



Brass Bands Archive Conservation Plan

Executive Summary

This conservation plan lays out the current conservation priorities of the Brass Bands Archive (BBA) owned by Brass Bands England (BBE). The BBA is the world’s largest archive dedicated to preserving global brass band heritage. The mixed-media collection includes sheet music, vinyl records, programmes, journals, books, uniforms and trophies; recording over a century of brass banding history. The collection has great significance to the brass banding sector, but also to those interested in social, cultural and political histories. The conservation plan has been created to determine priorities for conservation work on the BBA; namely the repackaging of material in acid-free packaging to ensure the long-term preservation of the collection; and the digitisation of sections of the collection, which is intended to increase access to out-of-copyright music and items in poor condition.

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Introduction

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The following plan sets out the conservation requirements of the BBA. This plan sets out the most immediate preservation concerns of the archive, and isn't intended as a comprehensive document, but as a resource to inform the planning of future preservation work. By recording the conservation needs of the collection the plan will facilitate conservation planning, management and monitoring.

The BBA falls under the scope of various policies dictating access, collections care and management; both by BBE who own the archive, and Heritage Quay at the University of Huddersfield where the collection is on deposit. Further information on these policies can be found in Section 1. This plan focuses on the practical care measures being taken to preserve the BBA in line with these policies.

This plan was produced by the current Archive Project Officer managing the BBA. This plan is primarily intended for use by those responsible for the preservation and management of the collection, but also as a source of information for stakeholders who wish to understand the measures being taken to preserve the collection and to improve access.

This plan explains the collection and its significance, the processes used to determine conservation priorities, and sets out the conservation actions to be taken to preserve the collection. The plan will be reviewed at two year intervals, or sooner where significant additions and new media formats are added to the archive, to ensure the conservation plan remains relevant to the BBA.

1. Understanding our heritage

The collection

The BBA is a large mixed-media collection which contains over 9,000 sets of sheet music, 1,000 vinyl records, 2,000 programmes, 5,500 journals, 130 books, 100 trophies, 17 uniforms, and other ephemera related to brass band heritage. The archive records over a century of brass banding history, and is unrivalled in its size and scope. The collection has grown with the donation of music and other ephemera from brass bands and players across the UK.

The collection was originally owned by two brass band players and enthusiasts who cared for the collection in a first-floor flat in Wigan. Brass Bands England (BBE) gained custodianship of the National Brass Band Archive in 2018 who renamed it The Brass Bands Archive. The archive is in the process of being catalogued, after which priorities for the archive will include creating access, and developing and engaging audiences.

Its significance

The BBA holds great significance to the brass banding sector by documenting the evolution of brass band music. The collections shine a light on the people who contributed to the development of brass banding, including composers, arrangers, conductors, publishers, sponsors, and competing and non-competing bands. Notable items range from a first purpose 19th century performing jacket from the award-winning Black Dyke Mills Band, to a rare echo cornet believed to be owned by well-known player Harry Mortimer. The collection also preserves lesser-known stories. From photographs of contemporary bands and players, to a memorial book of remembrance for all the bands people that died in service in WW1, the archive reflects a broad range of experiences across the brass banding sector.

Public response to the archive, despite not currently being accessible, has shown the brass banding community have a clear interest in the preservation of the collection. This is reflected in the level of enquiries, social media engagement and the number of donations added to the archive since its transfer to BBE. The scope of the archive's collecting policy creates opportunity for the brass banding sector to participate in the preservation of their heritage. This makes the archive a valuable resource but also reiterates the need for conservation work to ensure the terms of the collecting policy and donation agreement are met.

The archive also holds significance to those interested in social, cultural, military and political histories. Founded in the mines, mills and factories of Britain's industrial centres, brass bands have been central to working class communities since the 19th century. The BBA records the development of bands from different sectors of industry, and the sponsorship of bands by companies, recording ways that the working class interacted with their employers. Many scores and sets of parts are stamped by the band that purchased the music, recording changes in sponsorship. Through the collection, we can understand the impact of the world wars on the brass banding sector, through preservation of military band compositions and records of military composers, as well as recording band member shortages during the war years. Our partnership work with museums in the UK, such as the National Coal Mining Museum, allows us to contextualise the collection with other collections in the UK whilst also reaching those outside the brass banding sector, to highlight the different uses of the archive.

