

**THE BOYS' BRIGADE
BIRMINGHAM BATTALION**



OBJECT

The advancement of Christ's Kingdom among Boys and the promotion of habits of Obedience, Reverence, Discipline, Self-respect and all that tends towards a true Christian manliness.

‘‘The Eighth’’

SOUVENIR BOOKLET

75 years

1906 - 1981

Foreword



In an attempt to write a foreword for this Souvenir brochure, I thought with the wealth of material contained in our 21st Brochure, our Golden Jubilee Brochure, hundreds of photographs at my disposal, and an active knowledge of the Company during the last 30 years, it would be a relatively easy task, how wrong I was.

Reading reflections of D. G. Barnsley, S. E. Barnes, H. L. Hall, "Bert" Gabb, W. L. Hill to mention just a few, no number of words printed could do justice to a recognition of the dedicated service of the men, boys, friends and parents of the Company who for 75 years have been responsible for the "Advancement of Christ's Kingdom Among Boys" in the 8th Birmingham Company of the Boys' Brigade.



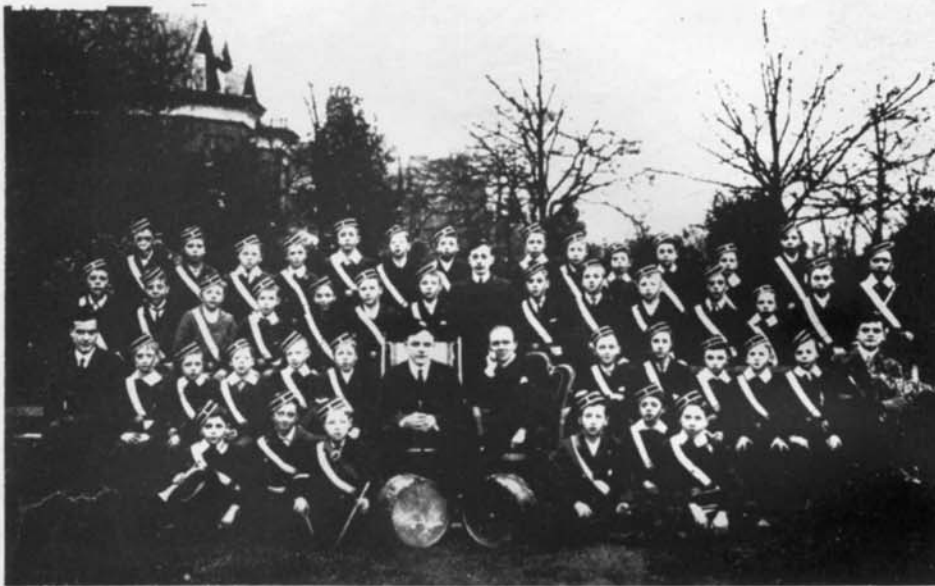
J. B. WESTON — CAPTAIN 1960

I have been privileged to be associated with The Company when it has taken major honours in the Battalion, been reduced to a nominal roll of 3 Boys and 5 Officers and now happy to report in this 75th year perhaps the strongest it has been since our Golden Jubilee year of 1956.

In compiling this souvenir handbook, I make no apology for re-printing some articles that appeared in our 21st and 50th publications with "up-to-date" comments from H. S. Burnett, M.B.E. Honorary President of the Birmingham Battalion and Captain of the 10th Birmingham Company, G. W. Oakton, Old Boy of the 8th and Honorary Vice-President of the Birmingham Battalion, and Mr. L. Stirrup, Captain of the Company.

We have an anchor that keeps the Soul,
Stedfast and sure while the Billows roll,
Fastened to a rock that cannot move
Grounded firm and deep in the Saviours Love.

J.B.W.



FIRST COMPANY GROUP

“The Eighth”

A FOREWORD BY THE OLD CAPTAIN

(Reproduced from the 21st Birthday Souvenir Brochure)

I have been asked by the present Captain to send a word by way of introduction to this Booklet which records Twenty-one Years of useful service by the 8th Birmingham Company of the Boys' Brigade.

My first word — and I know that I write too on behalf of the old Officers and Boys of the dear old Company — is one of sincere congratulation.

