

BALLARAT MEMORIAL CONCERT BAND

A century of music

Georgina Williams

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The Ballarat Memorial Concert Band acknowledges the Waddawarrung people of the Kulin Nation as the traditional owners of the land on which we play. We recognise that music has been played in ceremony for countless generations on this land and we acknowledge and pay tribute to the Waddawarrung ancestors, past, present and emerging leaders.

Ballarat Memorial Concert Band: A century of music
Written by Georgina Williams

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Cover photo: 1959, Soldiers' Band, South Street Quickstep Competitions, City Oval, Ballarat. Source: Norm Newey Archive.

Ballarat Memorial Concert Band gratefully acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government and Public Record Office Victoria for making this project possible.





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This history was brought together by the kind contributions of band members past and present from their private collections and archives and with public records and collections. The band history is a collection of personal histories.

By their nature, personal memories can sometimes lead to inaccuracies. Every effort has been made to correlate personal accounts with factual evidence; however, there may be some inconsistencies. We welcome any corrections.

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Prelude

Sounding the century

The Ballarat Memorial Concert Band, which started life 100 years ago as the Ballarat Soldiers' Memorial Band, has made a significant contribution to the sounds of Ballarat, its life and its culture over the last century.

The band has made a deep and lasting impression on many, many members' lives and continues to uplift and build community for band members right now and into the next 100 years of playing together. It's like the beloved axe whose handle sometimes wears out and so is renewed and whose head is sometimes replaced, but which continues on, recognised as the same axe from one generation to the next, chopping the wood that gives energy in summer and keeps everyone warm in winter. And anyone who has lived in Ballarat's climate will know how needed this is.

It is the same band but has transformed itself a number of times through name, uniform, repertoire, gender and instrumentation, to remain current and relevant to the times in which it plays.

How much is the band a reflection of the times in this regional Australian town and how much is it a forerunner of social change? What does it mean to the people today who meet on a Wednesday evening and who perform sometimes until their lips can't take it any more? To the members who have played with the band for over half a century? To those who join to play with their father, daughter, husband or girlfriend? Why was it so important to the returned servicemen who officially registered the band in 1920? Who are the people to whom this band is indebted?

Up until now, the band's history has existed as a collection of photographs, decaying scrapbooks, minute books becoming more and more fragile through age (by the minute), and memorabilia including band uniforms, recordings, awards and trophies (much of which has been stored under the stage in the bandroom or in the back of the instrument store room).

This book marks the gathering of a century of collective experiences; elation, tragedy, electric performances, a whole lot of friendship and even ... romance.

The band history encompasses all this as well as Australia's military history, music history, significant events and celebrations, many family histories and the evolution of a particularly diverse and inclusive community group. As members age, this history has been in real danger of being lost, so with the generous support of the Public Records Office of Victoria, and the vision and drive of the committee and band members (past and present), these stories, images and records along with previously undocumented moments of Ballarat's music and social history have been preserved.

It is time to dust off the archives, sit back in a comfortable armchair and take a peek inside.

– George Williams and Bec Paton



Beginnings

The Ballarat Soldiers' Band was first registered with the Victorian Band Association (VBA) in 1920.

It was before war's end that a small number of ex-servicemen, who had returned from active service, got together and decided to create a 'living memorial to honour those who had sacrificed their lives in the Great War'.

This quote is from William (Bill) Wilkinson, long-time president and member of the band, after whom the current band hall is named. He handwrote the history which was to become the basis of a 1971 *Australian Band Leader* article. The article encompassed much of Bill's handwritten history, but not all. Stored under the bandroom stage in an archive box were morsels of information and rare stories that have never before been published. For instance, what was not printed in the article were the names of the original members. He wrote:

The band was originally formed in 1918 by several servicemen who had returned before the conclusion of the first world war. Some of the early players of that time were:- Frank Galvin, Gomer Thomas, Norm McWilliam, Jack Holt, Harry Brew, Bill Wright.

– Bill Wilkinson

Some of these men are pictured in the photo published in a 1971 *Australian Band Leader* article.



1921, Photo of Ballarat Soldiers' Memorial Band, *Australian Band Leader*. Source: December 1971

Back: G Thomas, N Nankervis, ?, C Hewitt, G Morrell, R Jerram, A Leith, H Brew, R Nankervis.

Centre: S Allen, R Lockett, H Casley, A Thane, F Galvin, G Allen, B Ackroyd, P Heinz.

Front: C Cromwell, L Harrison, R Rutherford, A Rowell (BM), G Wilkinson, C Ellis, W Wilkinson. Seated in Front: G Bell, A Waight



When we track these soldiers' records through the Australian War Memorial and Discovering Anzacs records we find:

Frank James Galvin (2119): 8 Light Horse Regiment - 15 - 31 Reinforcements (July 1915 – Nov 1916)
Joined age 19, listed trade or calling: Turner

Gomer Stanley Thomas (758) 22 Infantry Battalion (Feb 1915 – Feb 1919) Joined at the age of 18,
listed trade or calling: Clerk

Harry Brew (Junior) born 13 February 1891, served in the RAN from 11 May 1908 until invalided out on 24 April 1918. Attempted to join the AIF, 14 June 1918, but was refused on medical grounds. On 22 November 1929, bricklayer Harry joined the Militia's 8th Battalion (City of Ballarat Regiment) and was posted to the Signallers. He rose through the ranks, being promoted to Lieutenant on 21 March 1933.

