clinics as B&H considered that the 'form of advertising that really "sells"' called for personal contact with the customer.' To aid their advertising, B&H had a 'Music-Wagon', which was described as a 'shop on wheels' that was taken to major cities in Britain and on the continent for dealer displays at jazz festivals, and educational and school tours<sup>775</sup> (Figure 26).

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<sup>774</sup> B&H, *The Best Play Besson* (c.1963).

<sup>775</sup> B&H, *Musical Merchandise* (1963).



**Figure 25.** The B&H Group logo from 1966.

**Figure 26.** The Music Wagon from the B&H 1963 catalogue. (HM/B&H)

B&H continued to collaborate with distinguished musicians on instrument design, such as trombonist Denis Wick, trumpeter Derek Watkins, clarinettist Reginald Kell and respected flute designer, Albert Cooper (see Sections 7.8.1, 7.8.3, below and 7.8.2). Kell, on his retirement from performing in 1959, accepted a position as a director of B&H and Executive Director of the woodwind division of C. Bruno their New York dealers, promoting and selling clarinets.<sup>776</sup> Kell's interests with B&H had commenced earlier that year when they started to sell large numbers of mouthpieces that he had designed for the '926', '1010' and '8-10' models.<sup>777</sup> He received orders from the London and Toronto companies, making all the mouthpieces himself in America, work which he continued almost until his death in 1981. B&H had always been keen for Kell to play their instruments so they could name him in their advertising, but he continued using his H&S clarinets; however, he did order a number of 'Imperials' for his pupils.<sup>778</sup> Towards the end of 1959 Kell advised Edgware of serious problems he perceived with the quality of the clarinets that they were sending to America; he considered that the workmanship was bad and quality control poor. Consequently, many parts had to be replaced.<sup>779</sup> He corresponded on the matter with Eric McGavin, detailing the faults.<sup>780</sup>

<sup>776</sup> Nelson, *Kell Interviews*. pp.122-129. Also letter from Kell to McGavin (10/02/1966): HM/B&H/McG.

<sup>777</sup> Letter from J.E. Reynolds to McGavin and G. Hawkes re Reginald Kell mouthpieces, lists and charts etc. (10/12/1959) HM/B&H/McG.

<sup>778</sup> Appendix 10.x.

<sup>779</sup> McGavin notes and drafts of letters to Kell. HM/B&H/McG.

<sup>780</sup> Notes made by McGavin in response to Kell's letters of 26 and 28 April 1961. HM/B&H/McG.

Kell was not happy in his work for B&H and Bruno; he was never satisfied with the clarinets he was promoting and disliked running clinics.<sup>781</sup> He hoped that he would be allowed to modify the design, and on his biannual visits to the Edgware factory he worked with David James and Geoffrey Acton in the design department. In 1961 B&H brought out new models for North America: the professional level '2000', the amateur instruments '4-20' and '2-20' and the student model '1-10'.<sup>782</sup> Kell was credited for designing the bore of the new '2000' and '4-20' although Diana, his wife, recollected that he was only responsible for the design of two keys on the '2000', and that he was disappointed that B&H had not adopted his redesign of the clarinet.<sup>783</sup> Kell resigned disappointed and disillusioned in 1966.<sup>784</sup>

## 7.5 Factory processes

B&H included in their literature photographs of many of the processes used to make instruments in the different factory departments. However, in spite of all the 'up-to-date' mechanisation employed at this time, as in the 1950s, the promotional focus continued to be on individual craftsmanship aided by precision tools rather than mass production and machinery, as this was probably what the company felt would impress their clients. Although there were only a few skilled craftsmen remaining in the factory,<sup>785</sup> pictures showed craftsmen at work and employees constructing instruments by hand or operating small machine tools (Figure 27). B&H stressed that 'hand making plays an important part, not only in the many stages of assembly but in bell making and the many finishing processes – polishing, engraving, silver plating and lacquering.' However, they acknowledged that 'the many components required for assembly into instruments are produced by modern methods', and stated that they aimed to keep abreast of new developments. Although B&H claimed that some of the 'special' models – Symphony trumpets, French horns, and orchestral – tubas were made individually,

<sup>781</sup> Nelson, *Kell Interviews*. pp.122-1; also letter from Kell to McGavin (10/02/1966): HM/B&H/McG.

<sup>782</sup> Appendix 11.i.

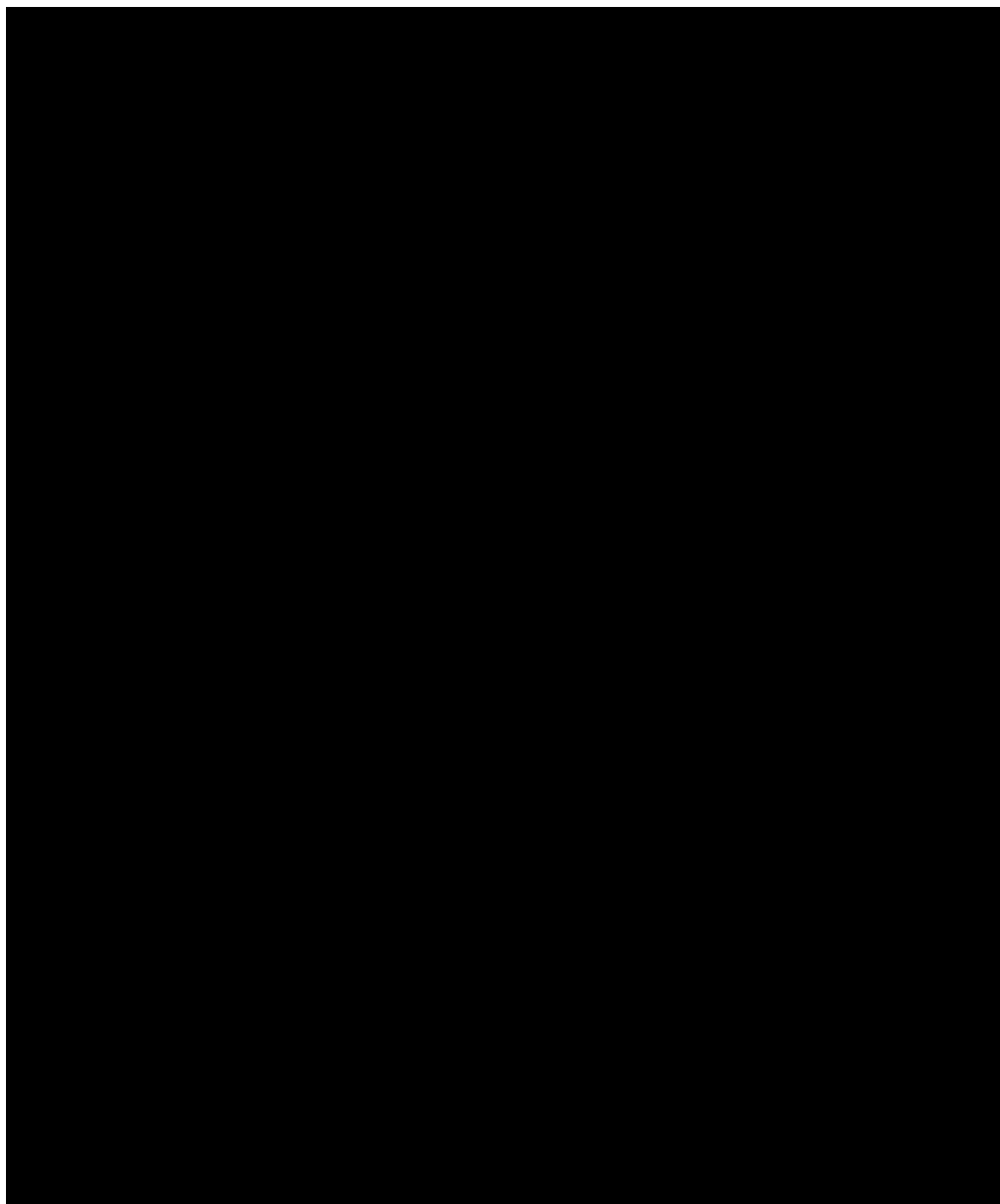
<sup>783</sup> There is evidence that Kell worked with David James at B&H on repositioning the lower F#/ C# padded tone hole on the left to the right, to obtain improved venting of G/D. Victor Slaymark and Richard Masters, "Have you seen this Instrument," *Clarinet & Saxophone* (2010) Vol.35, No.2. p.53. Also extant clarinet: HM/B&H.

<sup>784</sup> Nelson, *Kell Interviews*. p.122-129, and letter from Kell to McGavin (10/02/1966).

<sup>785</sup> Letter from W.J. Golbourn, B&H Engineers Ltd., to C. Monk (20/3/58): EUCHMI/M 6145.



numerous parts of these instruments were manufactured mechanically, using mass produced parts formed by hydraulic expansion methods and other techniques.<sup>786</sup> In effect, much of the production of instruments was carried out by semi-skilled labour with the skilled traditional craftsman only performing certain processes. Although many old-established manufacturing methods were discontinued, new skills were developed in the modern factory – not in the hand-crafting of musical instruments, but in the development of new jigs and tools for the machinery.



**Figure 27.** Photographs of craftsmen at work at B&H (HM/B&H and AMPC).

New manufacturing methods and materials that were developed during the early 1960s included the ‘Microbor’ process, and ‘Sonorite’ and ‘Maranyl’ plastics.

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<sup>786</sup> B&H, *Musical Instruments in the Making* (1968).

The 'Microbor' process employed high precision machines to hone brass instrument valve casings, valves and trombone slides for all grades of instruments. This was further developed early in 1969, when a new method of boring was developed on a diamond boring machine which used 'twin cutters and fixed cone supports' which produced a 'completely concentric bore and counterbore.'<sup>787</sup>

From the early 1960s 'Sonorite' was used for making student model clarinets and towards the end of the 1970s, student oboes. This robust material, described by the firm as 'indestructible', furthered the company's development of instruments for educational use. In the mid-1960s 50% of clarinets produced were made of modern plastics (including 'Sonorite') or ebonite, with this figure increasing to 75% in around 1972.<sup>788</sup> 'Maranyl' (plastic made of glass fibre reinforced nylon) was developed in conjunction with I.C.I. plastics division for making 'Edgware' clarinets during the late 1970s.<sup>789</sup>

B&H remained keen to point out that, whilst they were eager to embrace new developments 'using wherever possible the most up-to-date methods known today', they still employed traditional materials and processes. They emphasised that

*there are 2,361 operations involved in the manufacture of a clarinet [...] The finishing and balancing of the action of a Clarinet or a Flute calls for the skill and care of our many qualified technicians, and the manufacture of the many parts (there are 296 parts in a clarinet alone) is carried out by our highly trained and adaptable team.*<sup>790</sup>

However, the fact was that most of the instruments were almost entirely machine-made, overseen by technicians, with only the finishing carried out by hand. The company's unease in promoting its use of the latest technology and materials, whilst being perceived not to have lost the craftsmanship traditionally associated with instrument making, is evident throughout its literature. The new methods of mass-production were the antithesis of workmen individually hand-making

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<sup>787</sup> B&H, *Edgware Newsletter* (1969). p.17.

<sup>788</sup> B&H, *Musical Merchandise* (1963); B&H, *Musical Instruments in the Making* (1968); B&H, *Boosey & Hawkes* [Booklet About the Company] (post 1973): AMPC.

<sup>789</sup> B&H, *Boosey & Hawkes Presenting a Catalogue of the World's Finest Merchandise. Boosey & Hawkes for Everything in Music* (c.1977/1978): AMPC and HM/B&H. p.52.

<sup>790</sup> B&H, *Musical Instruments in the Making* (1968): AMPC.

instruments in the past. B&H attempted to reconcile the two very different manufacturing processes by stating that 'it is the individual and specialised attention, coupled with high precision engineering methods in production, which is responsible for the very high percentage of top grade musicians who use B&H instruments.' They recognised that skill and traditional methods were required for tuning and inspecting instruments, and these tasks were carried out by 'a resident staff of expert technicians' who were also 'experienced musicians and performers.'<sup>791</sup> The truth was that by the 1960s and 1970s, with the exception of employees involved in design, inspection and tuning, most instrument manufacture was carried out by a deskilled workforce – a total contrast to the expertise of the factory workers during the Blaikley era.<sup>792</sup>

## 7.6 Expansion in the factory

By the early 1970s the Edgware factory was no longer large enough to accommodate all the operations in progress, and there was much concern about the space required to enable the projected growth of the company. Owing to its considerable expansion and need to expand further, many departments of the factory were reorganised. Besides the growth of the brass and woodwind manufacturing and music publishing sections, more accommodation was required for construction of Hammond organs and distribution of Laney Sound Systems and Diamond organs.<sup>793</sup> B&H was keen to keep up with and capitalise on the trend in popular music for amplified sound.<sup>794</sup>

In 1972 the whole music publishing division was removed to a modern purpose-built unit two miles from Edgware at The Hyde in Hendon, a leased unit on the site of the old Duple bus and coach bodybuilder.<sup>795</sup> This released space at Edgware for new reed and brass departments. As there were still problems with

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<sup>791</sup> Ibid.

<sup>792</sup> A few remaining craftsmen were promoted to managerial roles. For example Brass instrument maker Dick Sheridan was appointed Manager of a new Development Section in 1970. Macree, in B&H, *Edgware Newsletter* (1970). p.15; also B&H, *Edgware Newsletter* (1972). p.21.

<sup>793</sup> Laney Sound Systems, designed by Lynden Laney were manufactured in Birmingham, and Diamond Organs in Italy. B&H, *Edgware Newsletter* (1969)." p.18.

<sup>794</sup> Eric McGavin in his notes for an after-dinner speech alludes to Hammond organs occupying almost every part of the factory. HM/B&H/McG.

<sup>795</sup> The new Music Division was opened by Edward Heath on 10 March 1972. B&H, *Edgware Newsletter* (1972). p.21.

accommodating the expanding company, towards the end of 1972 the company engaged a firm of consultants to review and improve procedures.<sup>796</sup> Extant plans of the factory layout show proposed reorganisation of departments throughout the 1960s and 1970s in an attempt to streamline and utilise space more efficiently.<sup>797</sup>

In 1969 B&H had embarked on a new venture in Malta, trading under the name B&H (Overseas) Ltd. with Louis Carabott, whose family had been Maltese agent for over 40 years, as Director. There was no apparent tradition of brass instrument making in Malta, so this was presumably a cost-saving enterprise. A small production unit was established with six workers – three men and three women manufacturing stays for brass instruments and other small assemblies.<sup>798</sup> Owing to its success, a new factory was opened in 1971 to make the cheaper trumpet models and bugles, ‘to augment existing supplies.’<sup>799</sup> By 1977 the lowest class ‘78’ B ♭ cornets and trumpets were also being manufactured in Malta.<sup>800</sup>

## 7.7 Imports and exports

During the 1960s and 1970s B&H imported an increasing number of wind instruments for resale. Many student models were bought in from Czechoslovakia, France, Germany, Italy, America and China and stamped B&H. Some were sold under their own brand names,<sup>801</sup> but a complete range, mainly from Czechoslovakia and France, was sold under the Lafleur name. Some instruments were made to B&H’s own specification; these included traditionally hand-made horns from the Lidl factory at Brno in Czechoslovakia which had been redesigned

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<sup>796</sup> Ibid. p.21.

<sup>797</sup> Appendix 11.vii.

<sup>798</sup> The factory 6,000 sq ft of space at Corradino Heights overlooking the Grand Harbour. B&H, *Edgware Newsletter* (1969). p.17.

<sup>799</sup> Macree, in B&H, *Edgware Newsletter* (1970) p.15.

<sup>800</sup> B&H, *Catalogue. Finest Merchandise* (c.1977/1978). p.33.

<sup>801</sup> ‘La Couture’/‘Buisson’ models from France, many models including ‘Artia’ from Czechoslovakia (which became 400 series in 1970s), instruments by Uebel, Huller, Adler, and ‘Weltklang’ (a trade name used from 1953 until 1990 by VEB Blechblas und Signalinstrumentenfabrik, East Germany), Selmer ‘Console’, ‘Renown’ imported by the dealer Dallas, ‘Dulcet’ imported by Rose Morris, and Anborg (Antonelli and Borg) from Italy. ‘Weltklang’ instruments were ostensibly marketed by Rudall Carte. These models were offered in various B&H catalogues.

by company technicians,<sup>802</sup> and the Zenith Mk III trumpets which were made by Amati in Kraslice, Czechoslovakia. By 1976 B&H had discontinued horn production and were buying in the large-bore Gerhard Schneider B ♭ and F double horns with corded and with lever actions which, according to B&H, were produced in co-operation with the company.<sup>803</sup>

The high demand for American models by professional British players led B&H to offer instruments from the American companies Bach and Buescher in their catalogues; this range had increased by 1978 to include Bach 'Stradivarius' and 'Mercedes II' trumpets, cornets, flugel horns and trombones, and Buescher 'Aristocrat' trumpets, cornets and trombones.<sup>804</sup> However, ironically, besides the very many 'Regent'/'Westminster' student brass models B&H sent to America during the early 1970s were a number of instruments stencilled Bundy and Buescher.<sup>805</sup>

By 1969 B&H were exporting 70% of their total instrument manufacture to over 90 countries – the highest rate ever, and despite worldwide competition, overseas sales continued to increase.<sup>806</sup> The company saw itself as adopting a collaborative and personal approach to subsidiary companies and dealers abroad, with directors and sales representatives from Edgware making frequent visits to advise them on business and the running of their departments.<sup>807</sup> However, B&H became increasingly aware of strong competition from rival firms overseas, and of the growing efforts required to maintain their market share. This was particularly evident at international trade fairs, especially at Frankfurt, which was considered to be the 'shop window' of European manufacturing.<sup>808</sup>

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<sup>802</sup> Model 412 F and E ♭ single rotary, Model 414 B ♭ and F half double compensating and Model 416 B ♭ and F full double French horns. *Brass & Accessories Boosey & Hawkes* (1976): AMPC. p.30. The compensating horn from Lidl is the Lehmann model (with the long rotary 4th valve).

<sup>803</sup> *Ibid.* p.15.

<sup>804</sup> B&H, *Catalogue. Finest Merchandise* (c.1977/1978). p.23.

<sup>805</sup> B&H, *Instruments Brass 33*: HM/B&H A227/077.

<sup>806</sup> B&H, *Edgware Newsletter* (1969). p.6.

