

*B. Walton O'Donnell*



*R.P. O'Donnell*



*P.S.G. O'Donnell*

# A Celtic Legacy

THE MUSIC OF THE  
O'DONNELL BROTHERS

for Wind Band

## THE BAND OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCE COLLEGE

Conductors:

Wing Commander Piers Morrell OBE MVO

Squadron Leader Richard Murray

Squadron Leader Chris l'Anson

- |    |   |       |
|----|---|-------|
| 1  | <b>Fanfare on the Royal Air Force Call*</b> RP O'DONNELL  | 1:14  |
| 2  | <b>Quick March: The Crusader*</b> B WALTON O'DONNELL<br>pub. Boosey & Co. Ltd   | 3:32  |
| 3  | <b>Prelude*</b> B WALTON O'DONNELL<br>ed. and arr. Kevin Lamb<br>pub: Bandleader Publications Ltd   | 7:29  |
| 4  | <b>Fantasia Overture***</b> RP O'DONNELL<br>ed. and arr. David Marshall<br>pub. Bandleader Publications Ltd   | 10:30 |
| 5  | <b>The Irish Maiden***</b> B WALTON O'DONNELL<br><i>The Pretty Girl Milking the Cows and Gentle Maiden</i><br>ed. and arr. David Marshall<br>pub. Bandleader Publications Ltd | 5:45  |
| 6  | <b>Two Irish Tone Sketches op.20*</b> B WALTON O'DONNELL<br>pub. Hawkes & Son<br><b>i The Mountain Sprite</b>   | 4:52  |
| 7  | <b>ii At the Pattern</b>  | 5:07  |
| 8  | <b>Celtic Waltz**</b> § RP O'DONNELL<br>pub. Hawkes & Son   | 3:38  |
| 9  | <b>A Lyric Poem: 'When the Sun is Setting'***</b><br>B WALTON O'DONNELL ed. and arr. David Marshall<br>pub. Bandleader Publications Ltd                                       | 3:50  |
| 10 | <b>Three Humoresques op.28***</b> B WALTON O'DONNELL<br>pub. Hawkes & Son<br><b>i Pride and Prejudice</b>   | 3:25  |

- |    |   |      |
|----|---|------|
| 11 | <b>ii Prevarication</b>   | 3:15 |
| 12 | <b>iii Petulance and Persuasion</b> §   | 4:32 |
| 13 | <b>Strathspeys and Reels***</b> B WALTON O'DONNELL<br>ed. and arr. David Marshall<br>pub. Bandleader Publications Ltd                             | 3:07 |
| 14 | <b>Dance of the Tumblers from <i>The Snow Maiden</i> **</b> §<br>RIMSKY-KORSAKOV<br>arr. B WALTON O'DONNELL<br>pub. Boosey & Hawkes               | 3:57 |
| 15 | <b>The Flight of the Bumblebee<br/>from <i>The Tale of Tsar Saltan</i>**</b> §<br>RIMSKY-KORSAKOV<br>arr. B WALTON O'DONNELL                      | 1:36 |
| 16 | <b>Intermezzo–March: Flibbertigibbets<br/>(<i>Parade of the Little Elves</i>)***</b> K. NOACK op. 5<br>arr. PSG O'DONNELL<br>pub. Schott & Co Ltd | 5:33 |

Total Playing Time 72:14

## THE BAND OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCE COLLEGE

Conductors:

Wing Commander Piers Morrell OBE MVO\*

Squadron Leader Richard Murray\*\*

Squadron Leader Chris l'Anson\*\*\*

Recording dates: 28–30/06/22, § 07/11/22

# NOTES ON THE THREE BROTHERS

BY MARC LYNCH

The three O'Donnell Brothers were among the best-known conductors of their day, due to their regular radio performances on the BBC, playing live to an audience of millions in Britain and abroad. Two of them, B. Walton and P.S.G. O'Donnell, conducted the legendary BBC Military Band, one of the most accomplished wind bands of its time. Uniquely, all three brothers were made Directors of Music in the Royal Marines at the same time — they even made BBC broadcasts conducting together — and they each received an award of an M.V.O. (Member of the Royal Victorian Order). Also uniquely, the third brother, R.P. O'Donnell, became the only conductor ever to be a Director of Music in all three British military services — land, sea and air. As bandmasters and conductors, they performed for royalty and heads of state, and crowds of thousands at vast public events. As composers, they wrote chamber works, marches and more for military band, and works for orchestra, small and large.