Harry went on to be the band's drum major for a time in the 30s and was also a lyricist of note.

Jack Holt and Bill Wright are not in the records and it is beyond the scope of this project to investigate further. In these initial searches however, what we do discover within this group of men is that not many were born in Ballarat but found their way to living in Ballarat when they returned during the war.

Totally unexpected was the series of discoveries about our last soldier:

Norm McWilliam (Hugh John Norman McWilliam) (1591) 3rd Reinforcements 5th Battalion (1915–1916) Joined at the age of 22, listed trade or calling: Fitter, senior cadet 18 months prior to enlistment.

Norm enlisted in December 1914 and joined the 5th Battalion as a reinforcement on Gallipoli on 5 May 1915. On 25 July he was evacuated from the peninsula suffering with Rheumatism. This service entitled him to wear the letter A (for ANZAC) on the Colour Patches on his sleeves.

Norm's mother, Catherine McWilliam, was secretary and highly active member of the Australian League of Womenfolk, auxiliary of the RSSAILA (now RSL). Catherine was awarded an RSL Certificate of Merit and awarded a Gold Medal in 1938 for her work which included ensuring that Anzac Day became a day of observance across Australia. This gives incredible significance to the Soldiers' Band involvement in the Anzac Day parade with Norm, who served at Gallipoli, the founder of the band. His war service contributing to his mother's work to keep the 25th April as a day of remembrance. Catherine is also reported to have set up canteens in Melbourne for the troops, arranged concert parties and worked to inaugurate the annual Poppy Day appeal.

Two years before he died, Norm travelled to Adelaide to join his South Australian 'cobbers' in the Anzac Day Parade. *The Advertiser* reporter caught a rare interview with him, published on 24 April 1953. His mother's contribution was reported:

Perhaps only a woman, and certainly only a woman of Mrs McWilliam's calibre, could have had the capacity, the tenacity of purpose, and the sympathetic feeling to carry out the great tasks she performed.

– *The Advertiser*



Norm was born in Melbourne, but how did he find himself in Ballarat prior to war's end as a returned soldier? A clue is given to us by his daughters, published in this interview by *The Courier*, 23 July 2016:

While recuperating in Melbourne, for exercise Norm would take his brother Alistair on bicycle rides – to Ballarat! It was there, while staying in the Leicester (sic) Boarding House opposite today's Myers [then Patterson Powell Pty Ltd] he and fellow servicemen would bring their instruments onto the balcony to play tunes for the public. On a Sunday afternoon passerby's would sit in the Sturt Street gardens and enjoy the music. On the basis of this interest and the enjoyment of playing together, Norm suggested they start a band, in honour of the servicemen of World War 1.

– *The Courier*

A snapshot of Norm's wartime experiences is glimpsed in the same article:

The little bit he told us about the war – they would actually drop their bayonets and have fistfights, on top of these bloated bodies. Dreadful. He had this one obsession, blowflies. You had to have the house empty of them. He said they had to scrape maggots off their food at Gallipoli. So you'd understand.

– 'An Anzac's Letter Returned to Ballarat', *The Courier*, 23 July 2016

Norm's story was only revealed because his mother Catherine had kept a letter that he had written to her from the first AIF camp at Broadmeadows 3 December 1914. But the letter had become lost after her death. Many years later, around the time of the World War I centenary a gentleman by the name of David McMahon, who had found the letter and kept it for its stamp, decided to track down Norm's surviving relatives to return it to them. The story was picked up by *The Courier* and published at the 100 year commemoration of Gallipoli.

During the same period that Norm was forming the returned soldiers' band in Ballarat, the proactive workers at the textile company E. Lucas & Co. (affectionately known as the 'Lucas Girls') initiated a tree planting project to honour those men and women who served in the war making Ballarat one of the earliest communities in Victoria to create an Avenue of Honour, now stretching twenty two kilometres.



1920, Lucas Girls load bricks for onto horse-drawn carriage for construction of Arch of Victory. Source: Max Harris Photography Collection

Both significant living memories were initiated during World War I and are still alive today. In 1920 when the band was being officially formalised through its Victorian Bands Association registration, the last bricks were being mortared on the Arch of Victory.



Beside the arch is a plaque that reads:

...in honour of the sailors, soldiers and nurses of Ballarat who took part in the Great War – June 1920

Another plaque reads:

This avenue extends for a distance of 14 miles and contains 3,900 trees which were individually planted by "The Lucas Girls" for every Ballarat citizen who served in the Great War and assisted in maintaining the liberty of Australia.

"All ye who tread this avenue of life,
Remember those who bowed beneath the strife,
Each leaf a laurel, crowns with deathless fame
and every tree reveals a hero's name."

We can only imagine how devastating the war must have been for the Ballarat community with around 4000 young men leaving for war, 800 of those never to return. In a population of roughly 40,000, war left a grave mark on the community.

In what was supposed to be a short war and intended to be over by Christmas of 1914, the conditions were unprecedented and beyond comprehension. Instead of months, the war lasted a harrowing four years. Australia, only newly federated and very much wanting to prove itself in will and might as part of the Empire, recruited incredible support for the allies. They considered themselves 'new Britons'. Australian-born young men were enlisted as 'Natural Born British Subjects' by the thousands, for what they thought was to be an opportunity of a lifetime for travel and adventure.