<sup>807</sup> *Ibid.* Also Macree, in B&H, *Edgware Newsletter* (1970).

<sup>808</sup> B&H regularly attended trade fairs, exhibiting at Frankfurt, London, Leipzig, Budapest, Zagreb and Chicago in 1969, B&H, *Edgware Newsletter* (1969)." p.6. and Frankfurt, Budapest, Buenos Aires and Hilversum (Holland) in 1970. Macree, in B&H, *Edgware Newsletter* (1970): pp.6-7.

The Edgware factory received many visits from British and foreign bandsmen and bands.<sup>809</sup> As trade overseas increased, B&H's subsidiary companies in Sweden, Australia, Canada, and South Africa, agents in the USA, and dealerships in other countries expanded.<sup>810</sup> By 1970 B&H (South Africa) Ltd. consisted of retail showrooms in and near Cape Town and Johannesburg, a half share in a Hammond organ assembly business and retail outlet in Durban, and separate office and warehouse facilities in Loop Street, Cape Town. At B&H (Canada) Ltd. sales of wind instruments to school bands continued to increase,<sup>811</sup> and consequently the company moved from their Victoria Street premises in Toronto, where they had been for twenty-two years, to larger premises with modern offices and spacious warehouse facilities in a north eastern suburb of the city.<sup>812</sup> B&H (Sweden) Ltd. expanded into a new modern unit in 1972.<sup>813</sup>

Business in Scandinavia and Europe continued to develop, and catalogues in four languages – English, German, French and Spanish,<sup>814</sup> and English, German, Dutch, and Swedish – were produced in the late 1960s.<sup>815</sup> In most European community countries, Spain and Portugal, B&H exported directly to the main music dealers and had representatives based in those countries to look after sales.<sup>816</sup> At the beginning of the 1970s Switzerland was the largest European customer for brass instruments and Laney amplifiers,<sup>817</sup> and B&H reported that in Switzerland, Norway, Holland and the Commonwealth countries most bands played instruments produced at Edgware.<sup>818</sup> However, the company acknowledged the growing competition from abroad, particularly in Europe, stating that ‘the export

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<sup>809</sup> Macree, in B&H, *Edgware Newsletter* (1970). p.6.

<sup>810</sup> B&H, *Edgware Newsletter* (1969). p.3.

<sup>811</sup> Ibid. pp.12-13.

<sup>812</sup> Macree, B&H, *Edgware Newsletter* (1970). p.10.

<sup>813</sup> Sales in 1969 had been good, especially of brass and woodwind instruments and Dolmetsch recorders. Sales of Sonorite clarinets were almost twice 1968. B&H were leading suppliers of brass instruments to the Pentecostal Revival Church. B&H, *Edgware Newsletter* (1969). p.14. The new 12,000 square foot unit anticipated further expansion. B&H, *Edgware Newsletter* (1972). p.7.

<sup>814</sup> B&H, *Brass & Woodwind by Boosey & Hawkes* (1967): JHPC: also 1968 and 1969 catalogues: AMPC.

<sup>815</sup> B&H, *Besson for Brass. Choice of Leading Bands Throughout the World*. (c.1968/1969): AMPC.

<sup>816</sup> B&H, *B&H Booklet*. Members of the European Union from 1952 were: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands. Denmark, Ireland and UK joined in 1973.

<sup>817</sup> Macree, in B&H, *Edgware Newsletter* (1970). p.6.

<sup>818</sup> B&H, *B&H Booklet*. Photographs of Sugarland Band U.S.A., Musikgesellschaft Munsingen, Switzerland, Excelsior Band Holland, Tjensvoll Skolekorps, Norway, Danfoss Brass Band, Denmark, G.U.S. (Footwear) Band, England are included in B&H, *Besson for Brass* (c.1968/1969). See Figure 30.

sales team have a mammoth task in the years ahead of persuading musicians and bandsmen of the superior quality of Edgware manufactured instruments.<sup>819</sup>

Further afield, by 1969 B&H was exporting instruments to the USSR, Romania and Japan.<sup>820</sup> However, the growing threat of competition from Japanese manufacturers was especially clear. In 1970 the Sales Director, Dennis Gillard, stated that

*we have to fight to maintain quality if we are to capitalise on the earlier efforts of our production and sales divisions. In my view this need is, if anything, more urgent to combat the increasing competition from Japan [...] we must step up our activities, primarily with further development in respect of our range of musical instrument production at Edgware, in order that we can withstand the Japanese pressures that are steadily building up on the world's musical instrument market.*<sup>821</sup>

A few years later they reported that they considered it 'a source of pride' that Japan had become a major market for their instruments.<sup>822</sup>

A number of instrument models were designed specifically for the North American market, in particular some of the larger brass instruments from tenor horns to basses, and clarinets. The brass instruments were made with forward facing or 'recording' bells in a similar fashion to the sousaphone;<sup>823</sup> these were popular in both marching bands and for jazz. As discussed in Section 6.4 and Section 7.4, the '8-10' clarinet (developed in 1957) was followed in 1961 by a new range of models, '1:10', '2:20', '4:40', '2000', designed specifically for American players. At the same time a new range of flute models was introduced: the '3-20' also recorded as 'Model 1957', the Romilly 'Graduate' and 'Super Graduate', and the '2-20'.<sup>824</sup>

In 1965 B&H addressed the issue of the preference of professional American players for clarinets by Buffet which had narrower bores than the B&H models. Brian Manton-Myatt, who had been retired since 1954, was invited to

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<sup>819</sup> B&H, *B&H Booklet*.

<sup>820</sup> B&H entered the Japanese market in 1969. B&H, *Edgware Newsletter* (1969). p.6.

<sup>821</sup> Macree, in B&H, *Edgware Newsletter* (1970). p.4.

<sup>822</sup> B&H, *B&H Booklet*.

<sup>823</sup> B&H, *Musical Instruments in the Making*. (1968).

<sup>824</sup> Appendix 11.i.

attend a meeting at Edgware to discuss how the company could get a foothold for their clarinets ‘among the top strata of transatlantic players who seemed completely sold on the Buffet ideals of tone, scaling, pitch, and appearance.’ Manton-Myatt understood that about ninety-five per cent played Buffet instruments, and felt that the firm ‘should tackle the admittedly formidable task of making, and if at all possible improving the scaling of a model embodying the tonal nature of the present day Buffet “B-C-20”’. However, he had reservations about producing instruments tuned to A.446 (as adopted for the ‘B-C-20’ for America), which he pointed out was ‘almost exactly half way to the old standard High Pitch of A.452.4.’ McGavin felt strongly that the company should also develop a universal student model for distribution throughout the world based on the continental type of instrument, which would incorporate ‘a nature and scaling that conforms to the preferences of the widest possible potential market.’ Initial production costs could be kept low by using as much of the existing factory tooling as possible.<sup>825</sup> It seems that Eric McGavin may have worked at the initial stages of developing these models,<sup>826</sup> but none was produced.

## 7.8 Home Market

### 7.8.1 Band instruments

After a depressed period in the 1950s, during the 1960s and 1970s the British band movement began to flourish again. Higher wages and a rise in morale promoted increased band activity with good attendance at band concerts and contests, but this period was not without problems. Changes in the sponsorship of the National Contest, the effects of rapid inflation during the late 1960s on bands needing new instruments, and the miners and industrial strikes of the 1970s affected the movement, but not as seriously as the changeover from high pitch to standard pitch which necessitated many bands to purchase new instruments.

The decision that brass bands would change to standard pitch was made in 1964 when B&H announced their intention to discontinue manufacture of high pitch

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<sup>825</sup> Letter, Manton-Myatt to McGavin (20/12/1965): HM/B&H/McG.

<sup>826</sup> Letter, McGavin to Kell (16/12/1965): HM/B&H/McG.



instruments, for economic reasons. An announcement by B&H in *The British Bandsman* stated:

*You will have read articles recently on the advantages of playing in low pitch. B&H now announce that owing to increased labour costs which have seriously increased production costs, the manufacture of high pitch instruments will be discontinued after 31<sup>st</sup> March 1965.*<sup>827</sup>

The Salvation Army (SP&S Ltd.), who were the only other firm still producing these instruments, concurred, and advised their bands that the change-over would be gradual; however, this exacerbated the company's problems (they had been making annual losses since 1957 apart from in 1964 when many bands required low pitch slides) and led to the takeover by B&H of the manufacturing and repair section, with its remaining five workers at the Salvation Army factory in Campfield Road, St Albans in 1972.<sup>828</sup> An announcement in the *Musician* stated:

*In order to meet, adequately and economically, the growing demand for instruments for our bands throughout the world, it has been agreed for Messrs. B&H Ltd., to rent our Musical Instrument Factory at St Albans. Our craftsmen there, in conjunction with that firm, will continue to make the current popular models of the 'Bandmaster' cornet and the 'Triumphonic' tenor horn. The other 'Triumphonic' instruments will be discontinued.*<sup>829</sup>

The move to low-pitch instruments opened up a wide choice of manufacturers and models available to players and, without the previous restriction, many players, particularly trombonists, looked to American firms such as Conn, King and Olds for wider bore models. The adoption of wide-bore instruments resulted in a change in sound of the British brass band, but according to Herbert and Wallace it was only contributory. They considered that

*the instruments had changed, but the musical culture of the brass band had not. These changes, perhaps the most momentous since the end of the nineteenth century, came as a new breed of conductors was becoming involved with the brass band movement, and it was the combination of the new*

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<sup>827</sup> *The British Bandsman* (06/02/1965). p.7.

<sup>828</sup> Trevor Herbert, ed. *The British Brass Band: A Musical and Social History* (OUP,2000). p.214. The remaining employees are named as David Sandford, Dennis and Roy Lofthouse, John Wathen and Bill Whiteway in B&H, *Edgware Newsletter* (1972): p.5 and p.20.

<sup>829</sup> *Musician* (19/02/1972). p.115.

*instruments and the impact of the influence of these performers which was to affect, if not irrevocably revolutionize, the brass band movement.*<sup>830</sup>

However, many bands continued to favour B&H and Besson instruments, especially the highest class competitive British bands who, remaining faithful to their traditionally preferred brand, chose B&H 'Imperial' or Besson 'New Standard' instruments accordingly.<sup>831</sup> In reality 'Imperial' and 'New Standard' models were identical.<sup>832</sup> The last stocks of the company's high pitch instruments were sold in November 1969. B&H reported that British brass bands were 'stepping up their demands for Class "A" instruments' as they re-equipped with low pitch instruments.<sup>833</sup>

A full-page advertisement in *The British Bandsman* for 'Besson Low Pitch Brass' announced that the world famous Black Dyke Mills Band had recently placed an order for a complete new set of instruments. Besson urged bands not to fall behind.<sup>834</sup> Concert band players, soloists and military band players who required good quality, reliable and hard-wearing instruments also favoured 'Imperial' and 'New Standard' models.

During 1965 the *The British Bandsman* featured full page advertisements for Conn instruments stating that the change to low pitch enabled players to use them. No doubt, the launch of the Besson 'International' range was an attempt by B&H to appeal to the same market. Three full pages announced 'Besson makes Big News'; they featured famous bands that played Besson instruments, presenting 'The Revolutionary Besson International' – a model that 'puts every other Cornet out of date',<sup>835</sup> the B ♭ tenor trombone – 'a completely new model, incorporating every possible refinement',<sup>836</sup> and the large-bore B ♭ and F trombone. However, whilst

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<sup>830</sup> Trevor Herbert and John Wallace, "Aspects of Performance Practices: The Brass Band and Its Influence on Other Brass-Playing Styles," in *The British Brass Band: A Musical and Social History*, ed. Trevor Herbert (OUP, 2000). p.303.

<sup>831</sup> For example Besson catalogues promoted their instruments as 'the choice of champions', featuring the Fairey Band, Fodens Motor Works Band and C.W.S. (Manchester) Band with their Besson instruments. B&H, *The Best Play Besson*. (c.1963). See Figure 30.

<sup>832</sup> Appendix 11.iv.

<sup>833</sup> B&H, *Edgware Newsletter* (1969). p.4.

<sup>834</sup> *The British Bandsman* (03/07/1965). p.5.

<sup>835</sup> *The British Bandsman* (16/10/1965). p.8.

<sup>836</sup> Appendix 11.iii.

the first two were new, the other instruments in the range were made up of rebranded B&H models.<sup>837</sup>

A completely new range of B&H brass instruments, the 'Sovereign', was developed during the 1970s in a serious attempt to keep up with American design.<sup>838</sup> The first models to be produced in 1971 were the B ♭ trombone with optional F (and E) rotary attachment (4105), cornet (4107), flugel horn (4108), and E ♭ tenor horn (4109).<sup>839</sup> Most orchestral trombone players had adopted wide-bore instruments by the middle of the 1960s, especially Conn's 8H and 88H models, and bandsmen followed their lead; the 'Sovereign' 4105 was a close copy of the Conn 8H which the 'Imperial' had never been.<sup>840</sup> It was designed in conjunction with Denis Wick, and had an extra large bore size which gave the instrument a 'dark rich sound'. The model was first promoted in an advertisement in *The British Bandsman* for a concert in Hertford in November 1971: 'Now hear Denis Wick, principal trombone with the London Symphony Orchestra play the new B&H Sovereign Trombone.'<sup>841</sup> It had an innovative optional detachable tuning slide which incorporated an F rotary attachment so that the instrument could be played either as a straight B ♭, or as a B ♭ and F trombone (with slide pull to E).<sup>842</sup> In 1972 B&H claimed that the model was 'now being played by many leading trombonists throughout the world.'<sup>843</sup> However, these were mainly band players, as orchestral players tended to buy the original Conn model, and this subsequently influenced band trombonists.

The high brass 'Sovereign' instruments were developed by Richard Smith. The 'Sovereign' B ♭ cornet (4107) was billed as 'the ultimate in playing luxury for the discerning soloist' and its features were claimed to include an 'acoustically perfect mouthpipe' and a 'specially tapered bell'.<sup>844</sup> The 'Sovereign' B ♭ flugel horn

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<sup>837</sup> Appendix 11.iv.

<sup>838</sup> Appendix 11.v.

<sup>839</sup> B&H Group, *Catalogue of the World's Finest Merchandise*. (c.1971): HM/B&H. The first advertisement for them appeared in *The British Bandsman* (02/10/1971).

<sup>840</sup> Personal communication with Arnold Myers.

<sup>841</sup> B&H Group, *Catalogue Finest Merchandise*. (c.1971); *The British Bandsman* (13/11/1971).

<sup>842</sup> Ibid.

<sup>843</sup> B&H, *Edgware Newsletter* (1972). p.12.

<sup>844</sup> Richard Smith has continued his work on the acoustics and design of brass instruments, including the development of leadpipes and bells, at his company Smith-Watkins.

(4108) had a redesigned valve group, and the E ♭ tenor horn (4109) an increased bore dimension and bell diameter to give a richer, more powerful tone. B&H were quick to mention in *The British Bandsman* (November 1971) that G.U.S. (Footwear) Band, winners of the 1971 National Brass Band Championship, now included the 'Sovereign' tenor horn in their line-up, and promoted the 'Sovereign' range as 'Champion Brass for Champion Bands.'<sup>845</sup>

The traditional G bass trombone gave way to a new wide-bore model in B ♭ with an F trigger attachment.<sup>846</sup> Wick helped design the two 'Sovereign' bass trombones: the 4106 in B ♭ and F with pull to E, and the 4110, a new two-valve design in B ♭, F, G and E ♭. Built to complement the 'Sovereign' tenor, they were promoted for orchestral players and as ideal for big band jazz fourth trombone arrangements. Wick also collaborated with B&H on the design of a wide range of brass instrument mouthpieces and mutes which became very popular. In 1976 large-bore cornets, E ♭ soprano cornets, and B ♭ euphoniums with three and four valves were added to the range,<sup>847</sup> followed by the B ♭ baritone in 1977<sup>848</sup> and the EE ♭ bass in 1978.<sup>849</sup>

Affluent bands generally chose the best instruments available, upgrading as new models were introduced. At the beginning of the 1960s 'Imperial' and 'New Standard' models were top of the range, but these were superseded by the 'International' and then the 'Sovereign'. In 1975 the B&H, Besson and 'Sovereign' model numbers were unified, with top quality models given a 900 number, mid-range 700, and student Regent-type instruments 600. Thus, a model sold under different brand names carried the same number. 'Sovereign', 'International' and a few 'Imperial' models comprised the first category. At this time most of the instruments supplied under the 'International' name were actually 'Sovereign'

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<sup>845</sup> *The British Bandsman* (20/11/1971).

<sup>846</sup> Herbert and Wallace, "Aspects of Performance Practices." p.302.

<sup>847</sup> New model numbers were introduced: 921, 925, 960, 967. B&H, *Main Dealer Price List 1976*: AMPC. See Appendix 11.vi.

<sup>848</sup> Model no. 955. B&H, *Catalogue. Finest Merchandise* (c.1977/1978). p.6.

<sup>849</sup> Arnold Myers has an EE ♭ bass from 1978 still marked 'Imperial', but actually a prototype of the new 'Sovereign'. To quote AM: 'interestingly, aside from the large mouthpipe and bell, the valves and valve tubing are pure D.J. Blaikley'.

models and not 'Imperial' as before.<sup>850</sup> In 1976 some of the duplicated models were discontinued including the entire 'International' range.<sup>851</sup>

## 7.8.2 Orchestral instruments

During the 1960s and 1970s B&H struggled to maintain the custom of top orchestral players. The general trend, following the swing band musicians of the 1930s, had been for increasingly wide-bore instruments which had influenced British orchestral players to move to even bigger bore sizes in the 1950s and 1960s. The majority of players chose foreign instruments in spite of B&H's attempt to copy and reinvent favoured models from abroad. The only exceptions were the '1010' clarinet and the tuba.<sup>852</sup>

In the USA instruments were being designed for their power as well as ease across registers. Generally, trumpet players chose instruments by the American firm Vincent Bach. Besson's top of the range of trumpet, the American '10-10' model, was designed with all the features of the best American instruments including Bach's. It was described as having the improvement of a new slow taper to the mouthpiece and bell, and was fitted with 'squeeze Trigger Action Mobile first and third valve slides' to enable every note to be played in tune. The '10-10' had a very thin bell which was available in a choice of metals: brass was considered to give a vibrant tone, and gilding metal a more symphonic tone.<sup>853</sup> British production of 'American' instruments, however, did not deter players from purchasing actual American instruments. The use by B&H of the name '10-10' for the 'American 10-10' range of Besson instruments (trumpet, long model cornet and trombone; see Section 7.8.3) was obviously indicative of their recognition of the success of the '1010' clarinet, and an attempt to build on its reputation.