It is not given to every Company to pass its majority and continue as strong as ever but at Islington this is indeed so, and we do indeed rejoice that the good work still goes on and that the fundamental purpose of the Boys' Brigade — “The extension of Christ's Kingdom among Boys” — is now as ever before, in the forefront of all the Company activities.

Twenty-one years ago to-day, on September 14th, 1906, we held our first parade. On the previous Sunday the formation of the Company had been duly announced in Sunday School, and on the following Friday evening Mr. J. M. Jones and I took the names of those boys who wished to join, and paraded them for the first time.

At first the only activities were the Sunday School Class and the week night drill parade. Later were added all the activities which made a real live Company. One of the first of these was a Bugle Band. How we managed I do not know, but Mr. Johnson conducted the musical (?) portion of the evening's entertainment in one of the Class Rooms opening off the lower schoolroom, whilst I instructed the remainder of the Company in the art of forming fours the other side of the partition! All this was done to the accompaniment of a bombardment of brick-bats and other missiles which struck the door outside and sometimes came through the windows. Mr. Winstone's face and feelings may be imagined — I

well remember them, and we do indeed owe him a debt of gratitude for his help then, in the midst of much aggravation, and for his interest and sympathy which still continue today. The story of the way in which we roped in those who had been our persecutors is too long to tell here, but the attacks on the St. Martin Street front died down and we added greatly to the strength of the Sunday School. I should perhaps have said first that the inception of the Company was due to the Rev. J. J. Leedal, then minister at Islington. It was largely due to Mr. Leedal's initiative and enthusiasm that the Company was so well founded, and we are indeed fortunate in having him with us for the birthday celebrations. I may here mention that the Company has always been splendidly served by its Chaplains, and this means a very great deal.

In regard to the Company staff, one is on dangerous ground in mentioning names, but I cannot close these brief notes without a word as to the Officers who have helped. I have already mentioned Mr. J. M. Johnson, and a list of the other Officers is given elsewhere, but I must mention in particular those of long and loyal service, as for example Mr. C. Soutter Smith, who was with us for seven years, and who left to Captain the old 3rd Company at the Central Hall, resuming his old rank under me in the 33rd at Sandon Road, after the war, and who now commands that Company; Mr. Selwyn Barnes, who was a Lieutenant for 9 years, and who took over the Captaincy from me in 1919 and still retains it; and Mr. Herbert S. Cull, who took over the command from me when I left for France in 1915, and who, as acting Captain, had perhaps, the hardest job of us all in keeping things going during the war until his practical isolation in Company work and pressure of war work made it imperative that the Company should be closed down temporarily during the later years of the war period. Then, later, we have rejoiced to welcome old boys as Officers, and have also provided Officers for other Companies.

I must also mention the many years of useful work put in by Sergt. Barber, then of the City Police, as Ambulance Instructor, and by Mr. E. J. Bartlam as Bandmaster.

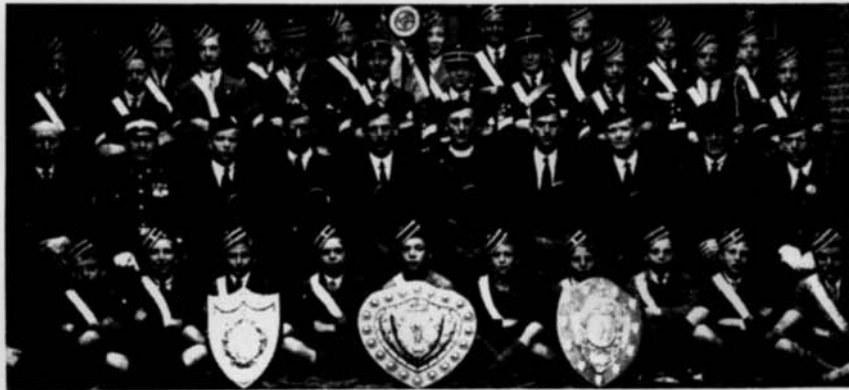
The Company has from the first taken its proper share in the Battalion, comprising the wider work of the Boys' Brigade in Birmingham, and no year has passed but has found even more of its Officers serving on some Battalion Committee or other.

