

GEORGE YABSLEY

1878 - 1953

The BAC Works Brass Band

Also known as the 18th Battalion Gloucestershire Home Guard Band.

The BAC Works Brass Band was formed in 1938, under the sponsorship of the Bristol Aeroplane Company. The band flourished during the war and post-war years, and played a vital role in boosting morale at the BAC and beyond. George Yabsley became the conductor and served with the band for nearly the whole of its career.

An early start

George Yabsley began his musical career at the age of eight with the cornet. Whilst serving overseas for a number of years he maintained his love of music, and when he returned to Bristol and joined the BAC he



Photography Source: Bristol Archives & Aerospace Bristol Archives

was well-placed to become conductor of the works brass band.

A big hit

During the war years, The BAC Works Band played two lunchtime concerts per week in one of the BAC's eight canteens. But as well as brightening the days of the tens of thousands of BAC employees, the band achieved national recognition when it became a BBC Broadcasting band, using the BBC studios in Whiteladies Road. In 1944 The BAC Works Band organised



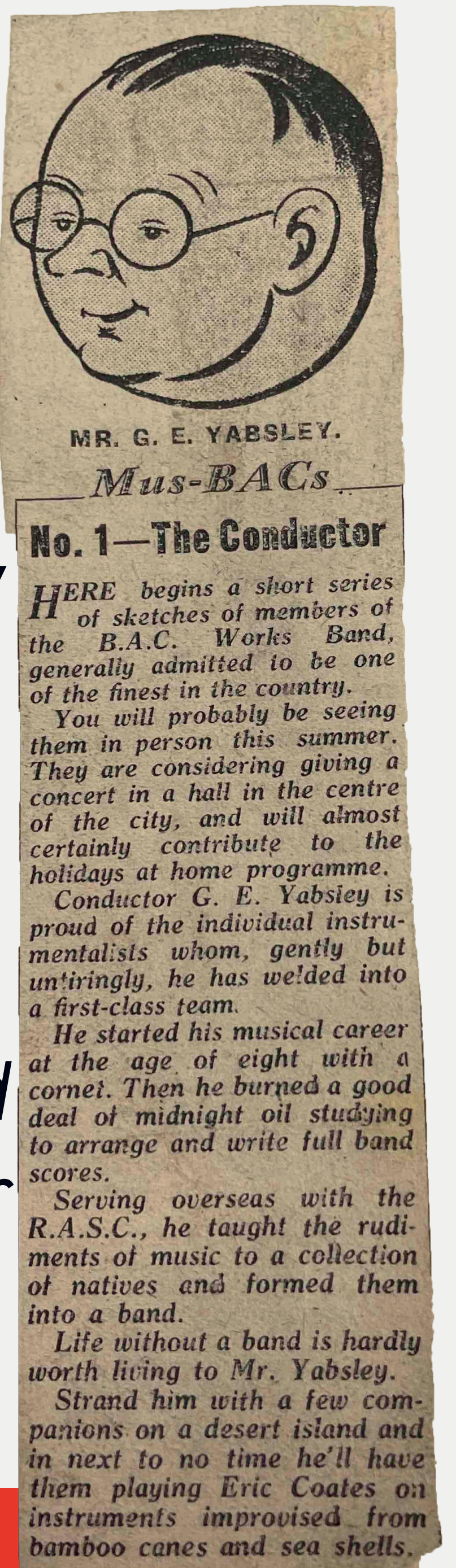
the first ever Bristol & West Brass Band Festival bringing many bands together from across the region. During the war the band made a special 78 rpm record: a version of 'Marching through Georgia' and of 'Colonel Bogey'. The former was played over the tannoy at

the BAC to warn of an air raid, whilst the latter would be played to sound the 'all clear'.

Dad's army

Band members were all BAC employees in reserved occupations and exempt from military service for the duration of the Second World War. As such, the band were enlisted to be part of the 18th Battalion of the Gloucestershire Home Guard, tasked with defending the BAC works in the event of an enemy invasion. The band played an important role in providing music for parades around Bristol during the war years.

One neighbour to the BAC works noted: *'They started enlisting people for the Home Guard. It was the funniest thing you've ever seen, they had no uniforms, no weapons, but they were training them to march, but the things they were presenting arms with were broomsticks and brushes and all, anything that looked a bit like a rifle. I mean it was funnier than Dad's Army.'*



Photography Source: Bristol Archives