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<sup>850</sup> Nos.930, 939, 940 trombones; 940 flugel and 950 tenor horns ; 960, 967 euphoniums. 933 and 935 trombones remained synonymous with 'Imperial' models. B&H, *Brass & Accessories* (1976): AMPC.

<sup>851</sup> B&H, *Main Dealer Price List*. 1976.

<sup>852</sup> Tuba players moved from the Besson Barlow model F (5-valve) to the B&H compensating E ♭. Personal communication with Arnold Myers.

<sup>853</sup> B&H, *The Best Play Besson*. (c.1963). p.2. Gilding metal is a copper alloy made of 95% copper and 5% zinc.

Other Besson trumpets included the 'Symphony' model which was designed specifically for orchestral players (available in different keys),<sup>854</sup> and the 'French Besson' trumpet made by the Paris Besson company, which had been acquired and set up as a subsidiary by the English Besson firm in 1951.<sup>855</sup> The 'French Besson' trumpet was described as being used in world-famous bands and orchestras, and as very popular in the USA. It was the sole model from that company to be offered in the English Besson literature and was only included in the circa 1963 catalogue; this may have been an attempt by B&H to attract custom on account of the popularity of this model in America and the general trend of British players towards instruments with larger bore sizes.<sup>856</sup> In 1977 two new trumpet models were introduced, the '906 Studio' B ♭ trumpet (see Section 7.8.3) and '907 Symphonic' B ♭ trumpet, for use in popular and symphonic music, respectively. The 'Symphonic' trumpet was endorsed by John Wallace.<sup>857</sup> It was promoted as being one of the lightest top-class trumpets, well balanced, with a reduced distance between piston centres which enabled an improved left-hand grip and right hand finger position.<sup>858</sup>

By the 1960s the instrument of choice amongst British horn players was generally made by Alexander.<sup>859</sup> However, for a time the horn section in the BBC SO played B&H models that were based on the Alexander double horn.<sup>860</sup> In 1964, in an attempt to attract the professional market, B&H completely redesigned the

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<sup>854</sup> 113:B ♭, 114:C, 115:D, 116:F, 117:E ♭, 118:C&B ♭. Ibid. p.5.

<sup>855</sup> Besson, *Shareholder Minutes 1932-1957*. p.253. Models 161 and 162: two bore sizes: extra large 0.470" and medium 0.465"; large in comparison to the traditional sort of bore size, such as the B111/112 'New Creation' trumpet which came with a large bore of 0.466" and medium of 0.452". B&H, *The Best Play Besson*. (1963). p.4.

<sup>856</sup> Ibid.

<sup>857</sup> In a personal communication between A. Myers and Wallace (09/12/14) Wallace confirmed that the Sovereign 907 Symphonic B ♭ trumpet was an excellent instrument and that he had no apologies for his endorsement of it. He admitted it was not a commercial success, which he attributes to the fashion for Bach trumpets at the time and the herd instinct. If two players in a trumpet section were playing Bachs, the third member could hardly turn up with a B&H, although he did so in the LSO. He said that he was engaged by B&H to test each instrument, but after rejecting two or three out of the first batch of 20 or so he was not asked again.

<sup>858</sup> The pistons were made of Monel metal and honed and hand-lapped for a precise fit. B&H, *Catalogue. Finest Merchandise* (c.1977/1978). p.3. Monel is a strong, corrosion resistant alloy made primarily of up to 67% nickel, copper and a small amount of iron, manganese, carbon and silicon.

<sup>859</sup> The Alexander 103 model was particularly popular. Personal communication with Arnold Myers.

<sup>860</sup> Robin Gregory, *The Horn* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961). p.44. The first horn had a rotary quick-change to A on the B ♭ section.

'Imperial' double horn (which was also sold as the Besson Academy model),<sup>861</sup> and in 1965 introduced an 'Imperial' B ♭ horn with three rotary valves. However, this was to no avail. The last extant catalogue to include B&H horns was 1971, with only large-bore instruments by Gerhard Schneider offered thereafter.<sup>862</sup> This was also the case with trombones. Although B&H and Besson produced the 'Imperial' and 'Academy' trombone models specifically for symphony and dance orchestra players,<sup>863</sup> top professionals did not accept these attempts to provide the type of instrument that they wanted, preferring American instruments, for example by Conn or King. However, these models were favoured by many players in good brass bands.

The one B&H instrument that was employed almost exclusively by British professional orchestral players was the 'Symphony 1010' clarinet, but many clarinettists were dissatisfied with the model's poor intonation and the company's lack of interest and commitment to improving it. However, in the 1960s Geoffrey Acton, one of B&H's development team, was asked to work on modifying it and changes he made included the design of a new vent hole and mechanism (the 'Acton vent') to improve the intonation and tone quality of B<sup>0</sup>/F#<sup>2</sup> and E ♭<sup>3</sup>.<sup>864</sup> There were two versions; the second design circa 1967 was more robust.<sup>865</sup> In 1967 Jack Brymer took some prototypes of Acton's improved instruments with him on tour with the BBC Symphony Orchestra to Russia. A postcard he sent from Leningrad to Eric McGavin describes the reception the clarinets received: 'I am pleased to say that all the best players behind the curtain, having tried them, demand either 1010 or Imperial clarinets. There is a fortune awaiting B&H if only they will play. No Regents, Edgwares, or small-bore stuff, please.'<sup>866</sup> In 1968 the company asserted

<sup>861</sup> The 'Imperial' double horn 4053 in F & B ♭ with 4 cord action, tapered rotary valves and a 12 ¼" diameter tapered bell to allow versatility of tone. B&H, *Musical Merchandise* (1963). p.6. 'Academy' 210 F & B ♭ 4 rotary valves cord action. B&H, *Besson for Brass* (1971): JHPC.

<sup>862</sup> B&H, *Brass & Accessories* (1976). p.16.

<sup>863</sup> 'Imperial' B ♭ 4040, Bass '555'. B&H, *Musical Merchandise* (1963). p.5-6. Besson 'Academy' 408 rotary valve change to F. B&H, *The Best Play Besson* (c.1963). p.13. The Conn tenor (B ♭) trombone 8H model and bass trombone (B ♭ +F) 88H model were popular. Personal communication with A Myers.

<sup>864</sup> B&H, *Musical Merchandise* (1963); B&H, *1965 Pricelist*. 'Symphony 1010' Acton Vent patent U.K.15405/64. B&H Group, *Catalogue Finest Merchandise* (c.1971). p.3.

<sup>865</sup> Besides the 'Acton vent', Acton's improvements included moving and enlarging the tone holes for a<sup>1</sup> and g#<sup>1</sup>, reverting to integral tone holes from holes with ebonite bushes, attempting to resolve the c#<sup>1</sup>/g#<sup>2</sup> problem (the hole needs to be on the joint) by making hole smaller and putting an insert in the bore (a 'chimney'- to make depth longer and flatten the notes). Informal interview with Colin Bradbury (04/12/08).

<sup>866</sup> HM/B&H/McG.

that 'in a highly competitive field we can confidently state that the range of clarinets produced here at Edgware are regarded by leading players everywhere as the finest in the world today.'<sup>867</sup> The '1010' remained popular until the 1980s when there was a reaction by clarinettists away from the so-called 'English sound' towards a tone without vibrato.<sup>868</sup> Many adopted instruments by the French company Buffet, who had started building instruments not to continental pitch. British players found that it was easier to produce a more focused tone on the Buffet clarinets, and that the company, besides having good quality control, was interested in client feedback.<sup>869</sup> Consequently, having acquired Buffet (in 1981), B&H discontinued manufacture of their own clarinet models in 1984 in favour of the Buffet range.

Although B&H manufactured 'Imperial' concert flutes, oboes, bassoons and bass clarinets during the 1960s and 1970s, they were not adopted by professional players.<sup>870</sup> Therefore, as there was little demand for these instruments, in 1978 they reduced their product lines, with bassoons and bass clarinets respectively available only in the mid-range 'Emperor', and student-range 'Regent' models. However, a new sterling silver 'Sovereign' concert flute (565) was introduced to replace the 'Imperial', with a head joint designed by Albert Cooper.<sup>871</sup> Cooper worked with the technical department to produce two head joints: the sterling silver 'Cooper Approved' for the 'Sovereign', and the plated 'Cooper Pattern' for the mid-range 'Emperor' model (568).<sup>872</sup> B&H also bought in three Buescher concert flute models for resale.<sup>873</sup> Rudall Carte's hand-made flutes and piccolos continued to be in demand, and besides continuing to make a small number of these they

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<sup>867</sup> B&H, *Musical Instruments in the Making* (1968).

<sup>868</sup> Yona Ettlinger, a clarinet professor at Guildhall was a proponent of Buffet and was influential in the move to Buffet instruments.

<sup>869</sup> Informal interview with Colin Bradbury (04/12/2008).

<sup>870</sup> The only flautist pictured in a B&H catalogue was Phil Goody jazz and dance band flautist and saxophonist; he was described as an 'outstanding radio and recording artist'. B&H, "B&H Range, 1963." Imperial instruments available c.1971: Sterling silver concert flute 8071, piccolo 8080, Artist and Conservatoire oboes, cor anglais 8130, bassoon 8140, B♭ bass clarinet 8060. B&H Group, *Catalogue Finest Merchandise* (c.1971). pp.5-6.

<sup>871</sup> Albert Cooper was an employee at RC until 1959, after which he established his own business. He developed the 'Cooper scale and made James Galway's gold flute.

<sup>872</sup> Promoted in May 1978 letter to dealers with B&H, *Boosey & Hawkes Group* (1978): HM/B&H. Offered in B&H, *Catalogue. Finest Merchandise* (c.1977/1978). pp.54-54B.

<sup>873</sup> Concert Piccolo de-luxe (127/0), Concert Flute de-luxe (80/0), Concert Flute (803/0). B&H, *Catalogue. Finest Merchandise* (c.1977/1978). p.57A.



introduced a new model basset horn and bass clarinet to low C, both with in-line wooden bells.<sup>874</sup>

### 7.8.3 Instruments for dance bands and session musicians

During the 1960s B&H and Besson continued to develop models for dance band and jazz musicians. Trumpet players who undertook session work, besides requiring outstanding sight reading ability and stamina, had to be able to play in many styles, with good facility and power in all ranges of the instrument. The new top of the range 'Sessionair' trumpet, designed to 'meet the many and varied demands of the session man' and promoted as 'the world's most advanced design', was introduced in 1961. Its appearance was modern and streamlined and it was claimed to have a special 'Audio Bell' that enabled 'brilliant voice projection'.<sup>875</sup> The 'New Zenith' trumpet made for Lafleur, which was at the cheap end of the market, was also promoted as having a 'sensational Audio-tone' bell 'for sparkling tone'.<sup>876</sup> Besson's 'New Creation' trumpet continued to be popular.<sup>877</sup> The trade name originated from before the First World War and B&H asserted that it had been 'favourite with top-line artists for many years'.<sup>878</sup> In 1977 the new top quality 'Sovereign 906' Studio model, took over from the 'Sessionaire'. It was designed under Richard Smith specifically for rock, jazz, pop band, semi-classical and small group musicians, and was endorsed by Derek Watkins, who was considered by many to be the finest lead player of his generation; Watkins was particularly known for his playing in many film scores including all the 'James Bond' soundtracks.<sup>879</sup> Increasing demands were being made on trumpeters who were expected to cover a far wider range than previously and to play with greater projection, ever more in the altissimo register of the instrument, for commercial work and film scores. The

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<sup>874</sup> Maloney, N., in B&H, *Edgware Newsletter* (1972). p.15.

<sup>875</sup> The 'Sessionair' was described as being 'designed in conjunction with Britain's Top Flight Musicians'; they named Ernie Watson and Grisha Farfel ; B&H, *Musical Merchandise* (1963). p.1. Model 4018, first recorded 14/06/1961, sns330295-304. *Instruments Brass 26*: HM/B&H A227/070. In the 'Sessionaire' leaflet it was offered in medium bore and large bore, and was produced with new valves.

<sup>876</sup> B&H, *Presenting the New Zenith Trumpet* (1963): JMPC; B&H, *The Best Play Besson* (c..1963). p.6.

<sup>877</sup> Available with medium bore 0.452", and large bore 0.466". B&H, *The Best Play Besson* (c.1963). p.3.

<sup>878</sup> They named celebrated jazz players Kenny Baker and Eddie Calvert.

<sup>879</sup> Peter Vacher, "Derek Watkins Obituary," *The Guardian* 25 March 2013.

<http://www.theguardian.com/music/2013/mar/25/derek-watkins> Accessed 21/01/2015.

'Studio' trumpet was described as having 'equal blowing from bottom range to extreme high range (double high C) without loss of tone or quality.'<sup>880</sup>

During the 1960s the long model cornet, which continued to be popular for jazz, was available in several different models.<sup>881</sup> The most superior model available was the Besson American '10-10' which had been specifically designed for the requirements of the traditional jazz band.<sup>882</sup> B&H's 'Imperial' 4014 with its medium-large bore, whilst marketed as 'ideal for concert or orchestral work', was also promoted as suitable for use in the modern jazz ensemble,<sup>883</sup> and a new 'Emperor' B ♭ long model 4304, synonymous with the new 'Stratford' B ♭ cornet long model 1156, was introduced in 1963. It was described by Besson as 'the newest development of the Trumpet-Cornet (or Mezzo Trumpet)' and by B&H 'as an instrument of great versatility, built for all types of playing.'<sup>884</sup> Two low-priced models were also available – the B&H trumpet-cornet '78' and Besson '35' B ♭ cornet long model.<sup>885</sup>

The 'Sessionair' trombone, which like the trumpet was aimed at session musicians, was described as an instrument 'designed by musicians in conjunction with our technicians', and it was billed as having 'already won widespread acclaim among top-flight trombonists'; although none was named, a photograph of 'celebrated stage and television star' George Chisholm was included in the catalogue.<sup>886</sup> The American Model '10-10' trombones, as with the '10-10' trumpets, were offered with a choice of bell metals, but the main new feature of this large-bore eight-inch bell trombone was an ultra-light weight outer slide which was designed to help to overcome difficulties in fast technical passages.<sup>887</sup>

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<sup>880</sup> B&H, *B&H Group* (1978): HM/B&H. p.2.

<sup>881</sup> Appendix 11.ii.

<sup>882</sup> B&H, *The Best Play Besson* (c.1963). p.7.

<sup>883</sup> B&H, *Musical Merchandise* (1963). p.3.

<sup>884</sup> Ibid. p.3., B&H, *The Best Play Besson* (c.1963). p.7.

<sup>885</sup> B&H, *B&H Range* (1963); B&H, *The Best Play Besson* (c.1963). p.7.

<sup>886</sup> It was described as having extra-lightweight slides made of nickel silver chromium plated and precision honed with the new Microbor process. B&H, *Sessionaire Leaflet*. (c.1963): JMPC; B&H, *B&H Range* (1963).

<sup>887</sup> Ibid.

By the 1960s B&H were no longer making saxophones.<sup>888</sup> Instead they were importing the high quality models from S.M.L. (Paris),<sup>889</sup> intermediate instruments from Buescher in America ('400' model) and the budget range through Lafleur.<sup>890</sup>

### 7.8.4 Music in education

After the War Local Education Authorities started to engage county music advisors to develop music in schools; by 1959 almost half of the 135 authorities had appointed advisors, and by 1967, 110. Gradually, authorities established schemes for instrumental tuition with the first full-time visiting teachers appointed in schools in the West Riding in 1961. LEA music centres were also set up, and during the 1960s and 1970s a significant increase in the number of children learning instruments occurred throughout Britain;<sup>891</sup> this made a great impact on sales at B&H.

B&H, whilst taking advantage of the dramatic growth of music in education, fuelled it by developing and providing many different low-priced student instrument models. During the 1960s instrumental music was integrated into the education system and became accessible to most children, not just the privileged few. In primary schools recorder and percussion became widely taught in the classroom, and in secondary schools there was an increase in instrumental tuition, orchestras, bands, and ensembles. B&H (Retail) Ltd. manufactured many thousands of instruments, offering them at special discount prices to education authorities and schools. Instruments were allowed out on approval for seven days, and six months interest-free credit.<sup>892</sup> By the 1970s a 'try before you buy' rental scheme was

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<sup>888</sup> The last recorded were 118 B ♭ tenors (stamped 'Regent' and some 'SPGB') charged to Regent St. October 1958-February 1959. sns164104 onwards. *Instruments Brass 17*: HM/B&H A227/061.

<sup>889</sup> The company SML was established in 1934 from the businesses of Charles Strasser, Marigaux and Lemaire. Waterhouse, *Index*. p.389. SML instruments were described as 'used by leading players throughout Europe and the U.S.A.' and their 'Gold Medal' model as having '22 outstanding features'. B&H, *Musical Merchandise* (1963). p.9.

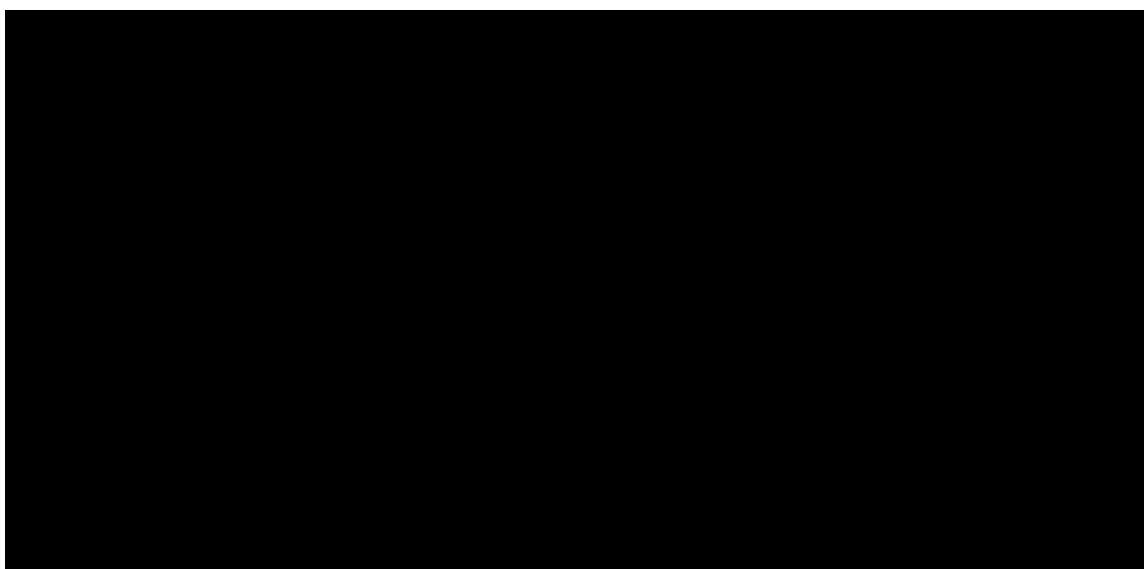
<sup>890</sup> 1967 Price list in B&H, *Musical Merchandise* (1963).