New to humanity, however, were the heinous weapons (machine guns, tanks, shell fire and poisonous gas) and accompanying diseases (trench foot, trench nephritis and trench fever contracted through days spent knee deep in trenches harbouring lice, rats and cold mud). The suffering was incalculable.

When the men and women who physically survived the war returned, they had to find a way back to some semblance of normality.

In the following 1917 article, in which the challenges to returned servicemen are reported rather too buoyantly and naively optimistic, we get an inkling of the difficulties faced and the reasons why – beyond a living memorial to those damaged by war – the returned servicemen must have found vital solace and support in the Ballarat Soldiers' Memorial band. Even the tone of the article speaks to the denial of the true experience.

It is not hard to imagine how this cultural denial may have caused personal internal conflict for returned servicemen. They were declared heroes, but for many, they were literally or figuratively crippled.



Monday 4 June 1917, *The Courier*

The difficulties connected with the repatriation of our soldiers are sometimes over-estimated. These men are not like immigrants who arrive amongst strangers to make a living in a country whose climatic and industrial conditions are entirely different from those of the land of their birth. Some of our men will return to their former occupations; many, perhaps the majority, will have no particular calling to follow; others will be incapacitated from following certain kinds of employment; but all will be amongst friends who will assist them in every way. Australia is capable of absorbing millions of workers, and the only difficulty is to place them in positions where they and the State will both be benefited. A man may be physically strong, intelligent, and energetic, and yet have no liking for a branch of industry which another would be delighted to follow. Many men would not accept a wheat field in the Mallee and reside on it, if it were offered to them; others again would not submit to an indoor city life, whatever the pecuniary inducement might be. We must, therefore take into consideration the habits acquired by our soldiers during the period of the war. Theirs has been a life of excitement and adventure, and of close and constant intercourse with myriads of their fellow men. It has been essentially an outdoor life, yet not one of loneliness of isolation. There is no parallel to it in civil life. Moreover, they have been constantly under the direction of their leaders; they have not been compelled to think and act on their own initiative; and everything they have required has been found for them. They have become habituated to a form of living that has no counterpart in time of peace, and these habits will cling to them until gradually replaced by others. Unity of action and the spirit of comradeship, engendered on the battlefield, will remain; and, if our repatriation schemes are to be successful these acquired characteristics must be taken into account ...

– *The Courier*

What better place to find 'unity of action and the spirit of comradeship' and an outlet for grief in regular civic life than in the band? A strong peace time group of support and friendship, a safe place to recover from the 'excitement' of war.

The article goes on to describe the soldier-farmer settlements provided for these men. Policy makers did not want the men to be isolated on large rural tracts but equally did not want them to settle in the major cities where they could potentially usurp the work of other willing and able men. Along with their allotments, the ex-servicemen were offered practical training in land and animal husbandry.

The forward-thinking citizens of Ballarat initiated something for returned servicemen nearly eighteen months earlier. A gentleman named Major Lazarus was to play a major role in bringing the men back from the dead of the battlefields.

2 September 1916, *Ballarat Star*

Free Instructions for Soldiers - The Council of the Ballarat School of Mines in February last adopted a resolution to the effect that applications from returned soldiers for free instruction at the School would be favourably considered. This matter was further discussed at the Council meeting held last week, at Colonel Bolton's suggestion, Major Lazarus, secretary of the Ballarat branch of the returned Soldiers' Association, was asked to co-operate with a sub-committee of the council in carrying out the proposal. Major Lazarus has enthusiastically accepted the offer, and has written to the general committee in Melbourne, with a view to leading other technical institutions to follow the local school's lead.

– Federation University, *Ballarat and District Industrial Heritage Project* wiki
(https://bih.federation.edu.au/index.php/World_War_One)

The progressive program preceded assistance from the Repatriation Department and ran until 1922 to great success. Over 400 returned servicemen made use of this free education repatriation program. Training included woodwork, electric wiring, electroplate work, turning and fitting and commercial subjects.

It seems likely that some of the Soldiers' Memorial Band members were among those retrained in these popular trades, necessary for rebuilding an economically and socially beleaguered nation.

Major Lazarus became the first president of the Ballarat Soldiers' Memorial Band. Their first bandmaster was Mr Hector Jones with rehearsals in the RSL Clubrooms in Sturt Street Ballarat. The RSL resurrected the space after legendary Lester's Hotel (est. 1862) closed in late 1916 due to wartime depression.

THE MIGHTY FALLEN

LESTER'S HOTEL CLOSED

PALTRY COMPENSATION.

MELBOURNE, This Day.

This evening 139 hotels, which have either surrendered their licences, or have been compulsorily closed, will terminate their existence. Amongst the most notable is Lester's, of Ballarat, once one of the best known in the State. Business fell away so much that the licensee had to give up. The compensation was only £175.

30 December 1916, 'THE MIGHTY FALLEN',
The Daily News, Perth, WA.



Lester's Hotel. Source: Max Harris Collection, Ballarat Mechanics' Institute



Introducing Major Lazarus

Julius Samuel Lazarus (b. 1861) was a musician, certified civil and hydraulic engineer, a certified land and mining surveyor, a certified municipal clerk and a certified state school teacher. He worked for the Shire of Bungaree as engineer and secretary and enlisted in the Citizen Military Force in 1901 and when war broke out, he was Second-in-Command of Ballarat East's 70th Infantry (Ballarat Regiment).