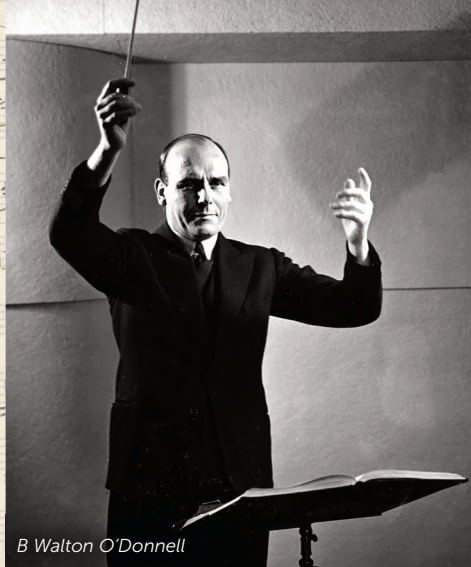
The O'Donnell family had emigrated from Galway, Ireland in the 19th Century after the Famine, taking their musical talents with them around the world. All three brothers were born in India, where their father and uncle were military bandmasters. The siblings would go on to become bandmasters themselves for a wide range of bands in all services. In their upbringing, Irish traditional music was prominent, alongside military music and classical arrangements, and in the works they later wrote, a



*back row, l-r: Gladys (known as Betty, Rud's wife), Dora (the brothers' mother),  
PSG, Rud, Bertie, Grace (Bertie's wife, later known as Gracie or Gaia).  
Front row, l-r: Peter (Rud's son), Brigid (Bertie's daughter).*



*B Walton O'Donnell*



*B Walton O'Donnell*



*B Walton O'Donnell with the 7th Hussars*



*B Walton O'Donnell*

notable feature is the weaving-through of lively and lyrical Irish themes. Their music could be seen partly as a musical exploration of Irishness and Britishness, and the contrast of marching or dancing rhythms, and martial or peaceful themes.

The youngest brother, Bertram Walton O'Donnell or Bertie (1887–1939) was the most prolific and prominent of the three. After musical studies in Dublin and London at the Royal Academy of Music, he graduated after winning numerous prizes, while his compositions for piano and viola were later published as sheet music. Bertram then enlisted and completed his studies at the Royal Military School of Music, Kneller Hall. With the start of World War I, he was posted back to India as Bandmaster of the 7th Queen's Own Hussars.

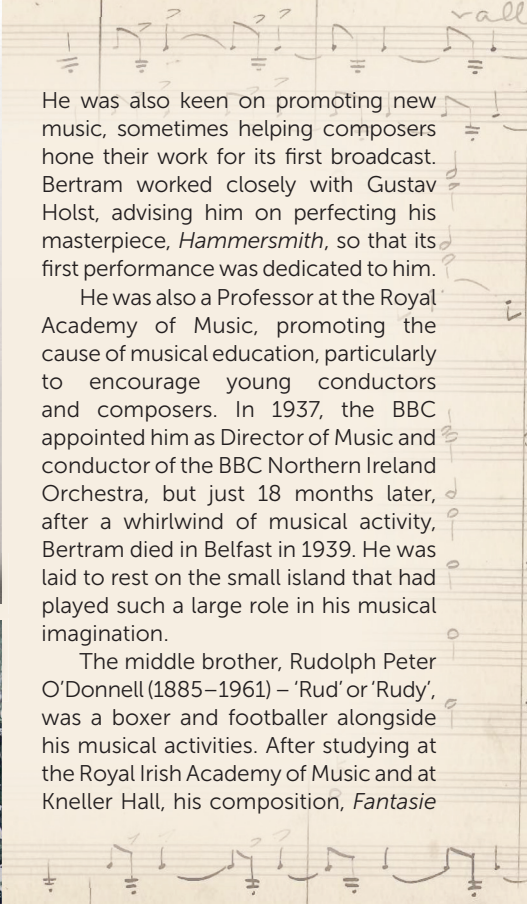
Post-war, compositions such as *Three Humoresques* and *Theme and Variations* soon built his reputation as an accomplished composer for band. He became Director of Music with the Royal Marines and, in 1923, he and his band were chosen by the Prince of Wales for his African tour. In 1924, Bertram's ambitious *Songs of the Gael* was first performed to a vast crowd at Wembley Stadium. He conducted an orchestral version at the BBC Proms in 1927, and just weeks later, he retired from the military after being recruited by the BBC to be Musical Director and conductor of the new BBC Wireless Military Band. This would be comprised of most of London's best wind and brass players playing arrangements from the classical and operatic repertoire. With multiple live weekly broadcasts, the band and its conductor soon became household names. Together, they produced well over 40 recordings, including some of Bertram's own arrangements and one of his works, the jaunty *Crusader March*.