<sup>891</sup> For example a music centre in Sheffield founded in 1968, by 1975 was employing 36 full-time and 19 part-time teachers to give brass, woodwind and string lessons to 2,500 children all over the city. In addition, the centre ran many bands, orchestras, ensembles and other activities for both pupils and teachers. Dorothy Taylor, *Music Now* (Milton Keynes: OUP, 1979). pp.23-24.

<sup>892</sup> B&H, *Making Music in Your School* (1967/68): JHPC.

introduced whereby customers could rent an instrument for three or six months, with the rental cost ultimately deducted from the purchase price.<sup>893</sup>

B&H, having already designed and supplied instruments for this developing home market during the 1950s, in 1965 established an education department to liaise with schools and promote their instruments and services. Eric McGavin was appointed full time Educational Adviser to apprise the company on the type of instruments and musical equipment required by teachers, and to offer advice on instrumental music in schools.<sup>894</sup> He became passionately involved in the development of student models and the liaison between the company and schools. Schools were encouraged to take parties of children to the Edgware works, where uniformed guides took tours round the factory to see instruments being manufactured (Figure 28). They also visited the company's collection of historic musical instruments (Figure 29) and attended lectures given by McGavin.<sup>895</sup>



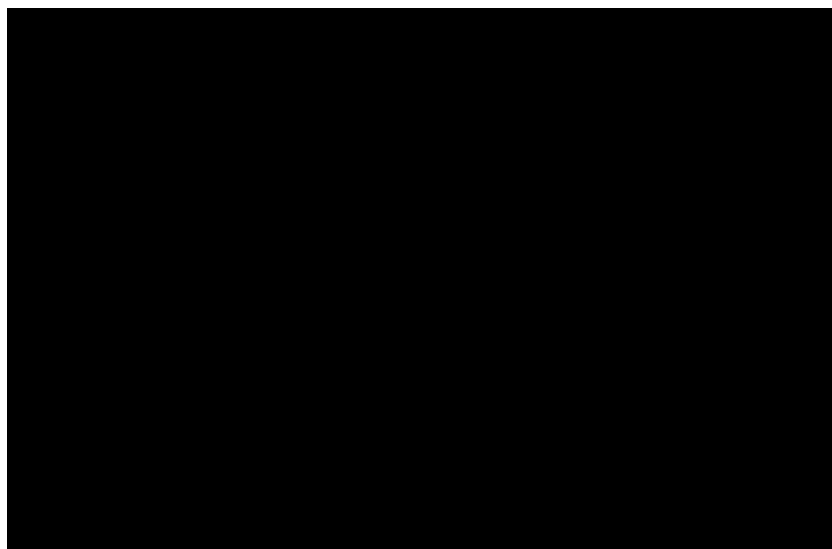
**Figure 28** (a) B&H factory at Edgware; (b) uniformed guides for school factory tours. B&H, 1963 catalogue (HM/B&H)

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<sup>893</sup> B&H, *B&H Booklet*.

<sup>894</sup> *Music: Supplement to Education* (19/03/1965): HM/B&H/McG. p.iv.

<sup>895</sup> *Ibid.*



**Figure 29.** The B&H museum in a 1970s B&H booklet (AMPC)

This approach may have been inspired by the developments that had already taken place in America. In an article in 1965 for the trade journal 'Music Industry', Eric McGavin indicated that the British musical instrument industry and their dealers should take notice of the progress in America. According to the American Music Conference, in 1947 2.5 million school-age children played musical instruments, receiving instrumental instruction in schools or by private music teachers in the United States. By 1965 the number had reached 10.5 million. Although the numbers of American students could not be compared to those in Britain owing to the different sizes of the countries, the considerable rate of growth was far ahead of that in Britain. Retail sales of instruments in America increased from 85 million dollars in 1940 to 630 million dollars in 1962. McGavin considered that although the situation in Britain had improved since the War, it was similar to that in America in the 1920s when there was a shortage of good student quality instruments, teachers, servicing facilities and sheet music.<sup>896</sup>

B&H led the growth of music education in Britain. Their collaborative approach with dealers, schools and teachers resulted in a significant increase in children learning to play musical instruments and in the establishment of youth orchestras and bands. The scale of the company's promotion was vast. According to McGavin, by 1969 (in just over four years), almost 8,000 people had visited the factory, and B&H had 'talked to over 20,000 children in their own schools, [and]

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<sup>896</sup> Eric McGavin, "Education and the Dealer," *Music Industry*, no. 6 (March 1965).

many thousands of teachers and music students in their colleges of education'.<sup>897</sup> The firm's self promotion was proactive and effective. McGavin claimed that

*at teachers' conferences and exhibitions we have shown our products to educationalists and teachers totalling over 50,000. Circulars, brochures and catalogues must be in the millions. A record has been made, articles written, several broadcasts and television interviews, and a continual stream of letters seeking advice on instruments [...] have been dealt with.*<sup>898</sup>

However, McGavin observed that in the 1960s British grammar schools were generally expected to have a school orchestra and secondary modern schools 'a band of some kind', and that wind playing was not considered to be such a 'fine art' as string playing. This assertion reflected the perceived continuation of the social class structure and preconception that linked grammar schools with orchestras, art and the upper/middle classes, and secondary modern schools with wind playing, bands, and the lower classes. Non-selective comprehensive schools were widely introduced from 1965, most commonly by amalgamating grammar and secondary modern schools. It took time for the new schools to become established, and McGavin felt that the new large comprehensive schools, in spite of enthusiasm for a well structured programme of practical music-making, were severely restricted by problems particularly with money, specialist teachers and suitable music.<sup>899</sup>

In 1968 McGavin formed The British Youth Wind Symphony Orchestra (renamed the National Youth Wind Orchestra) under the auspices of The Schools Music Association.<sup>900</sup> The purpose of this venture, which was sponsored by B&H, was to give young wind players the opportunity to gain orchestral experience, to promote the increasing interest in wind ensembles amongst players, teachers, composers and publishers, and 'to encourage an orchestral approach to all wind band playing, and by setting a national example, to make such groups musically acceptable'.<sup>901</sup> In doing this, it could be argued that McGavin and B&H were

<sup>897</sup> Eric McGavin, "Educationally Speaking," in *Edgware Newsletter* (1968): HM/B&H/McG. p.6.

<sup>898</sup> Ibid.

<sup>899</sup> McGavin unpublished article. HM/B&H/McG.

<sup>900</sup> The inaugural course held at Westhill College of Education, Birmingham catered for nearly 100 players with a concert in Coventry Cathedral on 10/08/1968. HM/B&H/McG.

<sup>901</sup> Recording of British Youth Wind Orchestra, 1971, B&H (Sales) Ltd. sleeve notes, and *Programme for 1973 Concerts: The British Youth Wind Orchestra*: HM/B&H/McG. p.3.

attempting to effect social change as well as musical, besides building on the reputation of the company.

### 7.8.5 Student instruments

B&H and Besson manufactured two comprehensive ranges of student instruments. They were marketed under B&H 'Regent' and Besson 'Westminster' names. Some of the instruments were described as having been modelled on the lines of more expensive instruments, and the larger instruments such as the baritone and E ♭ bass were promoted as 'ideal for young bandsmen and school combinations'.<sup>902</sup> The cheapest instruments were B&H '78' trumpet, trombone, and trumpet-cornet, and Besson's '35' trumpet, trombone and cornet long model. A full range of Lafleur instruments was also offered, with all models imported apart from the Lafleur Sonorite B ♭ Boehm clarinet (L8405) – the same as the 'Regent', wooden B ♭ and A (L8406, 8408) and a Sonorite B ♭ bass Boehm with a one-piece body.<sup>903</sup>

Medium-priced instruments were marketed under both the B&H 'Emperor' and Besson 'Stratford' names; however, they were the same models. They were sometimes described in the catalogues as designed for dance band or orchestral players, and as popular amongst professionals and semi-professionals; however, they were only really considered to be, as they were first described in 1955, 'for the serious student and progressive player'.<sup>904</sup> 'Emperor' and 'Stratford' instruments were only available in trumpet, long model cornet, B ♭ tenor slide trombone, B ♭ and F tenor slide trombone, clarinet, bassoon and flute.

During the 1960s and 1970s the clarinet became perhaps the most popular serious wind instrument for children to play at school. B&H encouraged the transition of children from learning recorder to clarinet, and published a 'simple' tutor book, 'The Open Road from Recorder to Clarinet', in collaboration with Jack Brymer.<sup>905</sup> Brymer, throughout the 1960s, endorsed the student clarinets, and made an EP record with TV personality Jon Kelley – 'an introduction to the Clarinet'

<sup>902</sup> B&H, *Musical Merchandise* (1963). Brass section. For example: p.7 and p.10.

<sup>903</sup> Ibid. Lafleur section. p.2.

<sup>904</sup> B&H, *Musical Instruments, Accessories* (1955). p.PL4.

<sup>905</sup> Jack Brymer, *The Open Road from Recorder to Clarinet* (Boosey & Hawkes (Sales) Ltd., 1963): JHPC.

– for the company.<sup>906</sup> This set out ‘to demonstrate the versatility of the clarinet and warns the intending student of the many pitfalls to be avoided in the choice of instrument.’ It was advertised in a number of their educational catalogues.<sup>907</sup>

## 7.9 Conclusions

During the 1960s and 1970s music-making in Britain flourished. Motivated by the thriving home and export markets, B&H focused on expansion in order to establish themselves as a global company and to compete with similar foreign firms such as the American Selmer company and Yamaha. It was an unsettled time in the factory with insufficient accommodation to house the growing business. However, throughout the period the firm produced and bought in increasing numbers of instruments and accessories to supply an extended range of musical genres and musicians. The growth of the company and assimilation of other brands may have been economically profitable to B&H, but in effect perhaps diluted the actual brand of B&H itself. As greater numbers of instruments and accessories were bought in, fewer were made under the B&H name, and this was perhaps an indication of the beginning of the company’s subsequent decline.

The company’s continued increase in global acquisitions and expanded dealership networks enabled sustained growth in trade overseas and throughout Britain, where B&H retained the monopoly of instrument sales. The marketing and sales departments developed and were highly successful at promoting and selling products worldwide. Such was the national economic importance of B&H that in 1971 the instrument division at B&H was presented with a Queen’s Award for Industry.<sup>908</sup>

B&H responded to the changing fashions of the time. However although the company continued to develop models made to foreign specifications to cater for the increasing vogue for large-bore instruments, many mainstream musicians still preferred foreign-made models. This influenced a growing number of brass bandmen who had been constrained to purchasing high-pitch instruments from

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<sup>906</sup> B&H, *An Introduction to the Clarinet* (c.1970): JHPC.

<sup>907</sup> For example: B&H, *Educational Instrument Catalogue* (1967). p.4.

<sup>908</sup> The certificate is in the B&H archive.



B&H until the changeover to low pitch. However, many bands remained steadfast to Besson and B&H models.

The two largest areas of home sales were instruments and equipment for popular music and for music education. This resulted in both product diversification and an increase in the number of product lines, with a large number of instruments made abroad bought in for resale. Whilst the company had always provided instruments for use in popular music, in the 1960s it extended the range it offered and became a dealer for electronic instruments and equipment. The demand for Hammond and Diamond organs and Leslie and Laney sound systems intensified as electronic instruments became part of almost all popular music groups. However, in promoting this area of the market B&H were projecting a different brand image and thus had moved away from their established market.

The shift in the company's attention towards the popular and education markets may have been at the expense of its traditional customer base. With its focus firmly on these areas during the 1960s and 1970s, B&H arguably lost sight of long-established professional customers, who continued to develop a preference for instruments from abroad. In pursuing diversification, expansion and mass production the company lost its focus on craftsmanship, quality and custom-built instruments. This move away from innovation and manufacture towards service industries was typical of the trend in Britain, and by the end of the 1970s B&H had become caught up in the ways of contemporary industry in an attempt to become 'all things to all men'. Manton-Myatt summed up the situation at B&H:

*Commerce, minus any sort of attachment to art, is the be-all and end-all of the concern, with (it has to be admitted) a corresponding decline in the quality of the products.*<sup>909</sup>

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<sup>909</sup> Letter, Manton-Myatt to Philip Bate (06/01/1967): UOBC: PATB M25/3.

## Chapter 8

### 1980–2003: The Boosey & Hawkes Group. Decline and demise

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#### 8.1 Introduction

In spite of a strong global profile and high productivity, the profitable years at B&H gave way to financial uncertainty, and the company, which was rated third in the world league of instrument manufacturers behind the American Selmer company and Yamaha,<sup>910</sup> struggled against increasing competition from abroad. During the 1970s inflation had risen dramatically in Britain owing to increasing oil prices and rising wages, and in 1979 the Conservative Party under Margaret Thatcher responded by raising taxes, increasing interest rates and cutting government spending. After a severe recession in 1981 economic expansion took place throughout the decade, reaching its highest level since the Second World War. However, this caused further inflation and government deficit, leading to another serious recession in 1991. Nevertheless, economic growth resumed in 1993 and continued into the 2000s.

During the 1980s and 1990s B&H moved with the times and, in spite of financial difficulties, took their expansion, globalisation and diversification of the previous decades to new levels before their ignominious decline and ensuing dissolution. This chapter discusses the rapid development of B&H through its acquisition of companies abroad, to become the figurehead of a large international group, and its subsequent demise. It examines the changing role of the parent company owing to the growth of its new subsidiary companies, the reorganisation of instrument manufacture throughout the group, and its increasing role as a dealer in foreign instruments. Brief historical notes on instrument companies mentioned in the text are contained in Appendix 5i.

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<sup>910</sup> B&H Group, *The World of Boosey & Hawkes* (1986): HM/B&H.

## 8.2 European acquisitions

In September 1980 B&H were again experiencing serious financial problems with a pre-tax loss of £146,000.<sup>911</sup> They appointed a new chief executive, Michael Boxford, to turn the company around and engaged a new managing director, Peter Ashcroft, to run the manufacturing division.<sup>912</sup> Boxford was clearly chosen because of his international experience and marketing success. (He claimed that, whilst in his previous position as Director of European Operations at Parfums Yves Saint-Laurent,<sup>913</sup> he had increased sales by 50% a year).<sup>914</sup> B&H's priorities were obviously set in this direction as Boxford, in spite of having no knowledge of the musical instrument industry, was charged with expanding the manufacturing side of the business. His ambitions and firm intentions to improve the financial standing of the company by increasing the range of instruments produced at B&H, and to penetrate the important United States, Japanese and European markets further (American sales had diminished considerably in the past decade),<sup>915</sup> demonstrated his vision for the future. Whilst Boxford was engaged for his management skills, his unfamiliarity with instrument manufacture must have been considered by many of the factory staff to be an imprudent move, and possibly may have served to alienate the workforce. Boxford also encouraged the employees in offices abroad to operate as part of a unified international company, rather than independently.<sup>916</sup>

Boxford's first opportunity for expansion occurred in November 1981 when B&H was able to purchase the nearly bankrupt Buffet Crampon International group for £4.5 million. It was controlled by the American Tolchin Group and comprised four companies which manufactured woodwind and stringed instruments, and instrument cases: Buffet Crampon, W. Schreiber & Söhne GmbH, Roderich Paesold GmbH and Jakob Winter GmbH. The acquisition gave B&H the foothold in Europe that they wanted. However, as the company was undercapitalised, it had to sell assets in order to raise enough funds to secure the purchase, which was partly financed by the sale for £4.1 million of the long lease on B&H's Margaret Street

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<sup>911</sup> "Boosey & Hawkes Acquisition," *Financial Times* (04/11/1981): EUCHMI/L.

<sup>912</sup> Wallace, *Publishing Story*. pp.165-6.

<sup>913</sup> <http://investing.businessweek.com/research/stocks/private/person.asp?personId=73629&privcapId=6350568&previousCapId=6350568&previousTitle=Keyhaven+Capital+Partners+Ltd> Accessed 6/3/2014.

<sup>914</sup> Wallace, *Publishing Story*. pp.165-6.

<sup>915</sup> "B&H Acquisition."

<sup>916</sup> Wallace, *Publishing Story*. p.167.

premises adjacent to 295 Regent Street. Boxford is reported as saying that 'B&H now has a full line of brass, woodwind and stringed instruments appealing to all grades of player from professional to student.'<sup>917</sup> Whilst the newly acquired companies complemented and widened the customers' choice, Boxford's statement was only true in respect of high level stringed instruments as B&H had, for decades, been producing a diverse range of woodwind and brass instruments and products to suit all levels of player. It was anticipated optimistically that 'the merger should triple sales for B&H to more than £25m next year.'<sup>918</sup>

As with the amalgamation of B&Co. and H&S in 1930, the formation of the new B&H Group automatically gave the partnership strength by reduction of competition, shared resources, collective corporate expertise and increased marketing outlets. The additional companies gave further diversity and global strength to the B&H 'empire': Buffet Crampon was a family woodwind manufacturing firm located at Mantes-la-Ville near Paris, with a reputation amongst professionals for its high quality instruments, especially clarinets. W. Schreiber & Söhne, a woodwind company, was known particularly for its bassoons, Paesold made fine stringed instruments and bows, and Jacob Winter manufactured cases for musical instruments.