At age fifty four he joined the battalion on the Gallipoli Peninsula, 13 November 1915. Only to be discharged less than one month later and transported to hospital at Alexandria four days before Christmas. By New Year's Eve the same year, Major Lazarus was discharged from duty. He returned to Australia early May 1916, to receive confirmation later that month that he was medically unfit for service. His role was then changed to 'an officer of the Citizens Forces'.



DISCOVER MORE

Read in *The Courier* articles from 2016 about how Norm McWilliam's story was tracked down through the fortuitous discovery of the hidden letter.

[Do you know who Norman McWilliam was? A letter needs returning to his family.](#)

[An Anzac's letter returned to Ballarat.](#)

What's in a name?

The band's name evolved with the band over the last century. It has played under names of varying lengths and, it seems, the longer it was, the more everyone shortened it.

Coming up are some variations that the brass band has been officially called or referred to over the years prior to its evolution into a concert band by 1987.

NAME	DATES	FREQUENCY
Ballarat Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial Band	(from at least 1921–1955)	5
Ballarat and District Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial Band	(from at least 1922–1949)	5
Ballarat Soldiers' Memorial Band	(from at least 1922–1975)	33
Ballarat Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen's Memorial Band	(from at least 1950–1975)	9

From this survey of official Royal South Street entries and bandroom band photos conducted by band member and President Tony Rowlands, 'Ballarat Soldiers' Memorial Band' was by far the most frequently used.



In talking to long-term past members, and reading the minutes and handwritten history, we learn that the band was most often referred to as 'The Soldiers' Band'.

The word 'Airmen's' was introduced after the mass use of air warcraft in World War II and we can track its use in '50, '57, '60, '64, '70, '72, '75. Interestingly, as with all the other names, 'Airmen's' was also used sporadically and interspersed with the other names.

Other names used included Ballarat Returned Soldiers and Ballarat RSL (1950 and 1951, <http://brassbandresults.co.uk>).

The minutes books from 1923, 1935 and 1940 are stamped with 'The Ballarat and District Soldiers' & Sailors' Memorial Band'.

In the minutes, Sunday 18 May 1946, it is recorded that a special meeting was held and it was passed that the name of the band be the 'Ballarat and District Sailors, Soldiers and Airmen's Memorial Band'. It seems the person taking the minutes either recorded the name in the wrong order, or this was briefly one idea of what the name should be. Throughout the minutes in the years following, however, the band is generally referred to as the Soldiers' Memorial Band.

So we can see that there were many variations on a theme.

For the purposes of this book, the 'Soldiers' Memorial Band', or more simply 'Soldiers' Band', are the versions of the name that we will use for the first sixty years of history.

The band changed its name to Ballarat Memorial Concert Band in 1987. But that is a story for later ...

What does music have to do with war?

I'm glad you asked! As it turns out, quite a lot actually. To understand the experiences of the returned servicemen and why they would think to create a brass band in honour of their fallen comrades, we need to understand the context out of which the band was born.

First, music has been utilised in war for (at least) over 2000 years. We have the Roman historian Vegetius to look to for information about military tactics used during the height of the Roman Empire. His earliest surviving text of *De Re Militari* dates to the 5th Century CE and includes specific information about the critical use of music for battle in ancient Roman:

The music of the legion consists of trumpets, cornets and buccina. The trumpet sounds the charge and the retreat. The cornets are used only to regulate the motions of the colors; the trumpets serve when the soldiers are ordered out to any work without the colors; but in time of action, the trumpets and cornets sound together. The *classicum*, which is a particular sound of the buccina or horn, is appropriated to the commander-in-chief and is used in the presence of the general, or at the execution of a soldier, as a mark of its being done by his authority. The ordinary guards and outposts are always mounted and relieved by the sound of trumpet, which also directs the motions of the soldiers on working parties and on field days. The cornets sound whenever the colors are to be struck or planted. These rules must be punctually observed in all exercises and reviews so that



the soldiers may be ready to obey them in action without hesitation according to the general's orders either to charge or halt, to pursue the enemy or to retire. For reason will convince us that what is necessary to be performed in the heat of action should constantly be practiced in the leisure of peace.'

– *De Re Militari* (Military Institutions of the Romans) by Flavius Vegetius Renatus (died A.D. 450), written around A.D. 390. translated from the Latin by Lieutenant John Clarke Text British translation published in 1767. Etext version by Mads Brevik (2001) digitalattic.org]

Interestingly, *De Re Militari* was used throughout the Middle Ages as a guide to war tactics and methods and remained in use into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with the book being traditionally gifted to generals. So what was recorded as a comprehensive history became a how-to reference for many centuries of war in Europe. Shakespeare explains the intrinsic relationship between music and war in *Othello*:

The spirit-stirring drum, the ear-piercing fife, The royal banner, and all quality, Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war!

– William Shakespeare

By the time William was putting quill to paper, musicians may not have been required for the observance of sacrificial rites – as Pericles saw fit to do in Roman battle times – but brass bands and Scottish pipe bands were used in Europe to rouse the troops, intimidate the enemy and to coordinate communication and movement.

Apart from the sounds of natural disasters, what were the loudest sounds on pre-industrialised planet earth?

Pipes, drums and brass instruments were the loudest mobile instruments emanating an aural force with which to be reckoned (town bells and pipe organs were arguably louder but not so easily transportable!).

The bigger the band, the mightier the sound and the most organised band strongly indicated, the most life-threatening militia.