Rudolph O'Donnell



Rudolph O'Donnell with the  
RAF Central Band 1945

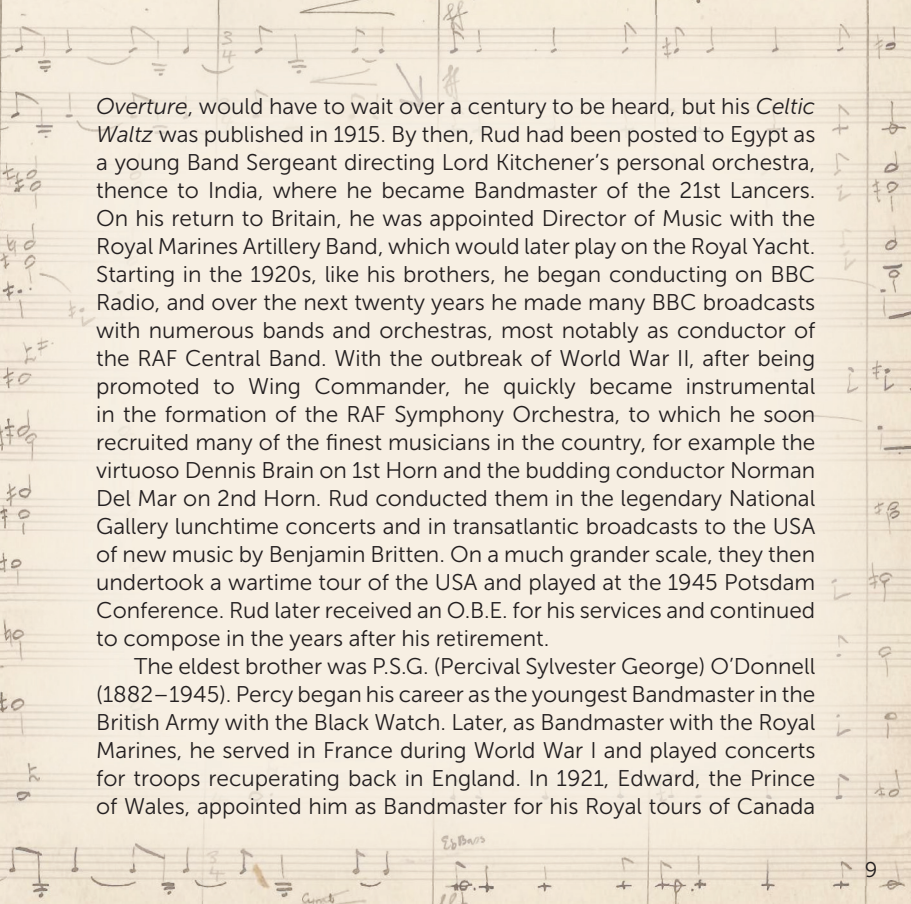


He was also keen on promoting new music, sometimes helping composers hone their work for its first broadcast. Bertram worked closely with Gustav Holst, advising him on perfecting his masterpiece, *Hammersmith*, so that its first performance was dedicated to him.

He was also a Professor at the Royal Academy of Music, promoting the cause of musical education, particularly to encourage young conductors and composers. In 1937, the BBC appointed him as Director of Music and conductor of the BBC Northern Ireland Orchestra, but just 18 months later, after a whirlwind of musical activity, Bertram died in Belfast in 1939. He was laid to rest on the small island that had played such a large role in his musical imagination.

The middle brother, Rudolph Peter O'Donnell (1885–1961) – ‘Rud’ or ‘Rudy’, was a boxer and footballer alongside his musical activities. After studying at the Royal Irish Academy of Music and at Kneller Hall, his composition, *Fantasia*





*Overture*, would have to wait over a century to be heard, but his *Celtic Waltz* was published in 1915. By then, Rud had been posted to Egypt as a young Band Sergeant directing Lord Kitchener's personal orchestra, thence to India, where he became Bandmaster of the 21st Lancers. On his return to Britain, he was appointed Director of Music with the Royal Marines Artillery Band, which would later play on the Royal Yacht. Starting in the 1920s, like his brothers, he began conducting on BBC Radio, and over the next twenty years he made many BBC broadcasts with numerous bands and orchestras, most notably as conductor of the RAF Central Band. With the outbreak of World War II, after being promoted to Wing Commander, he quickly became instrumental in the formation of the RAF Symphony Orchestra, to which he soon recruited many of the finest musicians in the country, for example the virtuoso Dennis Brain on 1st Horn and the budding conductor Norman Del Mar on 2nd Horn. Rud conducted them in the legendary National Gallery lunchtime concerts and in transatlantic broadcasts to the USA of new music by Benjamin Britten. On a much grander scale, they then undertook a wartime tour of the USA and played at the 1945 Potsdam Conference. Rud later received an O.B.E. for his services and continued to compose in the years after his retirement.

The eldest brother was P.S.G. (Percival Sylvester George) O'Donnell (1882–1945). Percy began his career as the youngest Bandmaster in the British Army with the Black Watch. Later, as Bandmaster with the Royal Marines, he served in France during World War I and played concerts for troops recuperating back in England. In 1921, Edward, the Prince of Wales, appointed him as Bandmaster for his Royal tours of Canada

and Australasia and, during the same year, he became a Director of Music with the Royal Marines. In 1937, he took over from his brother as conductor of the BBC Military Band and went on to make numerous recordings and weekly broadcasts until it was disbanded in 1943. Percy's own music is now an unknown quantity – we only have some titles, such as the march, *The Admiral's Regiment*, he composed for the Royal Marines. Though none of his original works have been found, one playful arrangement, of Karl Noack's *Flibbertigibbets* or *Parade of the Little Elves*, was rediscovered, giving a hint, with its powerful conclusion, of how his other compositions might have sounded like.