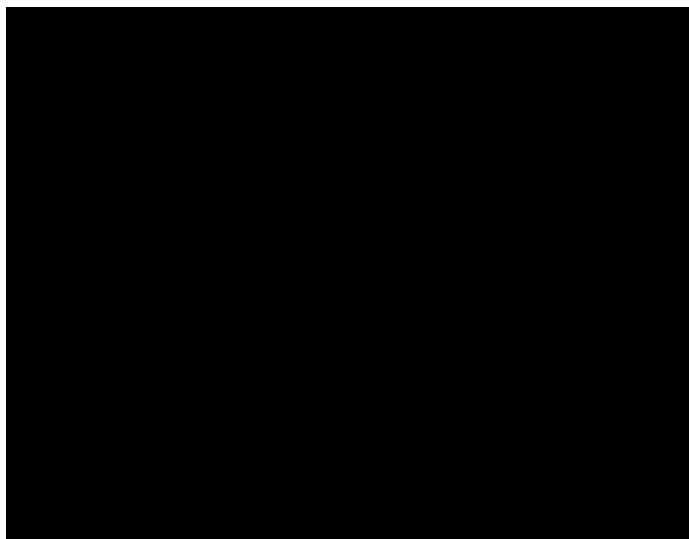
The now extended B&H Group presented itself as 'a great new musical partnership, making music together. Worldwide' (Figure 30). With renewed enthusiasm, it appealed to the global market and provided a consolidated European force against the competition from Japanese and American manufacturers. The Group had factories situated in Britain, France and Germany, and by combining sales distribution networks it achieved an expanded market with increased outlets in North America, Canada, UK, France, Benelux, South Africa, Germany, Scandinavia, Australia and Japan. B&H's global approach to export was emphasised in the company literature, endorsed by its new 'logo' – the letters B and H divided by an ampersand which was depicted as a treble clef 'containing' a globe.<sup>919</sup>

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<sup>917</sup> "B&H Acquisition."

<sup>918</sup> Ibid. Boxford remained at B&H until 1986. Handwritten note by Langwill on newspaper cutting ("B&H Acquisition.") 'ii 86 Boxford quit'.

<sup>919</sup> B&H Group, *A Great New Musical Partnership: Boosey & Hawkes, Buffet Crampon, Schreiber Paesold, Winter* (1981): AMPC.



**Figure 30.** New B&H logo.

In their literature B&H, with new motivation, declared the intention ‘to get the company in order at the factory; to get distribution right; to get the marketing strategy right’, and Boxford asserted that ‘we know our products are the best in the world, we are going to get out and sell them more aggressively.’<sup>920</sup> Whilst B&H achieved some of their objectives, focusing on marketing their products with a ‘hard-sell’ attitude, which was important for increasing sales and keeping up with their competitors in the world market, they neglected the ‘foundations’ of the business, the Edgware factory and its staff. Over the next two decades misguided leadership, factory reorganisation, and a workforce with a poor understanding of the instruments that they made – a situation exacerbated by severe financial problems – all contributed to the company’s eventual demise.

It is probable that decline might have been avoided if B&H had adopted a different approach to corporate management. Although a certain focus on marketing is essential for sales, it appears that complacency had set in, with little investment in the Edgware factory, and insufficient direction and training of the less skilled workforce. The senior management seems to have been preoccupied with the growth of the company and had lost sight of maintaining the high standards on which the company had been established, and which had previously promoted good morale and loyalty amongst working staff.

At first the individual companies of the B&H Group continued production as before, with Schreiber maintaining their manufacture of flutes, clarinets, bassoons

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<sup>920</sup> B&H Group, *World of B&H* (1986).

and recorders, Buffet making clarinets and saxophones, Paesold stringed instruments and Winter instrument cases. Capital was invested in Buffet and Paesold so that they could expand production to meet market demands. B&H continued to make all ranges of B&H and Besson brass and woodwind instruments for all standards and categories of players, stating that their instruments were ‘the natural choice for orchestras, brass bands and military bands all over the world’. The Group’s products were marketed ‘through affiliate companies, franchise and group agents and dealers throughout Europe and in every major market worldwide.’<sup>921</sup>

After 1982 many changes were made within the Group, with major restructuring and rationalisation of instrument manufacture. At Edgware reed instrument making ceased in 1984<sup>922</sup> and all B&H models were discontinued in favour of continental models,<sup>923</sup> even the renowned ‘1010’ clarinet, which had been gradually losing popularity to the Buffet R13 during the 1970s. Only flute production was retained, but under the Buffet brand name.<sup>924</sup> During the 1970s playing styles were changing and, owing to falling manufacturing standards at B&H, improving standards at Buffet and a successful sales drive led by UK Sales Director Alan Lucas at Buffet Crampon, many young players adopted the French instruments, often encouraged by influential teachers such as Yona Ettlinger and Thea King. This preference by players was well established by the time of the acquisition of Buffet by B&H.<sup>925</sup> As a result of these changes, clarinets, oboes, cors anglais and French system bassoons were made by Buffet, German system bassoons by Schreiber, and the majority of saxophones and Buffet ‘Prestige’ models by the German saxophone manufacturer Keilworth, after its acquisition in 1989 by The

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<sup>921</sup> B&H Group, *New Musical Partnership* (1981).

<sup>922</sup> *Instruments Reed 30*: HM/B&H A227/043.

<sup>923</sup> B&H brand woodwind instruments still available in 1984: ‘Symphony 10-10’, ‘Imperial’, ‘Emperor’ and ‘Regent’ clarinets, ‘Sovereign’ and ‘Emperor’ flutes, and ‘Emperor’ and ‘Regent’ oboes. ‘Edgware’ clarinets and ‘Imperial’ oboes were offered besides the above in 1982, but not in 1984. The only B&H brand instrument included in 1986 was the piccolo, which had not been listed in 1982 or 1984. B&H (MI) Ltd, *Confidential Price List* (1 February 1984): TBaPC.

<sup>924</sup> Flute manufacture was moved to Schreiber in c. 1999/2000. Interview with Tim Barrett 08/10/13.

<sup>925</sup> Many children took up the clarinet through local authority teaching schemes. Lucas, who was a good business man, created links with schools and teachers, established finance deals and gave good after-sales service. Chris Horril. <http://test.woodwind.org/clarinet/BBoard/read.html?f=1&i=263029&t=262822> Accessed 20/03/14. In January 1986 Peter Eaton purchased ‘1010’ tooling and parts from B&H which enabled him to set up his business independently producing clarinets in the tradition of the 1010. <http://www.eatonclarinets.com/> Accessed 20/03/2014.

B&H Group. This corporate reorganisation marked the end of large-scale woodwind manufacture in Britain.

Brass instrument lines were reduced at Edgware, with B&H 'Imperial' and Besson 'New Standard' models, previously two identical ranges of instruments, marketed under one name – 'Imperial Besson'.<sup>926</sup> Whilst practical, this was just the beginning of the end of the B&H brand name. Gradually all B&H brass models were merged into the Besson range and, by 1992, ironically the only instruments to retain the 'B&H' name were those in the '400 Series' – the imported budget priced range. B&H, once renowned for British-made instruments, had become merely the title of a group of companies abroad, a name that was lost forever when the company rebranded as 'Besson' in 2001.

The appointment of Michael Boxford as the new chief executive of B&H was a brave but perhaps necessary move. His purchase of the Buffet Crampon Group and aggressive marketing approach enabled B&H to keep up with the world market by giving the company a strong foothold in Japan, N. America and Europe. However, the acquisition came at a high price. His sale of the company's assets to fund the purchase left the company undercapitalised and vulnerable, and ultimately unable to cope with the later financial challenges in 1997 and 2000, that led to the company's demise.

### 8.3 Imports

From the 1980s an increased number of wind instruments were manufactured abroad for B&H by companies in Czechoslovakia, Germany, Taiwan, Pakistan and the USA, where labour costs were cheaper.<sup>927</sup> These instruments, in spite of being made overseas, were stamped B&H or Besson. Most imported instruments had previously been made in Czechoslovakia and Germany and marketed under the Lafleur name. The Zenith Mk III trumpet was replaced by the 437 B ♭ trumpet, and this and the 438 B ♭ and C trumpet, advertised for export only, were imported from Germany.<sup>928</sup> The '400 Series' trumpet, trombone and

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<sup>926</sup> Brass models offered were Regent, Imperial Besson and Sovereign. B&H Group, *Boosey & Hawkes Brass* (1982): AMPC.

<sup>927</sup> Appendix 12.i.

<sup>928</sup> B&H (MI) Ltd., *Recommended Retail Price List* (August 1981): AMPC.

cornet were made in Taiwan. Horns were imported, with the 'Regent', a compensating double instrument in B ♭ and F, from France (available until 1982), and several full double rotary models made in Czechoslovakia by Josef Lidl and by Gerhard Schneider in Germany; the latter were discontinued during the late 1980s.<sup>929</sup> Bugles were made in Pakistan, and the '600 Series' trumpet and trombone were imported from the USA. All the Besson and B&H top range trumpets and flugel horns were replaced by the American-made F. Besson 'Meha' and 'Brevette' ranges owing to the growing demand in America for pre-World War II French Besson trumpets. The 'Meha' models, originally named for Auguste Besson's granddaughter, were manufactured in America by Kanstul for B&H Buffet Crampon Inc. in Long Beach, Los Angeles from January 1982.<sup>930</sup>

## 8.4 Factory practices

In spite of a number of new manufacturing developments at the Edgware factory, B&H, with its now rather outdated plant, did not stand comparison with the image presented by the highly efficient and mechanised American and Japanese companies. B&H recognised this, and in the early marketing literature for the Group, they adopted an attitude of retrospective pride, setting their focus on craftsmanship and making instruments by hand. They harked back to the time when the individual companies of Boosey and Hawkes were held in high esteem, supplying good quality and reliable instruments to customers throughout the Empire and the world. B&H presented themselves as pioneers in the industry, and as responsible for establishing high standards, stating that

*for 150 years B&H has been a great name in music. Since long before the Japanese learnt Western skills or America introduced mass production to the world, B&H have set the standards by which fine musicians judge brass and woodwind instruments.*<sup>931</sup>

The company continued to emphasise the old values held during the Blaikley era at B&Co.: the 'quality of materials and craftsmanship, continuing collaboration with top

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<sup>929</sup> However, Schneider fulfilled occasional contracts until the early 1990s. Personal communication Tim Barrett.

<sup>930</sup> "Recreating the Renowned French Besson Trumpet," *Music Trades*. May 1983.

<sup>931</sup> B&H Group, *New Musical Partnership* (1981).



musicians, the constant striving after excellence, the attention to every detail from mouthpiece to bell, the multiple inspection and quality control'. In addition, B&H highlighted and illustrated the use of modern technology and science to achieve precision and perfection with the instruments that they manufactured described as 'made by perfectionists for perfectionists'.<sup>932</sup> Although many of the manufacturing techniques mentioned, such as dimpling and hydraulic expansion, freeze bending, and processes using numerically controlled machine tools had already been in use for some years, new technology using computers, lasers and holography was employed, under the direction of chief designer and technical manager Richard Smith, to aid acoustic research and facilitate design. According to the company literature the research and development team used electronic equipment to determine physical features of materials and instruments; this enabled scientifically exact prototypes to be made. These prototypes were then tested in controlled experiments for developing models.<sup>933</sup> Most of these designs were predominantly for brass band instruments and trombones, which were where the biggest market for Edgware-produced instruments lay.

## 8.5 Brass instrument models

Throughout the history of manufacturing at B&H the company maintained strong links with the brass band and contesting tradition, and the large proportion of instruments that the company made for bandsmen continued into the 1980s and 1990s. In 1980 the company that ran the National and European brass band championships at the Albert Hall, Band Promotions Limited,<sup>934</sup> was experiencing financial difficulties. B&H, who were keen to strengthen links with bands, stepped in and formed a company, B&H Band Festivals Limited, which gave sponsorship to the 'European' championships<sup>935</sup> and subsequently from 1981 staged the National Brass Band Championships. *The British Bandsman* stated,

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<sup>932</sup> B&H Group, *Brass* (1982).

<sup>933</sup> Ibid. and 1988/1989 pamphlets, B&H (MI) Ltd, *Boosey & Hawkes Brass Range* (c.1984): AMPC; B&H (MI) Ltd, *B&H Brass: Background Brass. Besson London* (c.1995): AMPC.

<sup>934</sup> Alf Hailstone, *The British Bandsman Centenary Book: A Social History of Brass Bands* (Egon, 1987). p.254.

<sup>935</sup> Bill Martin had just been appointed Special Projects Director at B&H. Ibid. p.254. A company B&H Band Festivals Ltd. was registered on 28/10/80. <http://companycheck.co.uk/company/01525003> Accessed 25/08/2013.

*In doing this, as in restoring the Royal Opera House after the war, the company is moved by the need to maintain a British musical institution as the acknowledged leader in its field. B&H believes that any such championships should be non-profit-making and the representatives of the band movement should be given a voice in their organisation.*<sup>936</sup>

In taking on the championships B&H took on outstanding debts of around £67,000.<sup>937</sup>

After the formation of The B&H Group, B&H offered three main ranges of brass instruments, the high quality 'Sovereign 900 Series', the mid-range '700 Series' which was branded 'Imperial Besson' and the '600 Series' – the old Regent models. The old Regent/Westminster-type brass models continued to be available until about 1984, but from August 1981 these were phased out and all mid-range Emperor/Concord instruments discontinued.<sup>938</sup> These were replaced by a whole new range of Regent II instruments which had been developed by May 1982. Other lines available were the imported high class F. Besson and budget-priced '400 Series' of instruments.

The top of the range '900 Series' was designed to cater for the demand from professional players for large-bore instruments. B&H described the instruments as having 'bore configurations to match the recent brass band trend for the growth of a much bigger sound'. In addition, the tenor horn and baritone both had newly developed tapering mouthpipes to aid the acoustic quality of the instruments.<sup>939</sup> From 1995 the bore sizes that had been detailed as medium and large were noted in the catalogues as medium-large and large, although the dimensions remained exactly the same. These altered descriptions of bore sizes indicates that, whilst providing well designed instruments that worked efficiently, B&H were attempting to appeal to what players thought they wanted, i.e. large bore instruments. This was based on the general assumption (that has no real scientific foundation) by players that a wider bore gives 'less resistance'.

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<sup>936</sup> *The British Bandsman* (17/01/1981). Bill Martin was Managing Director until he retired in 1989. From 1995 B&H relinquished management of the championships but retained ownership. B&H continued to pledge £25,000 *per annum*. Roy Newsome, *The Modern Brass Band: From the 1930s to the New Millennium* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006). p.228.

<sup>937</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>938</sup> Appendix 12.ii.

<sup>939</sup> B&H Group, *Besson 900 Series 'Sovereign', Tenor Horn and Baritone Leaflet* (1988): AMPC.

Many of the new '900' and '700' models contained instrument parts made of durable synthetic materials. These were employed mainly in the production of the valves; Delrin, a strong, low friction plastic, was used for making valve guides as it was quieter and harder wearing than metal<sup>940</sup> and Monel, a corrosion resistant nickel/copper alloy which was hard wearing, was used rather than nickel plate on valve pistons.<sup>941</sup> From 1995 lower costing stainless steel was also used for valves.<sup>942</sup> The tops of valve casings were built up to allow a release of air pressure and prevent a whistling sound during rapid valve action,<sup>943</sup> and valve pistons were honed accurately 'to a tolerance of 0.005mm' and then were 'hand-lapped within precision machine-reamed casings.' Besides promoting these modern materials and processes in the catalogues, B&H highlighted some of the design features of the past, such as valve springs made of phosphor-bronze which had been used since Blaikley's time, and the rolling and soldering of the rims of bells over brass wire for added strength; this technique had been used regularly by B&Co. for strengthening military band instruments. However, the company now asserted that it also prevented unwanted rim vibration.<sup>944</sup>

B&H stated that instruments in the '900' and '700' range were developed to give superb matching from mouthpiece through to bell and that the design of the mouthpipe was 'crucial'.<sup>945</sup> The importance of the design of the mouthpipe was one of the discoveries that Richard Smith made in his research, which he has since pursued further in his own company, Smith Watkins.<sup>946</sup> The '900 Series' instruments were supplied with Denis Wick mouthpieces and the '700 Series' with 'the latest Besson mouthpieces'.<sup>947</sup> The 'Sovereign' range continued to be developed and produced throughout the 1980s and 1990s. In 1979 B&H had offered thirteen 'Sovereign' models; however, the number available increased to 17 in about 1984 and to 20 in 1995. Some instrument designs were replaced, others were added.

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<sup>940</sup> For example in B&H (MI) Ltd, *Background Brass. Besson*. (c.1995). Delrin is a strong engineering plastic that slides easily, absorbs little moisture and machines well.

<sup>941</sup> For example B&H Group, *Besson Tubas* (c.1989): AMPC. Monel is an alloy composed of nickel 65-70%, copper 20-29%, and iron and manganese 5%.

<sup>942</sup> For example B&H (MI) Ltd, *U.K. Price List. July 1995*: AMPC.

<sup>943</sup> B&H Group, *Besson Tubas*. (c.1989).

<sup>944</sup> B&H (MI) Ltd, *Background Brass. Besson*.

<sup>945</sup> Ibid.

<sup>946</sup> <http://www.smithwatkins.com/aboutus2.html> Accessed 13/05/2015.

<sup>947</sup> B&H (MI) Ltd, *Background Brass. Besson*.

In 1980 the medium bore 'Sovereign' 923 cornet replaced the 920,<sup>948</sup> and in 1984 the once popular large-bore 921 (introduced in 1976; see Section 7.8.1) was succeeded by perhaps one of B&H most successful cornet models, the 'Sovereign' 928. With evolving styles of playing, the 921 cornet had ceased to be the instrument of choice of the leading British brass band players, many of whom preferred models by Bach, Getzen and Courtois. In 1983 Richard Smith was asked to design an instrument that would appeal to British players, and after performing a series of tests on a selection of models and prototypes using principal cornettists, he produced the 928, which is still included in Besson's catalogue today.<sup>949</sup> According to B&H, the new design enabled the production of a 'rounder and more mellow sound than its smaller bore sister model, the 927', which was designed for soloists. The larger bore and bell flare of the 928 required greater diaphragmatic support and stamina than other models, and was often used by section players in a band seeking 'a homogeneous solid cornet sound'.<sup>950</sup> Although B&H attributed the vibrancy of the Besson cornet tone to the 'special manufacturing process for the bell which minimises the number of annealing treatments required and thus preserves [...] the consistency of the original metallurgical structure', Smith strongly refutes this.<sup>951</sup>

In 1994 the National Lottery started in Britain, and during the mid-1990s many bands applied for and received lottery funding to buy new instruments. This led to a sudden increase in demand for complete band sets,<sup>952</sup> and consequently a six month waiting list for instruments built up. Short-term expansion of the company took place; night-shifts were introduced and production rose by 30%. However, the quality of instruments fell and problems ensued as most of the workers were

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<sup>948</sup> B&H (MI) Ltd, *B&H Sovereign Brass*.