I hope I may be allowed to close on a personal note — for the particular attention of Old Boys. Eight years ago I handed over the Captaincy to Mr. Selwyn Barnes on my removal to Sandon Road Church from Islington, but my interest in the Old Company still continued. As Captain of a new Company the 33rd, I was still in touch with old friends and it was a joy to see the good work carried on so well, but when I had to remove to London in 1925 my associations with the Boys' Brigade in Birmingham were of necessity broken, and the South London Battalion has claimed me.

I want to ask all Old Boys of the 8th, however, wherever They may be, to join with me in an earnest prayer that, under the blessing of God, our old Company may continue to flourish and prove a source of strength to the Church at Islington — and may we all be spared to join in the next celebration — its Jubilee.

*33 Lyford Road,
London S.W. 18*

GORDON BARNESLEY



THE COMPANY IN ITS COMING OF AGE YEAR 1927

A Captain's Reflections

(Reprinted from the Jubilee Souvenir Brochure)

It was in 1909 that a letter from Gordon Barnsley, the then Captain of the Company, invited me at the tender age of — well that does not matter! — to meet him at his office one evening.

That was in the old Ryland Street days. I thought he probably wanted an office boy!

To my surprise he asked me to become an Officer in the 8th. Frankly I was terrified and a copy of the Manual and Drill Book — especially the latter — did not help matters!

After careful and prayerful consideration I agreed to become a Lieutenant and joined a galaxy of talent. My name was bracketed with such great B.B. stalwarts as C. Soutter Smith, J. R. Simpson, A. J. G. Smout and B. Weatherill. Phew! what a team.

I was the green (very green) Lieutenant, turned left when I should have turned right, (as most green Lieutenants do on their first Parade Night), blushed like a beetroot, wished the floor would open and swallow me and then carried on hoping no one had seen!

On return from the 1914 War I restarted the Company and became Captain which office I held until 1938.

It is as such that I have been asked to make a contribution to this Souvenir Booklet to commemorate the Company's Jubilee.

What a magnificent achievement and how we shall all look forward to October 13th/14th.

Consistency, stability, tenacity and tremendous loyalty on the part of many members, both on the Staff and in the Ranks have brought us through the years to this great event.

I find it difficult now, to recall vividly, things which were not unfortunately chronicled at the time, as possibly they should have been.

They can be summarised as great days of happy Staff co-operation and superb team work. A sense of the privilege of being part of a great Battalion. Tremendous encouragement and sympathy from the Church at Islington and at the back of it all a sharing in the great brotherhood of the B.B. with its superlative unchanging object.

I must eschew the temptation to mention names for the work itself is always greater than the man.

We had some grand times together, especially at our camps and in retrospect now, one feels it was all very well worth while.

The work was not always easy and it is not for us to measure results, but I feel we can contentedly leave the past, present and future of such grand work as the 8th has always tried to do, in the hands of Him who called us to our tasks.

We thank God for our great days, grand fellowship and the happy, inspiring times we had together and pray that amongst them all we were instrumental in helping to advance Christ's Kingdom amongst Boys.

Then in 1937, I received another letter. This time from the then Brigade Secretary, C. Stanley Smith, inviting me to join the Brigade Headquarters Staff, as Brigade Training Officer.

In April, 1938, I handed the Company over to Mr. Coleman.

Others must tell the story onwards from there.

Through difficult days the Company has more than survived.

All honour to those who have enabled the Company to continue to flourish and maintain its fine tradition.

May God's blessing continue to prosper their work so that there may continue to flow from the Company's ranks that stream of trained, disciplined. Christian manpower which will always remain its glory and its reward.

S. E. BARNES

Abbey House,
London S.W. - .



The Company President Reminisces

(Reprinted from the Jubilee Souvenir Brochure)

My earliest recollections of the 8th go back to those hectic days referred to elsewhere in this Brochure, by the founder of the Company, Mr. Barnsley. In fact, I might well have been One of the very early members of the Company and it is a matter I greatly regret that this was not so.

However, in 1919 on my return from the Army I was invited by Mr. Barnes, who was then Captain, to join the Staff and so began a connection with the 8th, to which I owe so much. The Company had been temporarily closed down for a short time owing to the War, but under the able and inspiring leadership of Mr. Barnes it soon returned to its former glory and eminence in Battalion activities and in 1920 the Company again won the Battalion Drill Shield after a lapse of several years.