Its care

The collection is owned by Brass Bands England and held on deposit at Heritage Quay at the University of Huddersfield.

The decision was made to produce a conservation plan because the BBA falls under the scope of Heritage Quay's Collections Management Plan and therefore a working document focusing on conservation measures is needed to supplement these policies and ensure that the collection is being cared for in a way that meets the requirements of those policies.

Heritage Quay implements a Collections Care Policy as part of their Archive Collections Management Policy. The policy covers the provision, implementation and maintenance of a collections management framework, including detailed policy statements for: collections development and acquisition; collections information; collections access; and collections care and preservation. The policy states that the Heritage Quay subscribes to the relevant professional standards for caring for the archives in their custody such as: PAS 197: 2009 Code of Practice for Cultural Collections Management; EN 16893: 2018 Conservation of Cultural Heritage New Sites and Buildings intended for the Storage and Use of Collections; and BS 4971: 2017 Conservation and Care of Archival Collections. Digital preservation strategies and activities for Heritage Quay are encompassed by their Digital Preservation Project Framework. The BBA is stored in Heritage Quay's state-of-the-art strong rooms and maintained by Heritage Quay's experienced staff.

Heritage Quay undertakes an annual review of their conservation standards covering security, fire protection and environmental control of storage, to ensure Heritage Quay continues to uphold these standards.

BBE also has an independent Collecting Policy and a Donation Agreement which outlines to potential donors what we will accept in the BBA and how the items will be cared for.

2. Identifying conservation needs

A large proportion of the BBA is in a good condition but work is needed to improve preservation and access over-time. The main conservation concerns of the BBA are the need to repackage the collection in archive-grade packaging to ensure the long-term preservation of the collection, and the digitisation of sections of the collection to increase access to damaged and out-of-copyright music in a way that promotes use of the collection. These preservation needs, and the planning of this work, were determined based on the following factors:

- *The requirements and needs of users*

Whilst the catalogue is not yet live, knowledge of the collection, particularly within the brass banding sector, relates to the BBA's music holdings; the main enquiries received have related to sheet music and vinyl records. This is partly influenced by the fact the archive, prior to its ownership by BBE, operated as a lending library which has created sustained interest in access to out-of-copyright music. This informed the decision to prioritise the digitisation of the music collection.

- *The condition of the material*

Digitisation will focus on digitising material in poor condition in order to improve access whilst reducing handling. This informed the decision to prioritise the sheet music collection for digitisation, which whilst still in good condition for the most part, also contains some of the most damaged items. Whilst much of the music is in good condition, a number of records show evidence of fire and water damage suggesting the archive was not always stored in an appropriate environment. Information in the catalogue will be used to determine material of the poorest condition which will be digitised to allow access without frequent retrieval and handling of damaged items.

- *The copyright status of the material*

Potential archive users have expressed interest in access to out-of-copyright music. By digitising out-of-copyright music a digitisation project will allow for the collection to be used by brass bands to support the brass banding sector whilst invigorating interest in heritage.

- *The level of cataloguing conducted*

Cataloguing of the BBA is ongoing and as part of that process the condition and copyright status of the sheet music is being recorded at item level. This allows the archivist to conduct searches within the catalogue for items in poor condition, and for out-of-copyright, which will be used to determine digitisation priorities.

The sheet music is the most detailed catalogued section of the collection. Efforts will be made to catalogue other series in the collection to a similar level, especially the collection of vinyl records which will also take priority in future digitisation projects.

- *The technology available for digitisation*

Access to a flat-bed scanner is already possible, allowing for digitisation of the sheet music collection. Heritage Quay have the technology to digitise vinyl records. Digitisation may also be outsourced to an external company, which will be selected based on appropriate research and risk management. However it is also envisioned that BBE will recruit two volunteers to undertake digitisation work, who will receive full training and support.

