

London & Southern Counties Regional Champions 2015 – 2021
 Finalists, National Brass Band Championships of Great Britain 2013 – 2021, 2023 & 2024
 Audience Entertainment Award, Brass in Concert 2019 & 2021
 Most Entertaining Band, Butlin's Mineworkers Contest 2015, 2017 & 2019
 British Open Senior Trophy Champions 2014
 First Section National Champions of Great Britain 2010

FRIARY DIARY – ISSUE 131 – JANUARY 2026

Welcome to Friary Diary issue 131 - a monthly round-up of news about Friary Brass Band.

MUSICAL DIRECTOR: The response to our advertisement for a new Musical Director was very positive, and the first round of auditions has been concluded. A second round will be held for the short-listed applicants. We will of course keep you advised as soon as a final decision has been made. In the meantime, we are pleased to say that guest MDs have been secured to cover rehearsals until the new appointment has been made. A face familiar to many was seen recently conducting the Band at our first concert of the year ...

RETURNING TO THE BAND: ... is another familiar face. We are delighted to announce the return of solo trombone Neil Wharton, following his posting back 'down south' – Neil is a Flight Sergeant with the RAF. It was always the expectation that he would come back to the Band within a couple of years, so we have been looking forward to seeing him back in the seat. Many thanks to Pete Fewster who has been ably keeping the seat warm for him these past two years.



HARTLEY WINTNEY CONCERT: Our first concert of the New Year had a sense of déjà vu, with not only a return to the beautiful Victoria Hall, Hartley Wintney but also the return of Chris King as the guest conductor. This was Friary's fourth concert at the venue, and, according to at least one audience member, the best yet. It was also the best attended, with a capacity audience.



The concert opened with the magnificent *Where Eagles Sing* and the varied programme featured opera, classical, jazz, pop and rock as well as songs from stage and screen. There were solos from Richard Straker on cornet (*What a Wonderful World*), Neil Wharton (*A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square*), Jonti Whittingham-Smith on baritone (*The Flight of the Bumble Bee* – wow, did his fingers buzz!) and a duet from Lauren Straker on flugel and Morgan Marston on tenor horn (*For Good*,

from *Wicked 2*). The ever-popular *You'll Never Walk Alone* brought the programme to an end, before an enthusiastically-demanded encore of Queen's *I Want to Break Free* completed the afternoon's entertainment.

'The reception we have from the audience at Hartley Wintney is always superb, so appreciative,' commented Band Chairman, David Wicks. 'We hope to book the Band again next year,' added Graham Yule, one of the Hall's Trustees. 'We might well have to alter the seating arrangements to accommodate the growing audience!' he concluded.

RANKINGS NEWS: Sadly after a couple of encouraging months, the update by 4barsrest.com to their world rankings table on 6th January saw Friary overtaken by a number of Scottish, Belgian, Swiss and Norwegian bands, resulting in a return to 51st, negating the gain in the previous update. Brassstats.com updated their table on 1st January with Friary static at 43rd.

CORRECTION: My apologies: as you'll see below, the Grand Shield contest will take place on SUNDAY 3rd May, not Saturday 3rd as stated in the December issue. Right date, wrong day! (Not only has the venue changed, but also the day.)

FORTHCOMING EVENTS & DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

2026

Sun 22nd Mch	L&SC Reg. Championships	Gordon Craig Theatre, Stevenage	all day
Sun 3rd May	Br. Open Grand Shield contest	Town Hall, Birmingham	all day
Sun 17th May	Bandstand concert	Godalming bandstand	Pm
Sun 5th July	Entente Cordiale concert	Pinglestone Barn, Old Alresford	6.00pm
Thu 5th Nov	Lewes Bonfire parade	Lewes	Evening
Sun 8th Nov	Remembrance parade	Guildford High Street	10.30am
Sun 6th Dec	Carol concert	Hog's Back Brewery, Tongham	Pm

For further information, please contact Tim Straker, Public Relations Officer, Friary Brass Band
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