In Ballarat in the 1850s, music was employed to boost morale, coordinate movement and keep people focused and fighting for the cause in Australia's first democratic rebellion:

At Ballarat towards the end of 1854, rebellious diggers called upon the circus of John Jones. With guns and pistols levelled, the diggers ordered the German bandsmen of the circus to march to a site where a makeshift stockade was under construction. At gunpoint, the musicians serenaded the diggers all day until, at last, the crude fortress was completed and they were permitted to return to the circus. That evening, the fortress was overrun by several hundred soldiers and police sent from Melbourne – an incident that has gone down in Australia's history as the "Eureka Stockade".

– From the Australian Government's website australia.gov.au and quoted in *Songways Music Mapping, Ballarat* (http://www.hulballarat.org.au/cb_pages/songways_art_gallery_of_ballarat.php)

Music in war also importantly brings dignity to the many events associated with war. Music certainly topped, tailed and middled the World War I experience.



Band about to board the HMAT Ballarat (<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C1042820>)

Bands were desperately needed: on the home front for recruiting drives throughout the war; to play on the ships to entertain them men carried to war; in every battalion that could secure one and keep it; for concert parties, recreational activities, route marches and funerals; to sound The Last Post and The Reveille.

They were needed to accompany the men home at the end of war, and to welcome them when they finally arrived, with bands cobbled together from those too young, too old or infirm for active service.

Up to and including World War I, music transmitted orders across extensive distances in battle, just like in Roman times. Drums and brass instruments were still high-tech signal machines!

Perhaps unlike any other medium, music has power to lift people's spirits and enable and maintain a sense of unity. This is scarcely more needed than in wartime.

Music can bring a semblance of humanity back to an inhumane reality. In order for men to serve their country through war, they had to believe that sacrificing their life would not be in vain and that their lives would be remembered and honoured.

The ritual of bugle calls were designed to achieve this. *The Last Post* was played at the end of the day to cease fire during the war as well as honour those who had fallen during the day. The *Reveille* meaning 'to wake again' (French) was written for the waking of the troops, symbolising the awakening of the dead in the next and better world.



They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

– Laurence Binyon (excerpt from *For the Fallen*, 1914)

War music written and published in 1914 was prolific. Music, a valuable muscle in the marketing arm for war propaganda, encouraging boys and men to enlist. And brass band composers wrote in war themes during the war, in their descriptive fantasias they told the stories that stirred nationalist fervour through music. As Jeremy de Korte archivist at the VBL said about composers of the time: 'They felt as patriotic as the rest of us, so even if they didn't go to war, they wrote for it.'

In Robert Holden's book *And the Band Played On* (p. 265), he includes a quote from 1918 by 'Tenor Horn' who succinctly says: 'Music is to a city or nation's spirit what ammunition is to their army.'

Rudyard Kipling's, 'The Soul of the Battalion' speech details the importance of music to war:

27 January 1915

... a few drums and fifes in a battalion are worth five extra miles on a route-march — quite apart from the fact that they swing the battalion back to quarters composed and happy in its mind no matter how wet and tired its body may be. And even where there is no route-marching, the mere come-and-go, the roll and flourish of the drums and fifes round barracks is as warming and cheering as the sight of a fire in a room.

Or a band, not necessarily a full band, but a band of a few brasses and wood winds is immensely valuable in districts where troops are billeted. It revives memories; it quickens associations; it opens and unites the hearts of men more surely than any other appeal. In that respect it assists recruiting perhaps more than any other agency. The tunes that it employs and the words that go with them may seem very far removed from heroism or devotion; but the magic and the compelling power are there to make men's souls realise certain truths which their minds might doubt.

More than that. No one — not even the Adjutant — can say for certain where the soul of a battalion lives; but the expression of that soul is most often found in the Band. It stands to reason that a body of twelve hundred men whose lives are pledged to each other's keeping must have some common means of expressing their thoughts and moods to themselves and to their world. The Band can feel the mood and interpret the thought. A wise and sympathetic bandmaster — and most that I have known have been that — can lift a battalion out of depression, cheer its sickness, and steady and recall it to itself in times of almost unendurable strain ...

... A man who has had any experience of the Service can testify that a battalion is better for music at every turn — happier, easier to handle, and with greater zest for its daily routine if that routine is sweetened by melody and rhythm, melody for the mind and rhythm for the body ...



Listen to samples of World War I music in [Music and the First World War exhibition](#) from the Australian War Memorial.



... The Army needs music — its own music, for, more than any calling, soldiers do not live on bread alone. From time immemorial the man who offers his life for his land has been compassed at every turn of his services by elaborate ceremonial and observance, of which music is no small part — carefully designed to prepare and uphold him. It is not expedient nor seemly that any portion of that ritual should be slurred or omitted now.

— Rudyard Kipling

The dual role of musicians at war

By the time World War I was upon us, Australia had adopted the British model of assigning the task of medical field ambulance to a sector of the forces who were most literate, cohesive and easily trained: musicians. In previous wars this model had been a reasonably effective way of keeping their wounded alive.

However, the unforeseen problems encountered due to new weaponry including machine guns, rifles, mortars, artillery, air bombs and chemical warfare spilled out to the musicians who were close enough to the line of fire as to be regularly injured by shells, picked off by snipers and poisoned by gas as they provided this much-needed field ambulance.