3. Digitisation

The archive hopes to implement a digitisation plan which will maximise use of the archive world-wide and create access to historic music. Based on the priorities established above the decision has been made to prioritise digitisation of the sheet music and vinyl records. The below table set out the expectations for the initial digitisation stages.

SHEET MUSIC	Current number of items	Percentage of collection	Predicted number of items
Number of items catalogued	5169		
Items in poor condition	23	0.44%	40
Out of copyright items	518	10%	900
TOTAL	541	10.44%	940

VINYL RECORDS	Current number of items	Percentage of collection	Predicted number of items
Number of items catalogued	1163		
Number of items with known date	842	72%	
Out of copyright items	32	3%	46

In acknowledgement of the limited cataloguing done of the vinyl records, proper cataloguing of these materials will take priority in the next stage of the project to determine the condition, publication date and copyright status of each record.

Care of digital records

The digitisation project will lead to the creation of a large amount of digital records which must be appropriately maintained. Digital records will be stored in a managed digital preservation environment by the University of Huddersfield who reserve the right to electronically store, archive, copy, distribute or migrate the digital object for preservation purposes and to ensure future accessibility, provided that such use does not in any way damage the records. The archivist will produce a digital asset register to monitor the condition of digital records and manage risk relating to digital preservation.

Digitised material should also be appropriately stored, including the maintenance of back-ups which should be held at a separate geographical location. These locations will be University of Huddersfield and Brass Bands England's headquarters.

PDF-A will be used for digitisation, and TIFF formats where higher quality images are needed. JPEG will not be used as the quality of the file decreases all the time. It's envisioned the primary users of the digitised sheet music collection will be brass band players interested in using the music; in this case high quality file formats such as TIFF are preferred as they will allow for clear reading of musical notation to maximise use.

At the time of writing the archive does not contain born-digital material. Should this change the conservation plan will be reviewed to include conservation of born-digital records. Dublin Core is specified in Heritage Quay's Collections Management Policy as the preferred standard for the cataloguing of digital material, and will be adhered

to in instances where born-digital material is donated to the BBA. It is predicted that born-digital material will be donated in the future given revolutions in music production. In this event these records will also be recorded in a digital asset register.

4. Conservation

The full BBA collection is already packaged in acid free boxes, but there remain a number packaging concerns. The sheet music collection due to previous funding restrictions was packaged in folders which, whilst more appropriate that the BBA's original packaging, are not acid free. Acid free folders have only been used for manuscript items. Therefore, the repackaging of the collection in appropriate folders is an immediate priority. It is hoped that the archivist will recruit volunteers to repackage the material, who will be given appropriate training on object handling and repackaging.

The other series in the collection, particularly the programmes, also require conservation work including removing staples and paper clips, as well as repackaging in acid-free folders.

The other series in the boxlist have not been catalogued to the same level as the sheet music collection and therefore future cataloguing work will also focus on recording the condition of this material.

5. Conservation management and maintenance

The conservation work outlined in this plan will be completed in the following timeframe:

	2022	2023	2024	2025
Digitisation	Produce digitisation plan	340 items digitised	300 items digitised	300 items digitised Digitised items made available online
Conservation	Purchase conservation materials	3,500 items repackaged	3,500 items repackaged	2,000 items repackaged

The archivist will be responsible for ensuring these targets are met.

Steps will be taken to ensure the collection continues to be cared for overtime. In the event that there is no dedicated BBA archivist in-post, the University of Huddersfield

agrees to catalogue, preserve and keep secure the records, and to update the catalogue in the event of new Records being deposited. This is ensured through BBEs collecting policy and donation agreement. As discussed in section 1, the collection falls within the scope of Heritage Quay's collection care policy which abides by the relevant standards for building and collections care. Heritage Quay will ensure the material is kept in a stable environment.

The digitisation project will focus on the production of a digital asset register which can be used to risk assess digital holdings. It is believed that as the collection develops material will likely be donated in digital format, so this register will act as a working document that the staff at Heritage Quay can use to manage digital material.

This plan will be reviewed every two years by an archivist, who will ensure the plan remains relevant to the needs and condition of the collection.

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