Two generations on, Alison O'Donnell, granddaughter of P.S.G O'Donnell, is an established Irish singer-songwriter of 55 years standing with an extensive back catalogue and performance experience. She and producer Mike Purton connected when Alison was researching her family tree – work she commenced back in 1995. Since then, a flood of new material has come to light that has led to a greater understanding of the brothers' individual personalities, lives and musical works. Alison was bequeathed most of Bertie's Irish-themed music and was also given a collection of Rud's unknown compositions – many of which had not been heard for a century – so it seemed important that they should be recorded for posterity.

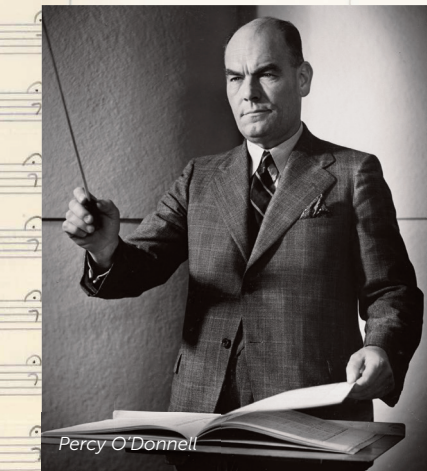
While the conducting and arranging skills of the brothers were well appreciated, their talents for composing were less well known. Now their own works and arrangements can reach a new audience through this fantastic recording, which includes many premiere recordings, so reintroducing the O'Donnell brothers' music to the wider public.



*Percy O'Donnell*



*Percy O'Donnell in Brighton*



*Percy O'Donnell*



*Percy O'Donnell*

**1. *Fanfare on the Royal Air Force Call*** For over 100 years, “Trumpeter, sound the advance!” is the order that has been shouted at Graduation Parades prior to the RAF’s newest members marching on to the parade square. The short phrase the trumpet sounds forms the basis of this fanfare written by former Principal Director of Music of the RAF, Rudolph O’Donnell (1885–1961), here conducted by the current Principal Director of Music Wg Cdr Piers Morrell OBE MVO. What better way is there than with this fanfare to prepare us for our journey through the extraordinary music of the O’Donnell brothers?

**2. *Quick March – The Crusader***. This jaunty march was penned by Bertram Walton O’Donnell in 1925 during his time as Director of Music of the Royal Marines Divisional Band at Deal and may be a tribute to John Philip Sousa’s march with the same name, written in 1888. Then in 1929, while B Walton O’Donnell was Director of Music of the BBC Wireless Military Band, they recorded the march for Columbia Records with ‘in a concert hall’ listed as the venue – an unusual outing for the Band who rarely, if ever, appeared in a live performance. *The Crusader* is technically quite demanding but having been a military bandmaster for so many years B Walton knew how far he could push his musicians, especially with so many of London’s finest orchestral players in the BBWMB.

**3. *Prelude*** (previously unrecorded) was completed by B Walton O'Donnell in Hounslow, near to the Royal Military School of Music at Kneller Hall, on the 27th May 1913, just before the start of the Great War, a fitting 'Prelude' indeed. Beginning with plaintive calls for solo oboe and bassoon over eerily distant, muted horns and developing into a passionate chromatic climax before dying away into the distance, this extraordinary composition has wonderful late romantic harmonies, music much more in the sound world of Frederick Delius (1862–34) and César Franck (1822–90). However, underneath we can clearly discern the influence of Irish traditional music. This remarkable composition just post-dates both of Holst's *Suites for Military Band* (composed respectively in 1908 and 1911), both of which rely largely upon English folksong – as does Vaughan Williams's *Folk Song Suite* of 1923 and was written long before many of Percy Grainger's (1882–1961) more chromatic compositions.

**4. *Fantasia Overture*** (previously unrecorded), a substantial and dramatic work for band, was composed by RP O'Donnell in 1908 whilst a student at the Royal Military School of Music at Kneller Hall near London and it was likely his graduation composition. He later orchestrated it for symphony orchestra. Unlike his brother's forward-looking *Prelude*, this overture is somewhat more conservative in its structure and harmonic language. Nevertheless, for 1908, it is a remarkably advanced composition for wind band/orchestra, there having been few substantial works for this type of ensemble prior to

that, Mendelssohn's *Overture for Winds in C Major*, Berlioz's *Grande symphonie funèbre et triomphale* and *Orient et Occident* by Saint-Saëns being notable exceptions. And we must not forget the pioneering work of John Philip Sousa and his band from 'over the Pond'. The overture begins with a modal melody in C# minor and moves from there to E major, its relative major key and the overture ends triumphantly in C major. Within its 13 minutes and thirty seconds' duration there are particularly challenging solos for the oboe and cornet soloists to play and the whole band is well and truly put through its paces with virtuosic writing for everyone.