The Field Ambulance Company was responsible for 'Second Line' casualty evacuation from 'First Line' Regimental Aid Posts (RAP) in each battalion.

The RAP belonged to the Battalion (or other units) and was manned by the Regimental Medical Officer (RMO), a qualified doctor generally of Captain rank supported by several non-commissioned officers (NCO) of Sergeant and Corporal rank, with a number of medical orderlies at the rank of Private.

They in turn were supported by unit stretcher bearers, generally drawn from the Battalion's Band. These men would be trained to administer First Aid sufficient to clear airways, staunch bleeding and perhaps splint fractures so that casualties could be evacuated to the Battalion RAP. Casualties would be hand carried - requiring at least four men but more like eight over any distance for each casualty. Hand carts were also used but rough ground generally meant stretchers. When mass casualties occurred, such as through major shelling or an enemy attack, decisions would have to be made about the priority of evacuation. The RMO would assess the casualty and decide whether they were to be evacuated and with what priority. Grievous wounds with little chance of survival would generally not be evacuated.

When an attack or advance was undertaken, the RAP would follow up the units' forward elements and were thus exposed to enemy direct fire (rifles and machine guns) and indirect fire (artillery mortar fire and even gas).

— Robyn Coates, Cornish Association of Victoria, Ballarat Branch.

By 1916, things were becoming dire and too many musicians were losing their lives, and it was agreed that this was not a tenable situation for the army. So measures were taken to change the roles to preserve the bands.

How many military roles are deemed so important that lieutenants would be willing to swap their men to replace them? This is indeed what happened in World War I.



Theresa Cronk, Senior Curator at the Australian War Memorial, explains the evolution of attitudes toward and necessity of musicians at war in World War I:

At the beginning of the war the attitude towards the bandsmen was that they were soldiers first and bandsmen second. About mid 1916 that attitude started to change at the same time that concert parties were becoming highly valued for their restorative values. Soldiers involved in concert parties started to be taken off the front line and given entertainment as their first duty. In the British army, they thought it would be over by Christmas, so they didn't want energy spent on frivolity but as the war dragged on morale became as much of a reinforcement as additional men to fight were.

– Theresa Cronk

World War I official war correspondent CEW Bean writes in his article 'The stretcher-bearer tradition':

Until the First Battle of the Somme many battalions had used their bandsmen as stretcher-bearers. After that battle this system generally was abandoned. For one thing, after such battles the band was too badly needed for cheering up the troops! A battle like Pozieres sometimes made a clean sweep of the regimental bearers.

– CEW Bean

Military History and Heritage Victoria documents that musicians were given the role as stretcher bearers until at least late 1918.

Jill Durance in her article 'The Band has Rendered Valuable Service - Victorian Brass Bands on the Home Front during the Great War' (p. 4) explains why young bandsmen would have been suited to army life as much as army life was suited to the services of a band:

Often bandsmen began their musical training at an early age and, by the time they enlisted, were quite accomplished on their instrument. Eighteen-year-old Ray Membrey, who enlisted in 1915, had already had six years of experience playing the trombone with the Stawell Brass Band. Les Vosti of the Essendon City Council Band had learned to play euphonium as a boy in the Guildford Band under the guidance of his uncle, while Stephen and William Haisman of Rochester were playing cornet from an early age. These bandsmen were also accustomed to wearing uniforms and had experience in playing while marching, particularly if they had participated in processions and band contests.

The training, discipline and experiences of the civilian bandsmen enabled them to adapt readily to camp life and to the battalion bands in which they commonly volunteered. The military origins of many aspects of brass banding meant that the bandsmen of the 1st AIF were in fact 'enfolded' back into a long British tradition where musicians aroused patriotic fervour, bolstered morale, and provided comfort to the troops for whom they played.

– Jill Durance

Band music's transportive quality cannot be underestimated: away from the horrors of war and the basic nature of life in the trenches, back home in their hearts and minds through familiarity and the nostalgia of good times with loved ones, uplifting their spirits through humour and joy and raising their physical prowess on route marches through rhythm and pride.



Next, we gain a rare insight into one Ballarat musician's war experiences. He's not just any musician, either..



DISCOVER MORE

Read about the war experiences of many Australian musicians in [Digger, #34, March 2011.](#)

To read more about the role of musicians during World War I in [Musicians under fire](#) from the Australian War Memorial.

To see band repertoire from World War I, read [Bandsmen and stretcher-bearers: Why were bandsmen also stretcher-bearers?](#) from Military History & Heritage Victoria.

Alf Rowell's wartime experience

Along with all the soldiers who returned to Australia before war's end and who started the Ballarat Memorial Soldiers' Band, there was one man who had grown up in Ballarat as an orphan and who was to become instrumental in the Soldiers' Band history. We will hear more about this extraordinary man's life in the upcoming 1920s chapter of the band's history.

In terms of his war experience we have his history written by Robyn Coates in *The Life And Times Of Alfred Rowell – Influential Musician*. (With kind permission, extensive excerpts are included here.) Robyn's grandfather served in the same battalion as Alf Rowell. Through her research we hear first-hand accounts from Alf about his duties and war experiences as a young musician growing up in an orphanage in Ballarat. It is worth noting that before Alf was appointed to band sergeant, it was Percy Code who lead the battalion band when it first formed in Ballarat.

