

## WTB tours UK

### **United Kingdom says “so glad” to see Western Territorial Band.**

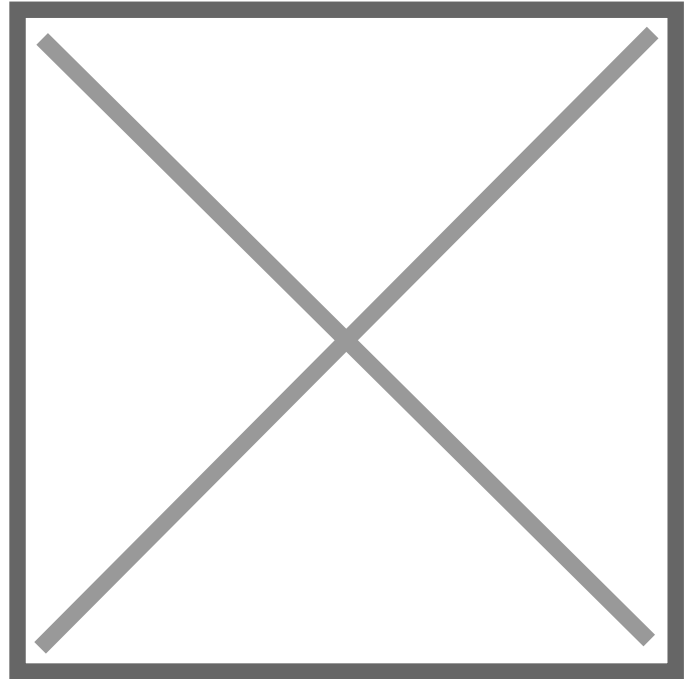
*The Western Territorial Band (WTB)—reintroduced in March 2006 after not existing for almost 75 years—is funded by an endowment allocated specifically for this purpose. The band’s 31 members travel from all over the territory three times a year to play music and minister to others.*

*Success!* This one word can be used to describe the recent Western Territorial Band tour of the United Kingdom.

Before each concert, Territorial Music Secretary/Bandmaster Neil Smith reiterated that the main purpose for this group was not to send people away impressed with the band’s playing—though that was not lacking by any means—but to share the gospel story and the love that can be found in Jesus Christ. In everything we did, from the interaction with the people at the various corps to our music selection, it was apparent the mission permeated the band. It’s not about us, but about him.

Susan Pierce, Del Oro DHQ, expressed the band’s collective mindset: “In my opinion it was a little audacious of the Western Territorial Band to plan a trip to the United Kingdom, to corps with a long and successful history of banding, and whose bands have recently put out great recordings, and gone on tours of the U.S. and Europe. However, the band members went with one thought in mind: to minister to our Salvationist family. We did not go to show off how well we play, or to prove that the Army is doing well in the Western Territory. We went to be instruments of God’s message. We went to minister.

“The reception at each location was extremely friendly and encouraging. Our fellow Salvationists were eager to talk with us about our common interests, to find out more about our band and our country, and to show us the love of God in practical ways. We received positive confirmation that our ministry is viable and important even in today’s high-tech world. We were refreshed, and though physically exhausted, spiritually renewed. In praying for God to use us to bless others, we ourselves were blessed.”



## **Gathering at Crestmont**

Prior to the band's departure, we met at Crestmont, home of the College for Officer Training, for some much needed rehearsing, band fellowship and final instructions. There to send us off was Territorial Commander Commissioner Philip Swyers, joined by newly appointed Western Territorial Band Executive Officer, Lt. Colonel Ron Strickland, who accompanied the band on the tour.

After a few hours of rehearsal and prayer, it was off to the airport—which provided its own difficulties—and then to the UK where we were greeted by Territorial Music Secretary and International Staff Band Bandmaster Dr. Stephen Cobb.

## **First stop: Worthing**

The band's first stop in the UK was Worthing, a quaint town known mainly as a retirement spot. Our first night there was quite relaxing, unlike the rest of the trip, and after fish and chips we were off to rest at our respective billets. Saturday provided an opportunity to meet the mayor of Worthing, a Christian who shared his testimony with us.

How we reached the mayor's office was exciting! Battling high winds that most in the band were not accustomed to, we marched down the street to the mayor's office playing marches and hymns with hats flying off our heads, music falling to the ground and the flags whipping back and forth overhead. The mayor gave us a warm welcome and we joined him for afternoon tea and strawberry scones.

After tea, the band marched back through the town center shopping area to Worthing Citadel hall to warm up and prepare for our first concert.

The hall was full and the band was well received. The program—light and interesting—was designed to present the gospel as obviously as possible.

After leading the morning worship service, the WTB joined Worthing Band and marched along the sea front into the shopping center area to hold an open air meeting. There were a good number of people around to listen and several members of the band shared personal witness during that time. Many onlookers sang along to hymns like "Onward Christian Soldiers" and "What a Friend we have in Jesus."

General John Larsson (Ret.) and Commissioner Freda Larsson spent the weekend with the band at Worthing. Corresponding with Commissioner Philip Swyers, Larsson wrote: "Congratulations on your territorial band—they were superb in every way! It was not only that they played well, which one would expect, but the blend of lighter and more demanding music in the programs was just right. There was something for everyone—and everyone was impressed....It was also a joy to see the members of the band mingling so well with the congregation."