**5. *The Irish Maiden*** (previously unrecorded), a fascinating juxtaposition of two Irish airs by B Walton O'Donnell, has no date in the original score, which he orchestrated for both military band and symphony orchestra. The Irish airs *The Pretty Girl Milking the Cows* and *Gentle Maiden* are probably from the 18th century but are still sung today, their Irish titles being respectively *Cailin Deas Crúite na mBó* and *An Mhaighdean Cheansa*. The first tune has been sung by the likes of Judy Garland, Bing Crosby and Ruby Murray; the second was famously recorded in 1940 by the tenor John McCormack. *The Pretty Girl* is introduced on the euphonium and shortly afterwards the music, rather like *Prelude* becomes very agitated, perhaps in the style of a mature Percy Grainger. After this passionate outburst has subsided, the solo cornet introduces *Gentle Maiden* and the alto saxophone brings her to a gentle close after briefly revisiting the *Pretty Girl*.

**6. *Two Irish Tone Sketches***, composed by B Walton O'Donnell, was first published in 1923 by Hawkes and Son and was first broadcast in 1924, it is in two movements, both steeped in the influence of traditional Irish music. The first: *The Mountain Sprite*, appears to have been inspired by a poem in *Irish Melodies* by Dublin born Thomas Moore (1779–1882).

**7.** The second movement is ***At the Pattern***: 'Pattern' is the same word as 'Patron' as in 'Patron Saint'; in places such as by a holy well where there was a saint associated with that place, people would gather to play music, sing, dance and make merry. This is certainly a very lively movement with a lyrical and slow central section where everyone has paused for a rest.

**8. *Celtic Waltz*** (previously unrecorded) is a gentle waltz with a slow introduction, composed by Rud O'Donnell and first appeared in an orchestral version in 1915, to be followed by a wind band version, published in 1919. It would not sound out of place played by the Vienna Philharmonic at one of their New Year's Day Concerts.

**9. *A Lyric Poem: When the Sun is Setting*** (previously unrecorded) was completed by B Walton O'Donnell in Hounslow on October 2nd 1913, shortly after *Prelude* and while he was still studying at nearby Kneller Hall. It also exists as a piano piece and was published a year

later (the composer was an excellent pianist) alongside its companion piece *Before the Dawn* which sadly does not exist in a wind band version. It is a gentle piece beginning with a clarinet melody in a 5/8 time signature and features a long expressive solo for the cornet in its central section. Shortly after writing it, the composer was posted to India as Bandmaster of the 7th Hussars.

**10. *Three Humoresques*** is a suite of three movements published in 1923 and was composed by B Walton O'Donnell. This is an extraordinarily imaginative work and it is very difficult to think of any other wind band piece quite like it. The first movement is titled *Pride and Prejudice* and in fact all three movements appear to be inspired by quotations and titles of novels by Jane Austen. This movement has a robust and proud opening which gives way to an expressive middle section with lush harmonies featuring the solo cornet and ending once more in emphatic fashion.

**11. *Prevarication*** is the second movement and was clearly designed to advise many of today's politicians, meaning 'the fact of avoiding telling the truth or saying exactly what you think'. A skittish solo on the clarinet leads to a rather eccentric waltz section and a very pompous passage featuring the lower brass. At the end when the fibber is caught out, they storm off, slamming the door behind them.



**12. *Petulance and Persuasion*** certainly lives up to its name by starting in a bad mood and goes hurtling off in a virtuosic 6/8 scherzo-like section. A slower passage follows with something of a sulk and the music races off again to its conclusion.

**13. *Strathspeys and Reels*** is a collection of six Scottish dance tunes, originally played on the pipes or the violin and orchestrated by B Walton O'Donnell. The Strathspeys (*Lady Lucy Ramsay*, *Highland Whisky* and *Stumpie*) lead to three faster reels: *Loch Rynach*, *Speed the Plough* and *Captain Keeler*. These are relatively straightforward arrangements which were played by the BBC Wireless Military Band and recorded by them in 1929 under the baton of B Walton O'Donnell. It is unclear whether the dances were to be played separately or *segue* but we have elected to present them in the latter way.

**14. *Dance of the Tumblers*** comes from Rimsky-Korsakov's Opera *The Snow Maiden*. Rimsky-Korsakov (1844–1908) wrote this opera between 1881 and 1882 and it was first performed in 1885. This dance occurs at the beginning of Act 3 where the villagers are all having fun. It is a very popular orchestral 'lollipop' and B Walton O'Donnell orchestrated it in 1928 for band and broadcast it with the BBCWMB, recording it for Columbia in 1929.

**15. *The Flight of the Bumblebee*** also by Rimsky-Korsakov, is from his opera *The Tale of Tsar Saltan*, completed in 1900, B Walton O'Donnell's arrangement for band was made in 1928. The original orchestral episode ends Act 3 when the Swan Bird turns Prince Gvidan Saltanovich into a bee so that he can fly quickly to visit his father. This famous 'lollipop', which appears in many different versions and is hugely popular, was also broadcast by the BBCWMB in 1929.