Alfred Rowell enlisted on 9th March 1916 at Ballarat having once been rejected due to varicose veins. He was allocated to the 39th Battalion and was appointed Acting Band Sergeant for the Battalion on 16th April 1916 and Band Sergeant on 1st May 1916.

– Robyn Coates



23 January 1918, The 39th Battalion Band, Belgium: Flanders, West-Vlaanderen, Messines, Neuve Eglise (Alfred Rowell – front row, sixth from the left). Source: Australian War Memorial (www.awm.gov.au/collection/C390328?image=1)

The band, before its departure, played at the funerals of several battalion members and at concerts to raise funds for the 39th Battalion's Comfort Fund. The Comfort Fund monies included an amount for purchasing music for the band. Prout's Band continued these concerts for the Comfort Fund of the 39th Battalion after the battalion had left for overseas.

Ballarat, like many country towns and cities, supported comfort funds with donations of non-perishable food, magazines and newspapers and knitwear being regularly sent.

These were often forwarded to the battalion's chaplain for distribution. In the case of the 39th Battalion, this was a local Anglican minister, Joseph Best, whose own church provided many comforts for the men of the 39th Battalion, including knitted socks, mittens, scarves and balaclava caps plus shirts, towels and face washers.

On the day of its departure, on 27 May 1916, the battalion led by its band, under the direction of its bandmaster, Sergeant Alfred Rowell, marched through the streets of Ballarat at 3.00 am to board the train to Port Melbourne for embarkation on board HMAT A11 Ascanius.

– Robyn Coates

Historian and former Soldiers' Band member, Amanda Bentley, writes more about the march:

A foggy, frosty Ballarat morning greeted the men of the 39th on 27 May, as they marched through the streets to the Ballarat West Railway Station. The band was apparently in fine form and played many popular selections along the way – Australia Will Be There, The Girl I Left Behind Me, "I'm 95", Will Ye No' Come Back Again, Le Marseillaise and Auld Lang Syne would undoubtedly have stirred hearts and brought tears to eyes in equal measure. The troops then entrained to Melbourne, where they boarded the troopship Ascanius, before embarking later the same day.

– Amanda Bentley



Robyn Coates' account continues:

The Band played on the pier prior to embarkation to endeavour to make the event a joyous occasion and continued playing as the ship sailed down Port Philip Bay.

During the voyage, on board the ship, the Band played for deck concerts which were greatly appreciated by the soldiers and for Church Parades each Sunday.

At each port the ship called, route marches were carried out to relieve some of the monotony of the voyage but also to supplement the soldiers' levels of fitness with them having been confined to the narrow spaces of the ship. The Band led the soldiers as they marched, and often, the local children accompanied them marching and dancing along to the music.

The Battalion disembarked at Devonport, England, on 18th July 1916 and entrained for Salisbury Plain, detraining at Amesbury before marching to their camp at Larkhill, close to Stonehenge.

Whilst at Salisbury Plain, a newspaper article concerning the Ballarat Orphanage reports that Sergeant Alf Rowell had distinguished himself through being the leader of twenty-five massed bands who played on the occasion of the visit of the King to Salisbury Plain.

– Robyn Coates

The 39th Battalion Band Reputations was a poem written by Bandsman Private John Cronin, sent home from the training camp at Salisbury Plain, England. It was received in October 1916 and published in Ballarat's, *The Courier*. In this snapshot an insight into the creativity, camaraderie and humour of the band is caught. Some of these men returned to form the Soldiers' Band; others never made it home.

Rowell he plays a cornet,
Martin plays a trom,
And when they play together
It sounds just like a bomb.

Bonnie Illig plays a side-drum.
Brother Stanley plays the horn,
And if no one interferes
They'll go from dark till dawn.

Griggs he plays a baritone,
Cromwell plays a bass;
And sure they are good players,
You can see it in their face.

Ruby plays a cornet,
Hopkins plays the same;
And when the sergeant "roars" them
They kid they're not to blame.

Harrison and Trekardo play E flats,
Rutherford plays a "tone";
And when they play a melody
It's always "Home, Sweet Home."

Gazzard plays the "Tut, Tut, Tut,"
Robinson beats the drum
Gilbert puts in brilliant work,
While Jones falls over a rum.

Cronin plays a eupho,
Welsh, he plays one too;
And on the second and seventeenth
They're pleased to lift their screw.

Arthur Moy, he plays a trombone,
Goodwin plays a horn;
And when they cannot play their parts
Their hopes are not forlorn.

Welsh and Smith are handy men,
Billy Gray the same;
And when old Toohey is not there
The playing is very tame.

So we come to the "End of a Perfect
Day,"
After keeping the boys well alive;
And when we wake up in the morn
We'll strike up "Ninety Five..."

Source: Amanda Bentley
(www.facebook.com/GreatWarBallarat)



I'm 95 was the 39th Battalion's tune.

Robyn Coates' history continues:

After training for several months and with the Band accompanying many route marches and playing in many concerts at the Salisbury Plain Camp, the Battalion left for France on 23rd November 1916.

When deployed, each battalion had a detachment at its Base Depot, which did not take the field when the battalion was on active service.

The Base Detachment consisted of a Lieutenant, two Sergeants and 91 Privates to form a first reinforcement (to make good battalion casualties or other losses), four Storemen, the Band Sergeant, and the Sergeant Master Tailor.

Sergeant Alfred Rowell was not meant to have been amongst those fighting at the Front Line. However, in a letter written home to his future wife, Olive Jeffs, he gives a first-hand account of what was happening at the Front and the role of the Bandsman.