After the Sunday evening meeting at the corps, shared with the corps songsters, it was time to pack up for an early departure on Monday.

## **The journey—often a wet one—continues**

Unfortunately, it was raining heavily as we were packing our bus to leave—this seemed to be the

theme for many days of the tour. At least we were not to be disappointed by the famous British weather!

After a lengthy bus ride, including a trip under the River Thames via the Dartford Tunnel, we arrived in the city of Norwich—where it was also raining.

Given the choice of visiting the fine cathedral in Norwich or wandering the narrow market streets in town, the majority of the band chose the latter—in the hope of finding Starbucks! Since we had not seen one since boarding the flight in Los Angeles, it was a much-appreciated find.

Again, an enthusiastic and welcoming crowd filled the corps hall in Norwich; many of them had traveled from corps in the surrounding area—including our own Major Ian Robinson, currently serving as the corps officer at Sheringham.

The concert featured music that folks would know: “Amazing Grace,” “How Great Thou Art,” along with music from our soloists—Susan Pierce (vocal) in “They Could Not” and Kevin Larsson (trombone) in an old Bill Broughton number, “Swing That Door.”

Leaving Norwich we made our way across country—slowly, no freeway there—to Derby. En route, Tony, our driver, took us to an old stately home for morning coffee, where the band enjoyed a spectacular view.

On arrival in Derby we aimed straight to the corps for lunch, set up, sound check and then some brief time to explore.

After our meal it was time to change and present our evening concert—again to a packed hall.

Wednesday we headed to the northeast of England to Sunderland, where we enjoyed a guided tour of Washington Old Hall, which is the ancestral home of George Washington’s family. We did get the impression that the guide did not really like Americans and he was definitely not a fan of former President George W. Bush!

After a brief photo opportunity visit to the Angel of the North, it was time to drive back to the corps for more of the same: sound check, tea, concert, pack up and return to our billets.

At this concert we played for the second time a piece called “Heritage of Witness.” Written for the band’s tour by Ralph Pearce, it paid tribute to the members of the Sunderland Monkwearmouth corps band, who were celebrating the band’s 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

After a long road trip the next day we ended up in the town of Kettering, where we had a civic reception with the mayor and the chance to play for her before leaving to prepare for the evening.

She shared with us that she was a Christian and we were pleased that she was able to join us that evening for the concert.

It was an honor for some of us to meet the euphonium legend Trevor Groom, who works at the corps as the caretaker. He still brings his instrument and practices every day!

Our concert in Kettering was recorded and broadcast on the web. I believe that there were actually around 50 hits during the workday at territorial headquarters!

We left Kettering bound for Cardiff, Wales. Although it was raining again, most of the band had a great time visiting Cardiff Castle and enjoying some down time in a fine city. Lt. Colonel Trevor Davis and I explored Starbucks for a couple of hours!

We were well received and encouraged by an enthusiastic congregation, many of whom we knew. It was great to feel at home.

We arranged an early start from Cardiff the next day so we could travel through London and see some of the sights. We viewed some of the Changing of the Guard at Buckingham Palace before heading off to Westminster, Parliament, Big Ben and then alongside the river to the Strand, Fleet Street and St. Paul's.

We drove by the new IHQ building before heading out to the Tower of London and crossing the famous Tower Bridge.

### **Where the Army was born**

On our way to Southend, we drove through east London, where we passed the Blind Beggar Pub and the statue of William Booth. This is where, in 1865, the work of The Salvation Army began. Booth preached his first open air sermon outside this public house, leading to the formation of the East London Christian Mission, which later became The Salvation Army.

In Southend we performed an open air concert in the shopping center. Many people stood around listening and about six people whom we greeted came to the concert that evening. Some had Army connections many years ago and were attracted by the Stars and Stripes flying in the breeze. The corps officer was very intentional about talking to them and keen to invite them back to the corps. I chatted with an elderly gentleman who had been in the junior band back in the late 1930s. It had been a long time since he had been to the corps, but he enjoyed our ministry and planned to return to the corps.

After sharing in Sunday ministry at Southend, we departed for Leigh-on-Sea, our final venue.

Despite the rain, there was standing room only. We finished up with "Stars and Stripes," which received prolonged applause.

Reflecting on the tour, Major Warren Dabis, Tacoma, Wash. corps officer, said: "I really enjoyed playing to responsive audiences and conversing with fellow Salvationists! I was intrigued with the history of The Salvation Army in the corps that we played in and have a deeper appreciation of The Salvation Army, its soldiers and its roots!"

Although by then we were completely exhausted, we were aware that our mission had been accomplished. Our only aim was to share the gospel through our music—not to impress folks—but to let them know that there *is* a God and he loves them, too.

Commenting on the band’s mission, Lt. Colonel Ron Strickland said: “The recent tour by the Western Territorial Band throughout the UK was a resounding success, not just in the quality of musical presentation, but rather, the effective sharing of the gospel message.

“The dedication, discipline, and hard work of the band was blessed by God in a special way. Hearts and souls were touched by the Holy Spirit at each of the eight venues during the UK tour.”

Many friends from all over supported us by praying for our travels and our mission. We thoroughly believed in what we were doing and know that in it all, God was honored. We truly serve a great God whose grace is sufficient for all of us.