During this time, the spiritual strength of the Company which had always been one of its prominent features, grew and the atmosphere in our Bible Class meetings was most impressive. That same spirit of worship and Christian fellowship is still as strong as ever and through the years one remembers with great thankfulness to God, many grand fellows, whose lives are dedicated to the service of the Master.

Then in 1938 Mr. Barnes was called to a greater work for the B.B. at Headquarters in London. Little did we know then that so soon the clouds of war would gather and that once again war would interfere with the life of the Company. When Mr. Barnes left in 1938 the Captaincy was taken over by Mr. Coleman, who carried on until conditions brought about by War made it impossible for the Company to continue and so it was forced to close down at the end of 1939.

Fortunately, this was not to be for long for late in 1940 the Company was restarted by Rev. Sydney Hunt who was the minister at Islington and shortly afterwards the present Captain and I took over from Mr. Hunt — although I was nominally Captain — it was really a joint affair with Mr. Hill and me, and later another old stalwart in B.B. service, Bert Gabb, came along and in between Fire watching and Fire Service we endeavoured to put the 8th on the map again. Despite all the difficulties caused by war conditions it was not long before the old spirit reasserted itself. During this time one remembers the great gesture of an old officer of the 8th Mr. Soutter Smith, who invited us to join his Company the 33rd and the 10th and 53rd at Camp at Malvern in 1942 and although later circumstances caused the 33rd to make other arrangements, the greater fellowship with the 10th and 53rd and later the 59th has continued to this day and has been a source of inspiration to all officers and boys who have been privileged to attend these Camps.

It was with great regret that, owing to ill health my active service with the 8th ended in 1949, and Mr. Gabb took over as acting Captain ably supported by the present Captain, Mr. Hill. It was not long, however, before Mr. Hill became Captain and the present strength and efficiency of the Company is due to the great efforts he has made. There seems to be something about the 8th which compels the best that one can give. It must be that great spirit which has always been present, the spirit that has made the 8th such a grand old Company, which means so much to all of us who have been privileged to be members and we all pray that under God's guidance it will long continue to further the object of The Boys' Brigade, the advancement of Christ's Kingdom among boys.

H. L. HALL



FORTY YEARS ON — THE COMPANY IN 1946



COMPANY GROUP — 1951

This Day and Age 1956

(Reprinted from the Jubilee Souvenir Brochure)

Thanks be to God for the privilege and opportunity of service in The Boys' Brigade, however imperfect, must be the first words of one who happens to be the Captain of the dear old 8th in its Golden Jubilee Year.

Since becoming an Officer in 1928 I am indeed profoundly grateful for all the fun and fellowship of Christian Service in the finest movement for boys.

The constant challenge of duty, the precious friendship of so many fellows down the years, the unfailing help of my wife and members of my family, the loyal and cheerful assistance of the Staff. Non-Commissioned Officers, Boys and Old Boys and members of the Church have all conspired to make The Boys' Brigade a joyously happy part of my life.

Owing to changing conditions the work is not easy, but under the guidance of God we can look back with humility and pride on the record of the Company and safely leave the future in His hands.

Our Jubilee Year has been a very happy one of service. We have maintained our strength and the spirit of its members is an inspiration to all. For the first time in our history we appeared in the Golden Honours List of Boys' Brigade Week, our collections exceeding £110.

For the second consecutive year we won the Battalion Squad Drill Cup. Sergeant Edward Tomkinson also gained the Queen's Badge, the premier badge of the Organisation.

The Bugle Band reached the Semi-Final of the Battalion Competition.

The full programme of Company work has been maintained throughout the winter and summer months.

May we all be very conscious of Divine Guidance and Blessing throughout these celebrations and the coming years.

W. L. HILL

61 Pereira Road,
Birmingham 17



W. L. HILL — CAPTAIN 1956

Jubilee Year



THE COMPANY 1956



Company Staff
Back Row: M. Weston, G. Tomkinson, J. Weston,
Front Row: R. Pye, A. W. Gabb, W. L. Hill, H. L. Hall, T. Price

GREETINGS FROM THE FOUNDER OF THE BOYS' BRIGADE

SIR WILLIAM A. SMITH CHRISTMAS, 1911

"Sir William A. Smith sends kind remembrances and best wishes for Christmas and the New Year to all ranks of the 8th Birmingham, and warmest thanks for charming photo booklet of the Company."