<sup>949</sup> A series of blindfold tests was undertaken by eight top solo cornet players from leading brass bands to ascertain the tone and response characteristics that they preferred for a cornet. The first test compared cornets that were on the market at the time: Sovereign 921, Bach, Gezen, Courtois. The second series of tests was performed on six prototypes. The preferred prototype was manufactured as the Sovereign 928 model. Richard Smith, "Getting Technical. Design by Science," *Brass Herald*, pp.84-85 (February 2009). The 928 is still included in Besson's current brochure: 'The Sovereign 928 cornet has been described as the established benchmark against which all top line cornets are measured. Both amateur and professional players adore this instrument with its rich open sound, giving every cornet section a singing vibrant sound that makes bands so exciting to listen to.' Besson brochure 2014.

<sup>950</sup> B&H Group, *Besson Cornets* (c.1989): AMPC.

<sup>951</sup> Ibid. and personal communication with Richard Smith.

<sup>952</sup> 9 cornets, 1 flugel horn, 3 tenor horns, 2 baritones, 2 euphoniums, 2 E ♭ basses, 2 B ♭ basses, 3 trombones.

technicians and non-musicians.<sup>953</sup> Reports in the press and on the BBC programme *Watchdog* criticised the Edgware factory for being antiquated and the company for having poor quality control. They outlined and spread awareness of unsightly damp patches appearing on brass instruments that had been sold.<sup>954</sup> Owing to the adoption of a new manufacturing process, moisture had been getting trapped in the joints when instrument parts were soldered together, and this was causing dark stains to appear under the lacquer months after instruments had been purchased. Metallurgy experts were consulted to rectify the problem.<sup>955</sup> Because of this and difficulties with sticky valves, many instruments were returned to the factory for repair, costing the firm much time and money. B&H had been driven by the commercial sales side of business, and the boom years led to complacency and lack of quality control.<sup>956</sup>

After the bad publicity about the poor quality of their instruments, B&H introduced new 'Prestige' models above the 'Sovereign' range and regained favour by their improved attention to detail and quality control. Although the 'Sovereign' 928 and 927 were popular cornet models, development of the 'Prestige' cornet, aided by Roger Webster of Black Dyke Mills Band, commenced in 1999.<sup>957</sup> It was launched in 2001. Webster endorsed the instrument and was quoted saying 'the idea of a free blowing cornet coupled with the much sought after Besson sound was to many a dream.'<sup>958</sup> A detailed review described the 'Prestige' as a high quality instrument, and considered that the brave decision by B&H to get rid of a proven popular model was overdue and most welcome as 'Boosey were running behind the game' and that 'the major developments on the design have lead to big improvements and put the "Prestige" back on the top of a very competitive pile.'<sup>959</sup>

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<sup>953</sup> Personal communication with Tim Barrett (08/10/13).

<sup>954</sup> "Buffet Picks up Besson and Closes Uk Operation," *Music Trade News* (01/04/2006).

<sup>955</sup> Andrew Clark, "Rising Damp Hits Boosey Profits," *Daily Telegraph* (20/01/2000).

<sup>956</sup> Personal communication with Tim Barrett (08/10/13).

<sup>957</sup> Roger Webster, "Besson Prestige Cornet," *Allegro* (March 2002).

<sup>958</sup> John Myatt, *Catalogue. 2001-2002*: [http://myatt.co.uk/art\\_012.htm](http://myatt.co.uk/art_012.htm) Accessed 21/01/2009.

<sup>959</sup> 4barsrest.com, *Review of the New Besson 'Prestige' Be2028* (12/09/2001): <http://www.4barsrest.com/reviews/products/inst004.asp> Accessed 23/04/14. The 'Prestige' cornet was given an excellent review and scored 89%. However, Smith-Watkins 'Professional' model, which received a 'Millenium Products Award' in 1999, was given an outstanding review, scoring 93%, and was commended to brass band players. 4barsrest.com, *Review of the Smith-Watkins 'Professional' Bb Cornet* (03/10/2001): <http://www.4barsrest.com/reviews/products/inst005.asp> Accessed 23/04/14.

'Sovereign' trumpets continued in production until the mid-1980s, after which they were replaced by the new F. Besson 'Meha' range of professional models in an attempt to compete with companies such as Gezen, Yamaha and Bach.<sup>960</sup> The instruments were described as having 'an evenly tempered scale, even resistance between registers and the full commanding timbre unique to the F. Besson during its long and distinguished history.' Many parts of the instruments were handcrafted and assembled by hand; the valves, which were made of monel, were hand-lapped and the bell was hammered by hand.<sup>961</sup> At first four models were produced: medium-large bore B ♭, large bore B ♭, medium-large bore C, and large bore C.<sup>962</sup> By 1988 the range had been increased to include B ♭ models in three different bore sizes, a C trumpet, a D/E ♭ trumpet, B ♭ piccolo trumpet and flugelhorn plus a 'Brevette' flugelhorn, with a smaller bore.<sup>963</sup> In 1992 Besson introduced the new middle range 'International' trumpet; as with the 'Sovereign' instruments, it was described as having a medium-large bore despite having the same dimensions of instruments previously detailed as having a medium bore (11.68mm / .460"), probably to appeal to players' preference for instruments with larger bores.<sup>964</sup> A new 'Sovereign' 947 model took over from the 945 from 1993.<sup>965</sup>

During the 1980s and 1990s B&H, having discontinued some of their earlier well-established trombone models, introduced a number of new ones.<sup>966</sup> The medium-bore 'Sovereign' 937 B ♭ trombone, designed for band and jazz players, was first offered in August 1980, but was only continued for a few years, and during the mid-1980s the 930 B ♭ and 932 B ♭ / F symphonic models were replaced by new large-bore designs: the 942 in B ♭ and 944 B ♭ / F with trigger and rotary valve. These were marketed as 'the result of extensive research and design work', and as

<sup>960</sup> 906 'Studio' and 907 'Symphonic' models last appeared in extant catalogues in c.1984. B&H (MI) Ltd, *Brass Range*, c.1984." According to Richard Smith, the F. Besson instruments were forced onto the UK at a time when the Sovereigns 906 and 907 trumpets were doing well. Smith did blind tests on trumpets for the Musical Instruments board which put the Sovereigns at the top, Bach etc in the middle and the Bessons at the bottom. As a result he left B&H in 1985 and set up his own company. Personal communication with Richard Smith.

<sup>961</sup> B&H Group, *F. Besson* (April 1988): AMPC.

<sup>962</sup> *Recreating the Renowned French Besson Trumpet* (1983).

<sup>963</sup> B&H Group, *F. Besson* (1988).

<sup>964</sup> 'International' 712 and 713 in B ♭, 714 in C. B&H (MI) Ltd., *U.K. Price List*. 1995.

<sup>965</sup> B&H, *Boosey & Hawkes Group Catalogue* (1993): AMPC.

<sup>966</sup> The 933 B ♭ & F tenor, and 935 G&D models were discontinued at the end of the 1970s, and the 'Symphonic' large bore (13.89mm) 'Sovereign' 930 B ♭ and 932 B ♭ / F tenor trombones during the second half of the 1980s.

manufactured using ‘the latest technology – computerised bell-spinning, controlled temperature annealing and automatic polishing’.<sup>967</sup>

In the 1990s B&H introduced additional models – a new medium bore 940 B ♭ trombone (not to be confused with the previous 940 double trigger bass instrument), the 943 bass with in-line double rotor, and the dual-bore 945 ‘Symphony’ B ♭ /F.<sup>968</sup> In 1997 new ‘Sovereign’ tenor 944 and bass 943 trombone models, which included the Hagmann ‘free-flow’ valve, were brought out. This valve, developed in 1990 by René Hagmann, a brass repairer and acoustician in Geneva, improved the air-flow in the instrument without altering the sound.<sup>969</sup> According to retailer John Myatt, the 944 and 943 were a great improvement on the old models, and in 1998 they were selling well against the competition,<sup>970</sup> which at this time were instruments by American makers Bach, Conn, and King, and British maker Michael Rath.<sup>971</sup> This viewpoint was shared in 2001 by professional trombonist Nick Hudson. Hudson stated in his favourable review of the new large bore ‘Sovereign’ BE 944R B ♭ /F trombone that he considered the quality of instrument manufacture had greatly improved over the previous ten to fifteen years, resulting in at least six manufacturers who produced excellent quality instruments; however, he considered that Besson were making a big impression with their latest range of large-bore ‘Sovereign’ trombones, and added that ‘players in the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, The Philharmonia, Black Dyke Band, Williams Fairey Band plus a number of high profile European orchestras have chosen to ‘Buy British’.<sup>972</sup>

Basses were the last instruments to be added to the ‘Sovereign’ range in 1983, and the old ‘Imperial’ (‘700’ Series) models, which remained popular amongst players, were gradually discontinued or upgraded. The 780 EE ♭ and 790 BB ♭ Monster ‘Imperial New Standard’ models were discontinued in 1981, whilst the new 981 EE ♭ concert model, the 982 EE ♭ and 992 BB ♭ ‘Sovereign’ instruments replaced the 782 EE ♭ and 792 BB ♭ ‘Imperial Besson’ instruments. The 982 was

<sup>967</sup> B&H, *Besson Sovereign Trombones* (c.1988). AMPC

<sup>968</sup> B&H, 1993 catalogue: AMPC; B&H (MI) Ltd., *U.K. Price List*. 1995.

<sup>969</sup> <http://www.trombone.ch/> Accessed 23/12/14.

<sup>970</sup> John Myatt, *Catalogue 1998-1999*: [http://myatt.co.uk/art\\_989.htm](http://myatt.co.uk/art_989.htm) Accessed 23/12/2014.

<sup>971</sup> Personal communication with Arnold Myers.

<sup>972</sup> Nick Hudson, *Review of Boosey & Hawkes Sovereign 944r Bb/F Trombone* (08/03/2001): <http://www.4barsrest.com/reviews/products/inst001.asp> Accessed 30/12/2014.

the same as 981, but with a narrower mouthpipe bore for a brighter tone and the original Besson design 'high position' mouthpipe, which made it more suitable for parade use. All three models had four valves and larger 19" bells.<sup>973</sup> The development of 'Sovereign' basses had been in progress for some years, with models at the design and prototype stage as early as 1977; the early prototypes which were sold were marked 'Imperial'.<sup>974</sup>

The general trend continued towards large bore instruments, and in 1988 a new large bore bass, the 784 EE  $\flat$  with four valves, was added to the '700 Series' basses, designed as an intermediate instrument for students before progressing to a modern compensating bass. In 1995 B&H offered only nine bass models (of which five were compensating), far fewer than in B&Co.'s 1892 catalogue a century before, which included fourteen upright and eleven circular bombardons and contra-basses. In 2001 the '700 Series' was renamed 'Besson International', and the 'Sovereign' range redesigned. Professional player Simon Gresswell reviewed the BB  $\flat$  bass BE994 in 2002. He praised its build-quality, tone quality and easy response, but asserted that, although B&H had claimed in their sales literature it had 'perfect intonation', players found there was a major problem in that the instrument was not in tune with itself. He considered that with time and consultation with 'top quality tuba players' this problem could be overcome, commenting that 'it isn't an impossible job, but one that should be undertaken'.<sup>975</sup> Once again B&H were suffering criticism for their unnecessary manufacturing inadequacies, owing to their lack of concern for craftsmanship and quality control and to their on-going focus on commerce and production. Gresswell remarked that the company's endeavour to follow the trend for designing and making instrument models with increasingly large bore sizes in order to produce a bigger tone and greater projection of sound was at the expense of earlier instrument models, which enabled more variation of tone quality. Gresswell considered that

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<sup>973</sup> B&H, *Brass Section Price List. August 1983*: AMPC; B&H (MI) Ltd., *Background Brass. Besson* (c.1995).

<sup>974</sup> Appendix 12.iii: Interview between Sandy Blair and Arnold Myers.

<sup>975</sup> 4barsrest.com, *Review of Sovereign Bbb Bass Be994* (05/11/2002): <http://www.4barsrest.com/reviews/products/inst008.asp> Accessed 31/12/2014.



*the blueprint of a great tuba has to be the old Besson Imperial model, which had ideal balances, a lovely sound (small by today's standards, but one that could be developed if you had a sound technique) and was always in tune. Perhaps the move to bigger bores and the striving to create instruments that can wake the dead when giving full rein has meant that some of these qualities have been lost, and this is a huge pity. It is something of a misguided philosophy just to create bigger instruments by increasing the bore to try and get a bigger sound. More often than not it's the person behind the instrument that can make all the difference.*<sup>976</sup>

## 8.6 Further expansion and acquisitions

During the 1990s B&H continued to expand their product range and strengthen their assets. According to Tim Barrett, Sales and Marketing Manager at B&H at this time, the company, under Managing Director David Humphreys, saw itself as leading the industry with Europe as the central hub of operations, driven by B&H in London. B&H had become a sales company that manufactured, whereas Buffet and the other European companies were considered to be excellent manufacturers but not as sophisticated as London in sales and marketing terms.<sup>977</sup> After the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 East German and Czech companies were struggling under privatisation, so B&H started looking for alternatives to this market outside Europe. During the 1990s the Chinese market was opening up and in January 1994 B&H purchased the largest manufacturer of stringed and fretted instruments in Germany, Karl Höfner; one of the attractions of this acquisition was that the company had set up a 'wholly foreign-owned enterprise' (WFOE) for sales in China, thus enabling new trade links for B&H. B&H also attempted unsuccessfully to buy Paxman horns.<sup>978</sup> The further acquisition of Rico, a Californian-based manufacturer and distributor of reeds and mouthpieces, followed in August 1996.<sup>979</sup> The purchase of Höfner and of Rico proved to be highly successful, and Rico in particular was responsible for increased profits and rising share prices.

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<sup>976</sup> Ibid.

<sup>977</sup> Personal communication with Tim Barrett.

<sup>978</sup> Appendix 12.iv: Personal communication between Gary Ray and John Webb.

<sup>979</sup> Tom Stevenson, "Boosey & Hawkes Buys Rico for Pounds 17.9m," *Independent* (07/08/1996).

In 1997 production at Höfner expanded and was relocated from Bubenreuth to their newer factory at Hagenau in Bavaria, which had been enlarged and modernised.<sup>980</sup> The B&H Group also entered into a business partnership with a brass manufacturing company in India, Nadirali Band Instruments Private Ltd., which was then renamed B&H Musical Instruments Private Ltd. In expanding manufacture to companies abroad, B&H, like other multinational firms were making a saving on labour costs. Instruments from the Indian factory were first introduced into the UK in 2001. These instruments are not to be confused with the poor quality fake Besson instruments stamped 'Bessons' that were made in India and have been found for sale in Britain since the late 1990s.

The purchase of Rico provided B&H with the opportunity that they were looking for to increase the Group's involvement in the large American market. The expectation that B&H would benefit from Rico's position, reputation and market standing by improving the firm's stature and profit was proven in the long run. At the outset Richard Holland, Chief Executive of B&H, saw the purchase of Rico for £17.9 million from its founders, the Knaub family, as 'an excellent opportunity' to expand the musical instruments division. He considered that the 'significant international strength' that B&H held should help Rico's sales outside the US, and that Rico's strong position in North America would 'create further opportunities for the group.'<sup>981</sup> Rico was a leading and highly successful brand, the largest clarinet and saxophone reed manufacturer in the world, with reed plantations in France, California and Argentina, and control of the cane harvests in Spain. Its purchase caused B&H shares to rise dramatically to their highest point in five years.<sup>982</sup>

## 8.7 Demise

The acquisition of Rico proved to be a sound move for B&H; during the first half of 1997 operating profits for the instrument division increased by 75% to

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<sup>980</sup> "New Company with Legendary Brands, the Music Group Combines the Instrument Making Guild Traditions of Europe with Innovative Marketing," *Music Trades* (February 2004).

<sup>981</sup> Stevenson, "B&H Buys Rico."

<sup>982</sup> Shares rose by 53p to 718p, to the highest point in five years. Shares had been valued at 131p in 1991. Stevenson reported: 'the shares have outperformed the market by a huge margin as investors woke up to the attractions of a unique investment.' Ibid.

£2.66m in spite of the rising pound, and the share value was high.<sup>983</sup> However, success was short-lived. The decision of a major shareholder, the American publishing firm Carl Fischer, to sell their 43% share in B&H on the death of Walter Connors their owner left much uncertainty in the future of the company. London stock market regulations stipulated that the purchaser of Fischer's shares was obliged to make an offer for the whole B&H company. Take-over talks with prospective buyers took place over six months and cost the B&H Group £570,000.<sup>984</sup> Speculation caused share prices to fluctuate wildly, even though the combined accounting figures for both the publishing and manufacturing divisions were good;<sup>985</sup> the first-half operating profits for 1997 were up at £3.4m in spite of a rising pound, whereas they had been £2.8m in 1996.<sup>986</sup> The situation was resolved in May 1998 when B&H purchased Carl Fischer's shareholding. The company had raised the sum of £33m by offering stock to 964,000 new and existing shareholders.<sup>987</sup>

Although 1999 profits were reported to be higher than previously, it was estimated that they were reduced by over a million pounds owing to the problems with the quality of instruments made at Edgware<sup>988</sup> (see Section 8.5). Disaster struck B&H in September 2000, when serious accounting irregularities were discovered in B&H Musical Instruments Inc., the US operations in Chicago. An accounting fraud by two of its senior management team left the company in serious financial difficulty.<sup>989</sup> The American company led by Jack Faas falsified ledgers to enhance sales figures. Instruments that were sent out from Edgware to America appeared in the ledgers as sold, although they were actually given out on hire purchase schemes, returned early, and sent back to be sold off secondhand. There were so many they were given a separate model number: such as cornets

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<sup>983</sup> Nearly half of the increase was from Rico. Lea Paterson, "Boosey & Hawkes Fails to Lift the Gloom," *Independent* 01/10/97.

<sup>984</sup> Companies interested in B&H publishing business were EMI, Sony and Polygram. Ibid.

<sup>985</sup> "Music Stalwart Puts Itself up for Sale," *BBC News* 12/10/2001.  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/1595414.stm> Accessed 31/12/14.