**16. *Flibbertigibbets*** (aka *Heinzelmännchens* or *Parade of the Little Elves*) is sadly the only music we could find with an involvement by PSG O'Donnell. It was written during his time as Director of Music of the Chatham Division of HM Royal Marines (1928–37) and was surely broadcast under his baton during his directorship of the BBCWMB. This march was composed by German light music composer Kurt Noack (1893–1945) – originally as a piano duet – and has become a very popular 'novelty' item, which has appeared in many different arrangements. In German folklore, the *Heinzelmännchen* were house elves who lived in the city of Cologne. They would work through the night doing the housework, but if they were seen by any human, they would disappear, never to be seen again. Despite being very difficult to play, we we hope this charming march will make you smile after our journey through the music of three such amazing musical brothers.

c. Mike Purton 2023

## Royal Air Force Music Services

Royal Air Force Music Services was established in 1918 by Sir Henry Walford Davies and comprises of three Regular Bands, a Salon Orchestra and a Reserve Band. Based at RAF Northolt and RAF Cranwell, RAF Music provides optimum support to the RAF in order to enhance public perception, support State Ceremonial and achieve influence to further Defence and National interests.

RAF Music supports over 600 engagements worldwide every year. From Public Duties, such as The Changing of the King's Guard on the forecourt of Buckingham Palace, to performing Service charity concerts across the United Kingdom, RAF Music is renowned globally for its musical excellence. Recently RAF Music provided the soundtrack for the Coronation of Their Majesties King Charles III and Queen Camilla, the Honours of Scotland Service for Their Majesties, and the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo.

A variety of ensembles in each band allows RAF Music the flexibility of supporting many different occasions. As well as performing in concert and on parade, each band can separate into woodwind and brass ensembles, jazz groups, pop bands and a big band. RAF Music is proud to represent the heritage and traditions of the RAF in a variety of engagements in the United Kingdom and overseas.



# PRINCIPAL DIRECTOR OF MUSIC ROYAL AIR FORCE

**Wing Commander Piers Morrell**

OBE, MVO, MSc, FRSM, LTCL, FloL, CMgr MCMI, GCGI, RAF

Wing Commander Piers Morrell joined the RAF in 1997 and received his commission in March 2007. As a Director of Music he has led Defence Engagement tasks throughout the United Kingdom and across the world. In May 2017 he was promoted to Wing Commander and appointed as the Principal Director of Music, RAF.

He was conferred the award of Honorary Doctor by Buckinghamshire New University in 2019 for his international standing within the field of military music, leadership, and for his charity work.

In October 2020 he deployed to the Cabinet Office Covid-19 Task Force as a Team Leader and was recalled in April 2021 to lead Music Services support for the funeral of His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.

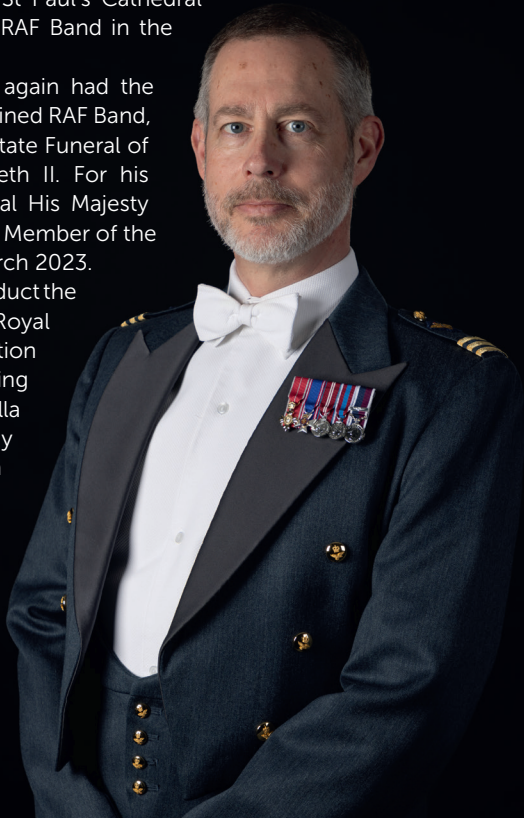
In the 2022 New Year Honours List he was appointed an Officer of the Order of British Empire and was also included in the Vice Chief of the Defence Staff Team Commendation for the Cabinet Office COVID-19 Taskforce.

His support to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee celebrations included conducting the Fanfare Team at the National

Service of Thanksgiving in St Paul's Cathedral and leading the combined RAF Band in the Jubilee Pageant.

In September he once again had the honour of leading the combined RAF Band, this time in support of the State Funeral of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. For his support to the State Funeral His Majesty the King appointed him as a Member of the Royal Victorian Order in March 2023.

He was honoured to conduct the Fanfare Trumpeters of the Royal Air Force at the Coronation Service for Their Majesties King Charles III and Queen Camilla at Westminster Abbey in May 2023, and at the Coronation Concert at Windsor Castle.