*13 Belmont Crescent,
Glasgow, W.*

Christmas, 1911

GREETINGS FROM BRIGADE PRESIDENT

THE RIGHT HON. THE LORD MACLAY, K.B.E. 1956

"I am very happy to be able to congratulate the 8th Birmingham on reaching its Golden Jubilee year, and the present officers and boys who are carrying on the company so successfully.

Many generations of boys must have passed through the Company and it is interesting to know that in its earlier days, they had the inspiration of the founder himself, Sir William Smith, who was leading, guiding and encouraging the whole Brigade.

Today, although Sir William is no longer with us, his aims and example still live in every true B.B. Company, and I wish you all success in maintaining our traditions, and relating our daily work and play with the Will of God, and the spirit of Christ's teachings."

(signed) MACLAY (Brigade President)

GREETINGS FROM BRIGADE PRESIDENT

THE EARL OF ELGIN AND KINCARDINE J.P. D.L. -1981

"I was very pleased to have your letter of 5th July and to learn of the 8th Birmingham Company's 75th Anniversary. I see that you associate with your Old Boys and this, I believe, is a very important characteristic of the Brigade.

I do wish to you all — whether of the present or the former generation — that you have a very happy time in this Anniversary Year. No doubt you will be adding 75% to your strength, but, whatever you do, the Boys' Brigade as a whole is very proud to send you congratulations at this time.

(Signed) ELGIN (Brigade President)

The Early Days

From Harold Burnett, M.B.E. Honorary President of the Birmingham Battalion, and Captain of the 10th Birmingham Company.

I am very pleased to have been invited to pay a tribute to the 8th Birmingham Company, and offer congratulations to them in the celebrations of 75 years Service. I have proud and happy memories of being their Inspecting Officer at their Jubilee celebrations in 1956.

Because of the close friendship between T. O. Bowen and S. E. Barnes, my first contact with another B.B. Company was with the 8th in 1923. Every year, until 1938 when S. E. Barnes went to London to be appointed as the first Training Officer for The Brigade, the 8th and the 10th held a Joint-Bible Class. We used to meet the 8th in Belgrave Road, with our Band and Colours, and they did likewise, and then we would join forces, either to march to Islington Methodist Church, or to my Methodist Church at Moseley Road. It was a Joint Bible Class at the headquarters of the 8th in 1924 that had a profound influence on my future B.B. life. S. E. Barnes took all the Officers into a small room off their main hall at Islington, for a brief time of prayer. When the Officers entered the main hall, all the Boys of the 8th and the 10th stood up, without any word of command. I remember thinking, if Boys are going to stand for me as a B.B. Officer, then I must strive to be worth standing up for!



H. S. BURNETT, M.B.E.

My association with the 8th has continued happily since those early days with a rich store of memories. We have camped together in large Battalion Camps, Old Boys of the 8th will remember Clarach Bay 1923, Hunstanton 1924 and 1925, and Llanaber in North Wales in 1926, 1927 and 1928. In later years we have had smaller and more intimate Inter-Company Camps, and lasting friendships have been formed, and grown stronger through the years.

There has always been a keen, healthy rivalry between the 8th and the 10th, in Drill Competitions at the Central Hall and at Football and Cricket. The re-development of our City removed many famous landmarks, and the demolition of Islington Methodist Church, off Broad Street was one of them. The result is that in recent years the 8th has had to move around, but the work has gone on. The 8th have always been a good Company, and striven to maintain The aims and object of The Boys' Brigade. It is because of my association with them spanning nearly 60 years that I have always had a soft spot for the Company, and wished them well.

At the B.B. Jubilee in Glasgow in 1933 the theme song was "FOR FIFTY YEARS THE WORK'S BEEN DONE, AND NOW ITS OURS TO CARRY ON" 75 years doesn't quite trip off the tongue so easily, but the sentiments are right, and I hope that the 8th will "CARRY ON" to its Centenary in 2006!!! A famous Methodist hymn begins: "This, this, is the God we adore . . . and ends "We'll praise Him for all that is past, and Trust Him for all that's to come".