<sup>986</sup> However, owing to the strong pound and to costs incurred through restructuring in the German factories, operating profits were down to £1.51 million. Paterson, "B&H Fails to Lift Gloom."

<sup>987</sup> Wallace, *Publishing Story*. p.217.

<sup>988</sup> "Boosey & Hawkes Plays Right Tune," in *This is Money*:  
<http://www.thisismoney.co.uk/money/news/article-1572970/Boosey-Hawkes-plays-right-tune.html>,  
 21/03/2000 Accessed 23/12/14.

<sup>989</sup> Alistair Osborne, "Chicago Blues for Boosey," in *Telegraph* (13/09/2000).

NA723.<sup>990</sup> As a result of the irregularities, £15.4m of debt was written off and pre-tax losses of £14.4m for the year 2000 were recorded.<sup>991</sup> Until this incident, B&H had experienced a 14.2% rise in profits for the year to £2.66 million, compared with 1999 when profits reached £6.16 million.<sup>992</sup> Share prices dropped to their lowest for nine years.<sup>993</sup> B&H had breached their banking covenants, and were therefore forced to put the five acre Edgware factory site and 295 Regent Street up for sale to reduce the company's overall debt of £65.6m;<sup>994</sup> the company was valued at £29 million.<sup>995</sup> The sale of these premises in July 2001 increased the amount of money raised through the disposal of under-utilised assets to £17.8m, but this was not enough.<sup>996</sup> Thereafter, at every board meeting a vote was taken on whether the company could continue in business.<sup>997</sup> In America, B&H Musical Instruments Inc. restructured and moved its operations from Libertyville, Illinois to Sun Valley, California in order to share resources with Rico Reeds. Unfortunately the extreme financial problems caused by B&H Musical Instruments in America eclipsed the business success at B&H in Britain, where profits in the instrument manufacturing division were up 33% and publishing 10%.<sup>998</sup>

## 8.8 2001 relocation to Croxley Green

After the sale of the Edgware factory, which had been described by Richard Holland as 'dilapidated',<sup>999</sup> B&H rebranded itself as Besson & Co. and relocated brass production to a smaller, eight year old, leased building in Croxley Green,

<sup>990</sup> Personal communication with a former B&H employee.

<sup>991</sup> Inoakes, "Boosey & Hawkes Shaking the Blues Away," in *citywiremoney* (30/04/2001): <http://citywire.co.uk/money/boosey-and-hawkes-shaking-the-blues-away/a222809> Accessed 23/12/2014.

<sup>992</sup> Osborne, "Chicago Blues." According to a former B&H director the company's turnover at its peak in the mid-1990s was around £90m - £60m in the musical instrument division and £30m in publishing; however, the profit came from the publishing department and Buffet.

<sup>993</sup> Share prices dropped 55 to 147.5. Alistair Osborne, "Bad Vibes from Chicago Hit Boosey & Hawkes," *Telegraph* (17/11/2000).

<sup>994</sup> Philip Aldrick, "Boosey in Talks with Lenders after Account Irregularities," *The Telegraph* (01/05/2001).

<sup>995</sup> Osborne, "Bad Vibes."

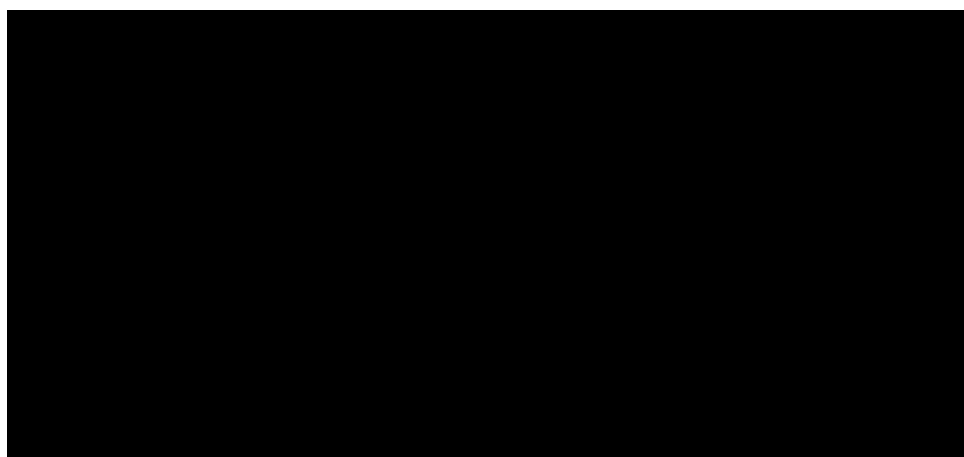
<sup>996</sup> "Boosey & Hawkes plc Disposal," *FE [Financial Express] Investigate* (29/06/2001). Accessed 31/12/2014. The five acre site was expected to sell for at least £4.7m. The B&H Edgware factory was sold to a division of Wimpey, McLean Homes North London. Robert Mulholland, "Boosey & Hawkes Move to Factory for the 21st Century," *BBW* (July/August 2001).

<sup>997</sup> Wallace, *Publishing Story*. p.218.

<sup>998</sup> Aldrick, "Boosey in Talks."

<sup>999</sup> Mulholland, "B&H Move."

Watford. Business commenced there in August 2001.<sup>1000</sup> The new premises were described in a contemporary report as having ‘the latest hi-tech machinery installed in a comfortable, compact modern building [...] a notable contrast with the old Edgware facility which had been looking run down and unloved for many years.’<sup>1001</sup> The new factory was considerably smaller than at Edgware, but according to Marketing Manager, Jan Osman, the premises offered extensive factory, warehouse and office space which enabled carefully planning of the factory layout, production and administration systems to the firm’s exact requirements, to create a facility to twenty-first century standards.<sup>1002</sup>



**Figure 31.** The factory at Croxley Green in a 2001 brochure (AMPC)

In effect, the factory move to Croxley Green in Watford marked the end of instrument making at B&H. No longer were instruments ‘manufactured throughout at their London works’<sup>1003</sup> by ‘experienced craftsmen in their green aprons’.<sup>1004</sup> They were assembled from parts made abroad, plated and finished by ‘experienced technicians’. This development was seen positively, as ‘just another sign that B&H are a multi-national corporation now, rather than a British instrument maker.’<sup>1005</sup> After the move the workforce was significantly reduced to only 120 employees; about 60 workers were made redundant. Instrument parts were machine made at a

<sup>1000</sup> It was reported that the move was due to take place on 27 July, and business to start the week of 13 August. *The British Bandsman* (30/06/2001). The B&H collection of historic instruments was boxed up in Edgware by Daniel Bangham and moved along with the archive to Croxley Green, where they were stored in a large open-plan area on the second floor which also housed the plan chests of blueprints and drawings. They remained there until taken to the Horniman Museum.

<sup>1001</sup> John Myatt, *Boosey & Hawkes Update* (01/09/2002): EUCHMI/L.

<sup>1002</sup> “The British Bandsman. (30/06/2001).

<sup>1003</sup> B&Co., 1902 catalogue.

<sup>1004</sup> B&H, 1951 brass catalogue.

<sup>1005</sup> All ‘Sovereign’ models and some of the ‘700 Series’ were produced at Croxley Green. Myatt, *B&H Update*.

new Schreiber factory in Markneukirchen (built at a cost of £3.5m) where labour costs were lower than in Britain.<sup>1006</sup> But, Richard Holland was either short sighted or in denial; even though there had been a drastic reduction in the British operations, he promised rather optimistically that 'whatever happens in the world of business, the manufacture of musical instruments in Watford is here to stay'.<sup>1007</sup>

In spite of the sales of the Edgware and Regent Street premises, and major reorganisation, B&H were still experiencing serious financial difficulties affected by the falling American markets, the costs involved in restructuring and relocating instrument manufacture to new factories and the repayment of loans. Therefore, in an attempt to try to reduce debt further, it was decided to sell Rico, the most profitable part of the group; B&H reported a loss of £1.6m for the first half year in 2001 compared with £465,000 profit the previous year, and the share price fell to its lowest for five years.<sup>1008</sup> On 8 October 2001 B&H received an unsolicited bid for £43m from the Music Sales Group led by a private equity firm – Graphite Capital.<sup>1009</sup> The bid was rejected by the board as it was considered to be too low and conditional, and plans for selling Rico separately were abandoned.<sup>1010</sup> Five days later B&H put the entire company up for sale, including Rico, which was included with the musical instrument manufacturing division.<sup>1011</sup> Manufacturing division profits had declined 3% during 2001 to £7.2m despite unaltered turnover.<sup>1012</sup> Final bids for the manufacturing company closed on 25 February 2002,<sup>1013</sup> and consequently exclusive discussions were entered into with Close Brothers Private Equity, which continued for some months before falling through.<sup>1014</sup> In August 2002 new negotiations commenced with Rutland Fund Management, a London-based investment company,<sup>1015</sup> and on 11 February 2003, sixteen months after having put itself up for sale, B&H plc sold the instrument

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<sup>1006</sup> Mulholland, "B&H Move."

<sup>1007</sup> "Buffet Picks up Besson."

<sup>1008</sup> The share price fell to 76p, whereas In August 1997 the stock had reached 1000p "Music Stalwart."

<sup>1009</sup> Philip Aldrick, "Steinway Quits Boosey Auction," *Telegraph* (13/02/2002).

<sup>1010</sup> "Music Stalwart."

<sup>1011</sup> Susie Measure, "Boosey & Hawkes Puts Itself up for Auction," *Independent* (13/10/2001).

<sup>1012</sup> Alistair Osborne, "Boosey & Hawkes in Sale Talks," *Telegraph* (01/05/2002).

<sup>1013</sup> The auction was run by Deutsche Bank. Interested equity groups included Close Brothers Private Equity, 3i and Graphite Capital. Steinway pulled out in early February. Gary Parkinson, "Equity Groups Make a Play for Boosey," *Telegraph* (25/02/2002).

<sup>1014</sup> Osborne, "B&H, Sale Talks."

<sup>1015</sup> Mary Fagan, "Boosey Nears Sale of Instruments Division," *Telegraph* (25/08/2002).

manufacturing division to The Music Group for £33.2 million.<sup>1016</sup> The Music Group was a joint venture formed between a management team of executives including Michael and Joachim Winter, Bill Carpenter the president of Rico, and Rutland Fund Management.<sup>1017</sup>

## 8.9 Conclusions

The demise of B&H during the last two decades of the twentieth century marked the end of large-scale manufacture of brass and woodwind instruments in Britain. The period was dominated by intensifying competition from companies abroad, and the firm was beset by financial insecurity. Many factors contributed to its decline, but poor leadership, and bad management set the company on a downward trend, which perhaps could have been avoided with clear-sighted leadership.

When Britain entered the Common Market in 1973 the country turned its focus towards being part of Europe and to becoming more competitive in European and global markets. B&H, like other British industries, were swept along into further expansion, and this continued in the 1980s and 1990s. The purchase by B&H of the Buffet Crampon Group gave the company a real opening into Europe but, although the acquisition helped to provide a consolidated European force against Japanese and American manufacturers, it came at a high price. The strength that B&H gained through reducing European competition and sharing resources and marketing outlets was undermined by the necessary sale of assets to finance the deal. Whilst this move was of short-term benefit, ensuring high productivity and financial turnover, it created a risk, leaving the company without collateral and therefore vulnerable to the catastrophic events to come.

The extension of B&H's business empire during the 1990s with its acquisition of a further two companies, the German stringed instrument makers Höfner and the American reed manufacturing firm Rico, expanded product lines, boosted profits and share prices, and raised the company's profile in America.

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<sup>1016</sup> Costs included almost £1m pension top-up, expenses for debt restructuring and around £2.5m in fees for Deutsche Bank and solicitors, Slaughter & May. Alistair Osborne, "Boosey Plucks £33.2m for Instruments" *Telegraph* (12/12/2003).

<sup>1017</sup> "New Company with Legendary Brands." The partnership comprised 15% ownership by the named executives, backed by 85% Rutland Fund Management. "Buffet Picks up Besson."

But again it seems that the firm's management, which still concentrated on expansion, complacently disregarded the importance of investing in the parent company. With B&H's attention firmly fixed on growth abroad, the Edgware factory became neglected, with out-dated plant, inefficient operations, mainly unskilled workforce and poor management. The corporate focus was on the European companies in the group – revitalising existing factories and building new ones. Little investment was made in the British firm and standards at Edgware continued to fall. The company's retrospective attitude, harking back to past craftsmanship and high quality instruments, was indicative of a company that was struggling to keep up with the efficient, modern factories and processes of rival firms. This decline could have been prevented by strong and perceptive leadership. However, with the rapid push of B&H to become a multi-national corporation and the constant changes in management hierarchy, the company lost sight of its core values and traditional customers.

As the number of wind models produced at Edgware continued to decline with the discontinuation of reed instrument manufacture and the merger of the B&H brass models into the Besson range, the number of instruments that the company produced with the B&H name diminished. Some models were replaced by foreign imports which eventually remained the only instruments to bear the stamp of B&H. B&H became a shell, the title used purely to represent the overall group of companies, with no obvious identity of its own as a manufacturer.

It was the decision by Carl Fischer in 1997 to sell their major shareholding in B&H that heralded a series of disastrous events and brought a brief period of success at B&H to an abrupt end. Costly takeover talks, uncertainty, and speculation caused a massive drop in share prices and led to B&H purchasing the Fischer shares in 1998. This was followed by a brass manufacturing problem at Edgware in 1999 which cost the company over a million pounds. However, in spite of these difficulties, the company as a whole was beginning to show good profits again. But the discovery of accounting inaccuracies at B&H Musical Instruments Inc. in America in 2000 had catastrophic consequences for the entire company, especially the British side of the business.

In order to reduce the overall debt incurred, B&H were forced to sell the Edgware site and Regent Street premises. Whilst it could be argued that had the



highly leveraged B&H had sufficient assets remaining, this situation could have been avoided, it might also be suggested that had better management controls been in place at the company, the accounting errors could have been prevented in the first place.

The new leased factory in Croxley Green was little more than an assembly, finishing and packing plant for instrument parts that were made in Germany. From here the B&H range of instruments ceased, and the company rebranded itself Besson. Just as the discontinuation of reed instrument making at Edgware in favour of the Buffet, Schreiber and Keilworth brands during the 1980s had marked the end of an era of British woodwind manufacture, the subsequent closure and sale of the 'Sonorous Works' marked the end of B&H's instrument division. The ownership by Rutland Fund Management of the group of companies that had comprised B&H was short-lived. The individual companies were systematically sold off and Besson, the sole remaining company, went into receivership in December 2005. B&H was ultimately a victim of its time – a period of cynical asset stripping and short-term gain.

# Chapter 9

## Conclusion

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### 9.1 Introduction

Now I return to the research question articulated at the beginning of this thesis: How did B&H come to be taken as both the symbol and sound of British band and orchestral music-making for so much of the twentieth century? In this final section I consider the answer to this question in relation to some of the major themes running through the previous chapters.

### 9.2 Changing markets

Throughout their existence Boosey and Hawkes and their associated companies were influenced by contemporary social, economic and political factors, all of which affected their production and therefore their fortunes. In an attempt to increase business they exploited market openings and opportunities to gain new custom, each firm competing to attain the greatest share of sales and highest profile amongst instrument manufacturers. The demand for particular types and quantities of instruments fluctuated over the years in response to altering markets, with the companies of Boosey and Hawkes providing instruments for players of all genres of music.

During the nineteenth century expanding trade, a strong economy and therefore higher wages in Britain led to an improved standard of living and increased leisure time, and these changes and the expansion of the railway network encouraged a rise in the popularity of concert-going and amateur music-making. As brass bands thrived and large orchestral forces were employed for many concerts, such as those at Crystal Palace, amateur and professional musicians were plentiful and the demand for wind instruments increased dramatically. However, it was the rapid growth in the number of military bands in the expanding British Empire that had the greatest effect on the instrument manufacturing industry in Britain. The attempt by foreign companies to gain British custom, with some selling directly from London branches, spurred British firms on

to establish instrument making workshops and extend their businesses in response to the demand. British firms wanted to claim their share of the market and win lucrative government contracts. Although Hawkes had commenced instrument manufacture somewhat later than Boosey, both companies quickly achieved high productivity and sales, with Boosey expanding into new premises in Frederick Mews and Hawkes, Denman Street. By the end of the century they had become two of the predominant wind instrument manufacturing companies in Britain.

Although sales to the military forces continued in quantity during the early twentieth century, orders for instruments for brass bands also remained a major part of trade. Both Boosey and Hawkes thrived, their growth and consequent success fuelled not only by this market, but also by the increasing demand from jazz and dance band players in Britain who were following the vogue for these types of music in America. The expansion of orchestral music in Britain at this time also had an effect on production, with some influence coming from the BBC through its widespread transmissions of music of all genres, and from the establishment of its own orchestras and bands.

During this period Boosey, who projected the image of a traditional, well-run company that took pride in its work, increased manufacture in its Frederick Mews factory, whilst Hawkes, with its direct, self-confident, modern approach, extended their works into additional premises in North London, including new electrically powered works in Highgate. This was obviously a profitable time for both companies, but especially for Hawkes, who in 1924 built their largest, 'up-to-date' factory – the 'Sonorous Works' – in Edgware.

Success continued until towards the end of the 1920s when the declining British economy and Depression severely affected all British industry, changing the fortunes of instrument manufacturing firms and resulting in some businesses failing to survive. Although trade in musical instruments was low during this period, companies continued production in order to retain skilled staff, but this resulted in the stockpiling of instruments. Many firms struggled, even though wages were lowered, the number of models produced was decreased and the cost of instruments reduced; Boosey and Hawkes were no exception.

It was the decision in 1930 by Leslie Boosey and Geoffrey Hawkes to amalgamate their businesses that enabled the unified company to gain a position of

strength and expand its business interests without competition from each other. By combining their customer base and responding to increasing musical activity in Britain, the company assumed dominance of the market and created a firm foundation on which they developed their musical empire.

From 1939 the upheaval of the Second World War brought new challenges. Trade restrictions, taxation, shortages of materials and the requisition of the Edgware factory and workforce for war work forced great changes on B&H. Instrument production was inevitably very low, but subsequently the company was quick to re-establish instrument manufacture and adopt mass production.