**DIRECTOR OF MUSIC**  
**Squadron Leader Richard A Murray**  
BMus(Hons), LRSM, LLCCM, MCMI, RAF

Squadron Leader Richard Murray joined Royal Air Force Music Services in 1997 and has served as a flautist with the Western Band of the RAF, the Band of the RAF Regiment and the Central Band of the RAF.

As a Director of Music, Richard has been integral in delivering musical support to numerous state, national and international events including the Queen's Diamond & Platinum Jubilees, London Olympics, Basel Tattoo (Switzerland), WW1 Commemorations (India), Classic FM Live, World Wind Band Festival (Lucerne), Defenders Day celebrations in Kyiv and the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo. In 2023, he was honoured to lead the Combined Bands of the Royal Air Force in the Coronation Procession for Their Majesties The King and The Queen Consort.

During the pandemic, Richard coordinated RAF Music support to Op RESCRIPT across the UK, was acting Officer Commanding for six months and spent a further seven months with Standing Joint Command (UK), planning and delivering Defence Contribution to Resilience Operations & Military Assistance to Civilian Authorities within the UK.

Richard is currently studying for a Masters degree in Air, Space and Cyber Power having been awarded a Dowding Fellowship by the Chief of the Air Staff. Outside of work Richard enjoys quality family time with his wife Megan and is kept on his toes with three young daughters.



**DIRECTOR OF MUSIC**  
**Squadron Leader Chris l'Anson**  
BMus(Hons) LRSM LTCL LLCM RAF

Squadron Leader Chris l'Anson joined the Royal Air Force in January 2003 and was commissioned as a Director of Music in December 2013. As a percussionist with the Central Band of the RAF, he performed in venues all over the world including Poland, Moscow, Canada and Gibraltar. He regularly featured as a xylophone and marimba soloist, including on four UK 'RAF in Concert' tours.

In March 2014, he became the Director of Music for the Band of the RAF Regiment and in July 2017, he served as Director of Music for the Central Band of the RAF where he had the privilege of leading the band for the RAF100 celebrations including trips to Washington, Paris and Amiens.

In August 2019, he was posted back to Lincolnshire as the Director of Music for the Band of the RAF College, the centenary year of the RAF College and of the Band itself. In 2020 he deployed as Operations Officer to Merthyr Tydfil COVID-19 Testing Unit and in 2021 he deployed to Wales again as Operations Officer of the Vaccination Support Force. He was promoted to Squadron Leader in 2021, and in 2022 was posted to RAF Northolt where he began his current role of Director of Music Headquarters Music Services.

Outside of work his interests include running, reading, hillwalking, tennis and supporting his wife and children in their various sporting and musical activities.





## Band of The Royal Air Force College

Formed in 1920 at RAF Cranwell, the Band of the Royal Air Force College has since forged a reputation of musical and military excellence. Still residing at RAF Cranwell, the Band enjoys performing concerts throughout the year in many of the country's most prestigious theatres and concert halls, all of which raise funds for Service charities.

As part of the celebrations for the Royal Air Force Centenary, the Band took part in the parade at Buckingham Palace and provided music for the Royal Service of Thanksgiving at Westminster Abbey. Memorable moments in recent years include recording a CD of the works of Saint-Saens for Naxos under the baton of world-renowned German conductor, Jun Markl, and performing a live concert at Symphony Hall, Birmingham, broadcast on Sky Arts, a first for any military band.

Other notable highlights include supporting the World Wind Band Festival in Lucerne and Isle of Man Tynwald Ceremony, performing at the Royal British Legion Poppy Ball in Abu Dhabi and travelling to Berlin for the 70th Anniversary Commemoration of the Berlin Airlift. Closer to home the Band had the honour to support the retirement of the E-3D Sentry at RAF Waddington, with Honorary Air Commodore HRH the Earl of Wessex reviewing the parade. The Band has performed at many prestigious State Ceremonial occasions, including Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Celebrations and route-lining at Windsor Castle as part of Her Majesty's funeral. The Band played an

integral role in the Coronation of Their Majesties King Charles III and Queen Camilla and the Fanfare Trumpeters of the Band of the RAF College recently performed in the Honours of Scotland Service for Their Majesties.