An Old Boy Remembers

As an "Old Boy" of the 8th my memories go back 70 years to 1911 when my brother and myself joined under the captaincy of D. G. Barnsley. Officers at that time were S. E. Barnes, H. B. Cull, C. Souter Smith, S. Hodgetts and E. Lamb.

Camp always revives happy thoughts, and I well remember the discipline in those days consisting of Drill, Rifle Drill, and for a time B. B. Scouts.

Having served in the 1914-1918 war I returned to the Company taking on a variety of duties as an instructor, moving on to the 5th Company in 1922.

I look back on my many years in the Brigade, Vice-Chairman of the West Midlands District, Member of the Executive of the Birmingham Battalion, Divisional Commandant, Hon. Vice-President of the Birmingham Battalion, and I thank God for all the Boys Brigade has given me in my life, and reflect on that day 70 years ago when as a young boy I decided to become a member of the 8th Birmingham Company.

G. W. OAKTON, B.E.M.



SUNDAY MORNINGS CHURCH PARADE IN THE "NEW" LADYWOOD

75 Years On

As present Captain I have been asked to cover the period at St. Boniface which commenced in September 1975, but I feel that I should first explain the motivation for the move from Ladywood. During the Spring of 1974 Rev. David Watkinson invited us to a meeting of several Youth Organisations who were concerned about the lack of numbers for youth work in the area, and, from this meeting came the housing policy of Bush House where families whose youngsters had reached 12 to 13 years old were moved to the suburbs as the flats were considered too small, thereby leaving only single child families and very young families, in the area.

If the 8th were ever to survive in this situation we had no doubt that we had to move, or just become a Junior Section.

Mr. Stan Cooper who was South West Divisional Commandant had been asking for years for a Company to re-start at St. Boniface, and at this time I lived in Quinton, was about to be married at St. Boniface, and therefore having met the vicar, seen the possibilities of the premises and passed the information onto the staff, a meeting of the Company confirmed the move and Stan Cooper was invited to be Captain for a period of 3 years.



L. STIRRUP
COMPANY CAPTAIN 1981

We opened at Quinborne Community Centre thanks to the kindness of the Superintendent, Mr. Cordukes, and after canvassing the area for quite a while received 5 boys on the first night. After a very slow start the Company Section gradually built up to 12 to 16 boys in the first 18 months, most of which joined at 13 to 14 years of age.

The Junior Section, however, went off like an express train, and in two years Geoff Tomkinson was forced to hold two meetings a week to accommodate the numbers, which at one time reached over 50.

We therefore, knew that if we could hold the Company Section together for two or three years the basis of it would soon become the products of our own Junior Section on which we could build a Company worthy of the people we had known as boys ourselves in the Company.

After 3 first difficult years I took over as Captain from Stan Cooper who still serves us as President and Treasurer and the company has gradually grown from the Junior Section influx which in itself brought parents into contact who have become officers. The staff who moved from Ladywood, Geoff Tomkinson and George Brown are actively involved, and E. Freer one of the first boys to be attracted to the new Company came on the staff, together with Peter Tomkinson an old boy from Ladywood. Derek Rozzier and David Jones who had boys in the Company joined the staff and Trevor Richardson and Geoff Haywood have also given valuable help. To them all and I would offer my sincere thanks for their valuable and dedicated support.

Annual Camp 1981 Weymouth



THE COMPANY IN CAMP



STAFF AND N.C.O.s



MORNING KIT INSPECTION



D. JONES, G. C. TOMKINSON, L. N. STIRRUP, P. TOMKINSON, G. BROWN



The Company has this session for the first time a genuine Senior Section. Four boys hold the President's badge and we cover the Award Section leading boys to the President's and Queen Badge.

The Company is now complete in every department from 8 years to 17 years of age. The progress made in the badge structure is evident by the number of badges earned by the boys. We have also introduced a Canoeing Class, built a dinghy bought by the Tomkinson family, and two members of the staff have attended a sailing course which has brought Charles Brown back to the Company in his capacity of a qualified Sailing Instructor. We also have in our Senior Sergeant, Mark Bell, the only qualified Origami Instructor in Birmingham.