During the late 1940s and the 1950s, although there was sustained economic growth in Britain, home trade was subdued by a high rate of purchase tax, which unavoidably affected B&H. However, the advent of mass production coincided with a rapidly expanding market for low-priced student-grade instruments, and this had a dramatic effect on the output and profitability of B&H. At first the company concentrated on exports, with significant and increasing numbers of models sent particularly to North America. As home restrictions were relaxed, B&H established a niche market for these instruments in British schools, where instrumental music was considerably less advanced. B&H did much to encourage schools and education departments to increase the provision of instrumental lessons and practical music-making in class, and consequently they reaped the benefits from extensive sales for several decades.

From the 1950s, with mass-produced student models comprising the major part of factory output, B&H made comparatively few top-quality instruments for professional musicians. As contemporary trends towards large-bore models from abroad influenced professional players to adopt foreign instruments, the company lost many of its established professional customers, with horn and bassoon players generally choosing German-made instruments and classical and jazz brass players following the fashion for American models. This trend subsequently influenced bandsmen who, until the change-over of brass bands to low pitch in 1964, had been limited to obtaining instruments from B&H and Besson, the last remaining makers of high pitch models.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s B&H diversified their product lines in response to the demand for instruments for use in British schools, and for

electronic instruments and equipment as used by most popular groups and bands. The company turned its main attention to supplying these highly successful areas of the market, although perhaps to the detriment of its traditional areas of sales. By selling Hammond and Diamond organs and Leslie and Laney sound systems B&H continued to play a large part in supporting popular music culture. However, through their promotion of electronic and school instruments, the brand image that they presented changed; the company name increasingly became associated with instruments for education and popular music, and not the high-quality models and personal service expected by their long-established professional customers.

The entry of Britain into the Common Market in 1973 led British companies to focus on the European market place, and during the 1980s, like other British firms, B&H expanded their business by purchasing companies on the continent. This enabled them to contend in world markets against competition from America and Japan. In the 1990s another period of acquisitions and the creation of American subsidiaries further extended B&H's global reach, thus improving the overall profitability of the Group.

### **9.3 The changing corporate structure**

Over more than 150 years B&H and its antecedents underwent many changes in corporate structure, developing from small family-run workshops into, ultimately, a single multi-national and multi-faceted company. Spurred on in the second half of the nineteenth century by the threat of competition from foreign firms, the companies developed their businesses to take advantage of increasing global trade. However, the industry in Britain was considerably behind that on the continent, where some makers were producing very many instruments in large factories, and it never reached the same scale.

In response to the demand for instruments some British firms increased their resources by purchasing rival companies. Boosey's acquisition of Hudson's flute-making business in 1856 and Distin & Co. in 1868 enabled the company to increase manufacture immediately, and to take on large government contracts prior to extending their production to reed instruments in 1879. The company of Hawkes, established in 1858, seven years after Boosey had started making instruments, also expanded by acquisition, but not until later, when they purchased Schweizer's

musical instrument case business in 1893, Morton's tooling for oboe and bassoon making in 1902, and Lafleur & Co. at some point before 1917; however, their main focus appeared to be on the acquisition of larger factory premises.

British companies, albeit initially behind their foreign counterparts, introduced new manufacturing methods to complement the traditional hand-crafting techniques. Gradually firms moved from steam power to electricity, increasing their use of mechanisation and employing a more scientific approach to design and production. It appears that whilst Boosey moved with the times, using machinery for many processes, Hawkes, after building their 'electric works' in Highgate, may have been generally ahead of Boosey, perhaps influenced by new manufacturing techniques used by the Conn company in America.

The merger of B&H and relocation of B&Co. to the Hawkes 'Sonorous Works' in Edgware brought about great changes, not only in the use of personnel, but also in new factory practices, such as hydraulic expansion for saxophone manufacture. The business was restructured and product lines were integrated, and the newly formed firm, consisting of the two workforces, became the largest instrument manufacturing company in Britain.

The requisition of the Edgware factory and workforce by the government during the Second World War had a great impact on the structure and running of the company, with the new regime irrevocably altering the ethos and working processes at B&H. Factory space was reorganised for making aircraft parts and munitions, and engineers were appointed to take control of operations. The factory was re-equipped with heavy-duty machinery which advanced manufacturing methods far beyond those previously employed and unskilled workers were engaged as operators, including many women. British companies in other areas of industry, such as car and bicycle manufacture, were similarly affected and, like B&H, were left after the War with a legacy of mechanisation and changed work practices that had originated in the necessity to produce rapidly large numbers of aircraft and munitions. When after the War B&H had to re-invent its role as instrument manufacturer, these changes signalled the end of traditional wind-instrument making at the company.

The mass manufacturing techniques that were adopted at B&H brought about complete reorganisation of the factory and its staff, with increased

mechanisation coupled with a loss of skills leading to many hand-crafting processes being discontinued. Line and mass production utilised large forces of unskilled workers, and many craftsmen were placed in supervisory roles. The identity of B&H changed from that of a traditional business employing skilled craftsmen to one of a modern, progressive company led by engineers. Mass production incurred lower manufacturing costs, and therefore B&H focused on making high levels of low-priced products in order to compete with the growing competition from firms abroad, rather than on instruments of a high quality, handmade singly or in small batches.

The acquisition by B&H of Besson and Rudall Carte during the 1940s is reminiscent of imperial opportunism, and can be seen as the first stage in the development of the B&H empire. It strengthened the company's control of the market by removing competition and increasing its customer base and product range. Although the amalgamation with Besson was in fact a gradual and prolonged process over more than thirty years, the interest by B&H in Besson – the only British firm that provided serious competition to the newly formed company – is clear from only three months after the 1930 merger. As the alliance between the companies increased, Besson began to lose its autonomy, and although B&H presented the assistance they offered to Besson as being of mutual benefit, the advantages appeared to be weighted towards B&H who projected themselves as the dominant company. The relocation of the Besson works, as a separate company, to the Edgware factory in 1948 was a significant stage in the company's history, although it was to be another three years before the Besson production and workforce were integrated with those of B&H.

Whilst the Besson ranges of high-quality instruments were continued – thus retaining the company's established customers for many years – the hand-made high-quality flutes upon which Rudall Carte had built its reputation were discontinued, with the name applied instead to cheap mass-produced flutes and clarinets. This resulted in the loss of the famed Rudall Carte flute and its professional clientele as B&H abandoned traditional craft-orientated methods of instrument making in favour of mass production.

The move by B&H away from more time-consuming, more expensive traditional methods of manufacture was indicative of the company's attempt to

retain its share of the international market. However, throughout the second half of the twentieth century, B&H continued to be forced downmarket by competition from abroad, where manufacturing costs were lower than in Britain. B&H thus lost their focus on craftsmanship, innovation and quality instruments, turning instead towards marketing and sales. This, whilst characteristic of other sectors of British industry at this time, undoubtedly contributed to the company's demise.

## 9.4 Changing instrument design

The ethos and production practices of the individual companies of B&Co. and H&S were inevitably similar, and consequently the two firms underwent parallel development as they responded to the changes in demands and trends for particular instruments and models. Although the major developments in wind instrument design had already been made, both companies existed through times of great change with numerous designs and systems being developed in various keys and pitches. As models went out of fashion they were replaced. Neither Boosey nor Hawkes made any great invention, but both advanced their legacy by devising many improvements to instruments. David Blaikley was a notable figure in this field, and by his introduction of compensating pistons he particularly changed the design of low brass instruments.

Design and production at Boosey and at Hawkes were directly influenced by customer demand, with both companies providing instruments suitable for many different musical situations and clients. Good research and development practices were essential to successful business, and whilst models were often developed from the company's own previous designs or based on instruments by other makers, some were devised in collaboration with professional players. Besides making the ranges of instruments offered in their catalogues, both Boosey and Hawkes custom-made a small number of instruments for individual clients. Although both firms presented many models with 'extras' and with different finishes, in effect a much narrower selection of instruments was actually made. However, after the Second World War lines were reduced and fewer individual designs were produced.

While the use of machinery and precision tools for instrument making was nothing new, after World War II, it was the sheer scale of production at B&H that



evidenced a sudden change in the company's approach. Designs that had been drawn up during the War for making new models using the factory's newly-acquired resources were put into manufacture, and mass production commenced. Although mass-produced student-range models accounted for the majority of instruments that the company made, the development of new high-quality designs for professional orchestral players and for jazz and dance band musicians continued to be of great importance. B&H, which mainly manufactured French-style models, necessarily kept up with contemporary trends, and as players began to adopt large-bore instruments made by German and American companies, the company reflected these models in their newly developed designs in an attempt to retain their share of the market. However, despite B&H's efforts, many British players did not choose the company's models, preferring the foreign instruments on which they were based. It can be considered that a player's choice of instrument is influenced by a range of criteria, from the technical sophistication of the instrument and appearance, to fashion and peer pressure.

The consolidation of the B&H and Besson lines in the 1950s led to the introduction of models that were common to both names, and consequently this decreased the product range manufactured. Two distinct classes of instruments were developed – the high-quality hand-made 'Imperial' and the lower-end mass-produced 'Regent'-type models – yet although the former were promoted as hand-made they were increasingly mass or line-produced. The major new ranges of brass instruments introduced in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s targeted the brass band market which was thriving again after a depressed period. A few professional models were also designed for dance band musicians and for orchestral players, but manufacture of B&H reed instruments ceased in 1984 in favour of those made at other companies in the Group.

From the 1960s B&H increasingly acted as a dealer, buying in products to sell on. The growth of the company by assimilation of other brands may have been economically profitable, but over time the B&H brand became diluted, with the range of instruments and accessories that the company actually made diminishing. This perhaps signalled a turning point – the first stage of the firm's decline.

## 9.5 Globalisation and international markets

Swept along by the flourishing market in musical instruments at the height of the Empire, the individual companies of Boosey and Hawkes expanded and increased their sales outlets abroad. It could be argued that Boosey and Hawkes were international companies right from the start; from their early foundation both firms quickly became established in global trade, with their early prosperity coming from importing instruments and accessories from France and Germany for resale, and exporting instruments across the British Empire and to North America. In the same way that the British Empire developed to facilitate and increase global trade, B&H expanded their 'territories' to become the major British wind instrument manufacturing company competing in international markets.

The merger of Boosey and Hawkes in 1930 gave the unified company strength, which, once established, enabled them to seek new sales opportunities. The company reflected a certain Imperial ambition, and as the British Empire declined, the realm of B&H increased. At the end of World War II the diminishing colonial trade and international recession forced B&H to look for new markets, and they took advantage of trade restrictions in Europe by securing contracts for the export of mass-produced student models to North America. This move assured the company's success, raising its international sales to the highest levels yet, and increasing the proportion of instruments manufactured for overseas, ultimately to about two-thirds of factory output; these numbers continued to rise over the ensuing decades.

Although throughout these years Britain's imperial standing diminished, B&H clung on to their perceived status, projecting in their choice of many model names an image of Great Britain and the Empire, thus attaching a strong national identity to their products. This they used particularly to promote many of their instruments for export. However, whilst the Britishness of many products was emphasised by the use of English place-names and titles reminiscent of government and empire, some models were specifically given American-sounding names in order to appeal to the American market.

The shift of international trading patterns after the end of the War, with America and Japan assuming global industrial dominance, affected Britain's standing in world markets. Whereas the decimated post-war Japanese economy

benefited from financial aid from the United States and Japanese government intervention designed to stimulate growth in the private sector, Britain, impoverished from wartime expenditure, struggled both to repair its reduced financial position and remain competitive.

Although extensive economic reform in Britain led to the expansion of British businesses during the 1960s and 1970s, B&H reflected the general trend from manufacturing towards service industries. This move by B&H in favour of import, franchise and trading agreements was probably short-sighted. Whilst increased marketing through international dealership networks, coupled with a rapid rise in productivity, led to a sustained growth in overseas sales and enabled B&H to compete globally against rivals such as Yamaha in Japan and Selmer in America, it could be argued that the company neglected its core asset, the works in Edgware. It was driven towards short-term profits through product diversification and importation of cheap foreign instruments, all of which ultimately diluted the B&H brand.

By importing large numbers of instruments and accessories from countries around the world the company was able to extend their profit margin. Labour costs were generally lower abroad than in Britain, and thus B&H increasingly focused on buying in products and expanding their overseas manufacturing capacity. However, this diluted the B&H brand as their name became increasingly attached to cheap foreign imports as the Edgware-made models were gradually discontinued.

Although the focus by B&H on expansion and marketing may have generated growth in sales and increased productivity, with hindsight it could be argued that it demonstrated a lack of vision for the direction and success of the company. Whilst rival companies abroad managed to maintain high productivity and profitability, they also managed to retain a balance of good management, good quality control and professional customer care.

Although there was still a strong national concept of Great Britain and British industry after Britain's entry into the Common Market in 1973, as British firms amalgamated with European companies, many lost their identity, gradually ceding their autonomy to their foreign counterparts. World trade increased further in the 1980s and 1990s, with many international corporations becoming globalised, and B&H, driven to expand at all costs, seized every opportunity to build its empire,

acquiring firms and creating subsidiaries to open up international trade. As with the changing emphasis on certain countries and trading patterns of the British Empire, at B&H strategic shifts occurred in the importance of their associated companies.

Whilst the purchase by B&H of the French Buffet Crampon Group in 1981 demonstrated vision and was a successful move in combining European forces to counteract Japanese and American competition, their financial position was irrevocably weakened by the sale of assets to partially finance the deal; this made the company financially unstable, leaving it highly leveraged with few reserves, which rendered it vulnerable. From this point on B&H was walking a tightrope. However, in the 1990s the company continued to strengthen its global position with the further acquisitions of the German and American companies of Höfner and Rico; Höfner's WFOE facilitated new trade with China, and Rico consolidated involvement with the American market.

Thus, at this point in the company's history B&H demonstrated the characteristics of a business empire as outlined by Unoki (see Chapter 1.1). B&H can be seen as the dominant 'parent' company/'mother' country, with the individual companies of the Buffet Crampon Group, Höfner and Rico comprising subsidiary divisions spread like colonies around the world.

With the company directors' attention set on expansion and investment in the Group's factories abroad, the Edgware works became neglected and out-dated. The company literature harked back to the past, conveying an attitude of retrospective pride, craftsmanship and high-quality instruments, notwithstanding that few instruments were still hand-made and quality-control standards were falling. With poor management and lack of investment the company at Edgware struggled to keep up with the modern processes and factories of their competitors. British production declined as reed instrument making was discontinued in favour of the European brands – Buffet, Schreiber and Keilworth, and product lines were decreased by merging the B&H brass models with the Besson range. The B&H name was devalued, with only cheap foreign imported instruments bearing the B&H name-stamp. The 'parent' company lost its own identity, becoming merely a name representing the Group.

In 1997, although B&H's performance was highly profitable, a series of unfortunate events set them further on a downward trend. However, with better

long-term leadership and improved management strategies, such those adopted by Yamaha in Japan, these perhaps could have been avoided. The decision by Carl Fischer to sell their major shareholding in the company prompted costly takeover discussions and speculation about its future, causing a dramatic fluctuation in share prices. The situation was resolved in 1998 with B&H buying the Fischer shares but, with little financial underpinning, the company was left in a vulnerable position. A year later the company experienced another set-back when problems with a lacquering process used on brass instruments cost them over a million pounds and caused widespread bad publicity; nevertheless the situation was stabilised and profits started to rise. However, in 2000 the catastrophic accounting scandal at B&H Musical Instruments Inc. had far-reaching effects on the whole company and, in particular, on the British side of the business. The enforced sale of the Edgware factory site and 295 Regent Street to reduce the company's overall debt brought about the final decline of B&H. Even at this stage, with different financial management, the eventual demise of the company could perhaps have been avoided. However, by this time B&H were over leveraged and without collateral. The final acquisitions of Höfner and Rico, although seen as beneficial to the overall company, left it further exposed. The company's downfall was brought about by lack of long-term vision and the financial mismanagement that had prevailed over a number of years – leadership that had endorsed acquisition and short-term gain, that had left B&H vulnerable and ultimately with insufficient reserves to survive a major turbulence (which is why the accounting scandal proved to be fatal).

A comparison with Yamaha is instructive. Whereas Yamaha, from World War II onwards, diversified their manufacturing into markets beyond musical instruments,<sup>1018</sup> thus reducing their dependency on one area of commerce, B&H concentrated on diversifying their acquisitions at the expense of manufacturing top-quality instruments. Whilst Yamaha would appear to have pursued manufacturing excellence across its group of companies, B&H failed to maintain a good balance between increased productivity and product quality.

When in 2001 the British works moved with a reduced workforce to a leased factory building in Croxley Green and rebranded as Besson, the new operations became little more than an assembling plant for imported parts from the German factory; instruments were then finished and packed for dispatch. The closure of the

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<sup>1018</sup> [http://www.yamaha.com/about\\_yamaha/corporate/history/](http://www.yamaha.com/about_yamaha/corporate/history/) Accessed 30/06/16.

Sonorous Works – the factory that had for many become a symbol of British music – in effect marked the end of an era of British wind instrument manufacture. Whilst the move to Croxley Green and re-branding to Besson was obviously a marketing device, recalling the reputation of Besson's fine quality instruments, it might possibly have presented B&H with an opportunity to change its ethos and return to manufacturing high-quality, expensive instruments. However, it is unlikely that, by this time, they could have made the necessary changes in outlook, nor manage to hire quickly enough (or even attract) the specialist craftsmen required.

Although the Besson factory and the B&H name continued in diminished form for another two years, the ignominious sale of B&H's instrument manufacturing division to The Music Group in 2003 (which marked the official end of the B&H marque) led almost immediately to the systematic disposal of each of the remaining individual companies.

B&H, a British business which had built its empire on the foundations of craftsmanship, skill and innovation, which had survived the hardships of the Depression and wartime upheaval, and moved with the times to embrace modern mechanised manufacturing processes, achieved much success before its untimely decline and demise. For over a century and a half B&H shaped the sound of music in Britain and throughout the British Empire; it was, however, a music business empire on which the sun finally set.

Ultimately, however, it could be observed that the rise and fall of the fortunes of B&H reflected those of the Empire itself, albeit over a slightly different time scale. Just as Britain rose from its roots as a small island nation to become the world's greatest trading power, so B&H grew from its traditional company origins into a global musical trading organisation. Both over-reached themselves, and both did not survive massive historical changes, political or economic, as the case may be. Nevertheless, both the B&H company and the Empire it served made profound impressions on different cultures around the globe, the legacies of which can still be seen and heard today.

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