*Recording sessions June 2022*



*Recording sessions June 2022*



**CONDUCTOR:** Wg Cdr Morrell / Sqn Ldr Murray / Sqn Ldr l'Anson

|                                  |  |                       |   |
|----------------------------------|--|-----------------------|---|
| <b>1st Flute:</b>                | AS1 Jordan-Ashby<br>Cpl Morris                       | <b>1st Trumpet:</b>   | AS1 Rollston<br>Sgt Godfrey                         |
| <b>2nd Flute/Piccolo:</b>        | AS1 Ward<br>Cpl Fourie                               | <b>2nd Trumpet:</b>   | AS1 Boddice-Jones<br>Sgt Ringham                    |
| <b>1st Oboe:</b>                 | AS1 Rimmer<br>Cpl Watson                             | <b>3rd Trumpet:</b>   | Sgt Bennett<br>Cpl Belfield                         |
| <b>2nd Oboe:</b>                 | Cpl Read   | <b>4th Trumpet:</b>   | Cpl Jones   |
| <b>Eb Clarinet:</b>              | Cpl Jones  | <b>5th Trumpet:</b>   | AS1 Smith   |
| <b>Solo Clarinet:</b>            | Sgt Watson   | <b>1st Trombone:</b>  | Sgt Dean  |
| <b>Rep Clarinet:</b>             | Cpl Rose   | <b>2nd Trombone:</b>  | Cpl Case  |
| <b>2nd Clarinet:</b>             | Cpl Percy<br>AS1 Hall<br>Sgt Dean                    | <b>3rd Trombone:</b>  | AS1 Pearce  |
| <b>3rd Clarinet:</b>             | Cpl Sims-Sweetman<br>Sgt Bolton King<br>Sgt Atkinson | <b>Bass Trombone:</b> | AS1 Maund<br>AS1 Leach                              |
| <b>Bass Clarinet:</b>            | Sgt Stannard   | <b>Euphonium:</b>     | Cpl Howley<br>AS1 Bray                              |
| <b>1st Alto Sax:</b>             | Cpl Braet  | <b>Tuba:</b>          | Cpl Dennis<br>AS1 Bray                              |
| <b>2nd Alto Sax:</b>             | AS1 Mackay   | <b>String Bass:</b>   | Sgt Vincent   |
| <b>Tenor Sax:</b>                | Cpl Hunter   | <b>Percussion:</b>    | Sgt Green<br>Cpl Kemp<br>AS1 Lutton<br>AS1 Stringer |
| <b>Baritone Sax:</b>             | AS1 Cochrane   |                       | AS1 Stringer<br>Sgt Ansell                          |
| <b>1st Bassoon:</b>              | AS1 Nicholson  |                       |   |
| <b>2nd Bassoon &amp; Contra:</b> | AS1 Underwood  |                       |   |
| <b>1st Horn:</b>                 | Cpl Watson<br>FS Meaden                              |                       |   |
| <b>2nd Horn:</b>                 | Sgt Bolton King<br>AS1 Brownlie                      |                       |   |
| <b>3rd Horn:</b>                 | Sgt Carter<br>Cpl Pretorius                          |                       |   |
| <b>4th Horn:</b>                 | Cpl Trott  |                       |   |

Some years ago, Alison O'Donnell – distinguished folk singer and songwriter and granddaughter of Percy O'Donnell, contacted me to see if we might record an album of music by the three O'Donnell brothers, I jumped at the chance and discovered that there was a treasure trove of music, largely unrecorded, which demonstrated their immeasurable influence on music for wind band and which had come into Alison's keeping. The music of the O'Donnell brothers, much of which has not been recorded is often way ahead of its time. B Walton O' Donnell was the most prolific composer of the three, having studied at the Royal Academy of Music and his brother Rud also penned a number of important works for wind band. Percy was more active as a conductor. It can be argued that B Walton O'Donnell in particular had an important influence on the likes of Holst, Grainger and Vaughan Williams and was for some time appreciably ahead of them in his writing for band, yet his music, music of real quality, often with deep roots in traditional Irish music, remains largely – and unforgiveably – forgotten and unperformed. In bringing this music back to life, it has been a privilege and a pleasure to work with Percy's grandchildren Alison O'Donnell and Marc and I should also like to thank all the fine musicians in the Royal Air Force, especially Wing Commander Piers Morrell OBE MVO and Squadron Leaders Richard Murray and Chris l'Anson, Chris having had a played a particularly special part as most of the recording took place when he was Director of Music of the Royal Air Force College Band. My old friend Major (retd.) David Marshall and his colleagues at Bandleader Publications have lovingly recreated the various handwritten scores for publication so that these unpublished works can now be performed. It has been a wonderful journey and it was especially pleasing that RAF musicians thoroughly enjoyed playing this delightful music.

Mike Purton August 2023.

**Mike Purton Recordings  
would like to thank the following  
for their generous support of this  
most important project:**

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Kate Brower

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Marc Lynch

Peter Lynch

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Yukihiko Okitsu

With grateful thanks to the BBC for providing Alison O'Donnell  
with the archive photos that are part of this project





*RAF St Michael's and All Angels Church RAF College Cranwell*

**MPR007 A Celtic Legacy – The Music of the O'Donnell Brothers**

The Band of the Royal Air Force College

Conductors: Wing Commander Piers Morrell OBE MVO\*, Squadron Leader Richard Murray\*\*,  
Squadron Leader Chris I'Anson\*\*\*

The Band of the Royal Air Force College play by kind permission of the Air Force Board of the Defence Council

Venue: RAF St Michael's and All Angels Church RAF College Cranwell

Producer: Mike Purton (MPR Recordings)

Editing: Mike Purton/ Tony Faulkner

Recording Engineer: Tony Faulkner

Dates: 28–30/06/22, 1 07/11/22

Design: Hannah Whale