Robyn Coates discovered Alfred's words to his future wife, published in *The Courier*:

14 December 1916

Here I am squatting in a dugout over which shells are flying for all they are worth, our side sending them over, the enemy replying. Our artillery is doing good work and we send over three shells to everyone of theirs.

Sometimes the shells fall very close to us but we are quite used to them now and go about happy and smiling and greeting each other with a, 'Good day, mate,' or if a shell comes too close, say to each other, 'Look out, Fritz is after us.' My boys are separated, four being with each company and they act as stretcher bearers. They are well and it is splendid to see the fine spirit they show in doing their work, and how they settle down to anything that is expected of them.

I doubt whether you would know us if you were to see us now, in our tin hats and clothes and boots covered in mud. We often joke about and say how we would like to parade in Sturt Street in them.

It is 11 pm and a heavy bombardment has just ceased so now for a few winks.

17th December 1916

Today is Sunday and one hardly knows it from Saturday. At present we are in billets, having come in last evening from the trenches after six days of it.

We have just been inspected by General Birdwood and other officers.

The Band played several items and General Birdwood spoke to me and thanked me for the 'splendid music' - (his own words). When he learned that the boys had been stretcher bearing all last week, he spoke of the grand work always done by the stretcher bearers and said, 'I am proud of every one of you, and you are brave men of the AIF,' and after a few more encouraging remarks, he continued his inspection. I tell you my boys felt very proud and flattered.

As I said before, we are in billets for a few days and then we expect to return to the trenches where we will spend Christmas.

We are in France, close to the fighting line, but when we were within some miles of it we could hear the guns roaring, reminding us that we were getting closer to it. We passed through many villages, and every one of them bore signs of the terrible havoc, which the guns have wrought. It is cruel to see the destruction. All the inhabitants have gone, goodness knows where.



After a day's march, we came to another very big place, which is also in ruins, and in which we are now billeted. We are able to make ourselves fairly comfortable here, because there are many household conveniences and we tax them to a large extent.

Things such as tables, chairs, cooking utensils, mirrors, carpets and a host of other articles. We lived like this for several days after our arrival in France, and overhead were flying shells, giving us a little idea of what we were to get later on. Our next move was to the trenches, where we have spent the last six days. We had to put our instruments away while there, but we have been playing again, now that we have a spell; and how the boys appreciate the music.

It is a funny sight to see us when we have overcoats on, Tin hats, a great pack on our back, two gas helmets, two blankets and a water proof sheet around our necks. We Bandsman carrying our instruments, the others carrying rifles and a hundred and fifty rounds of ammunition; also a 24 hour supply of rations in a bag, a haversack jammed full of shaving gear, etc, a water bottle filled and every pocket filled with different articles.

Talk about pack horses, they are not it. This is the life that takes all vanity out of us.

We think now that if a man has got a knife, fork, spoon, a tin plate and pannikin, two blankets and a waterproof sheet he is set up. But I suppose, if we are spared to come back, we will alter our opinion; anyway, we will know how to appreciate anything, everything. We have learnt to take things as they come. It is a great experience for any man, this life here, and I feel proud to be associated with thousands of Australian boys, who are doing their share towards winning this war.

Although we are not in the trenches at present, we will never know what minute we will be called out. We have not had our clothes off for over a fortnight, and don't know when we will. In the trenches one doesn't have a wash for days.

I am so pleased to hear of the success of the Orphanage band at South Street Competitions, and on behalf of the 39th Battalion Band offer them our hearty congratulations.

We are all in splendid health, also G Watkins, R Edwards, A Ellis, G Trekardo., and R Rutherford ... (other Ballarat men connected with the Band) 13

The Battle of Messines, June 1917, was one of the first battles in which the 39th Battalion was engaged and the battalion suffered heavily from a German gas bombardment and fierce machine gun fire when less than a third of the troops earmarked to attack were able.

The initial assault was preceded by the detonation of 19 mines, under the German front line, which caused an estimated 10 000 German casualties.

Many instances of bravery for men of the 39th Battalion are recorded from the Messines Battle.

– Sergeant Alfred Rowell in the *Ballarat Courier*, sourced by Robyn Coates

Amanda Bentley writes about founding Soldiers' Band member Russ Rutherford's experiences:

For members of the band, the treacherous job of stretcher-bearing exposed them to terrible risks. They had formed a close-knit unit within the battalion, so it came as a great shock when the popular trombonist, Arthur Moy, was shot through the face and mortally wounded early in the fighting.



Many of them, including Russell Rutherford, were also caught in a German counterattack of gas shells on the same day. He was evacuated to hospital at St Omer, before being removed to a convalescent depot at Boulogne on the coast with the hope that the fresh sea air would help with his recovery.

After eight weeks out of the firing line, Russell finally returned to his unit at Neuve Eglise on 4 August. He was to serve throughout the 39th Battalion's campaign during the Battle of Passchendaele.

– Amanda Bentley

After serving in France and Belgium at Messines, Ypres, Broodseinde, Passchendaele, The Somme, Amiens, Mont St Quentin, the Hindenburg Line and the St Quentin Canal, the 39th Battalion, as part of the Third Division, commenced demobilisation in February 1919.

A total of 406 of its members had died on active service and the Battalion Band would have been responsible for playing at many funerals, when it was safe to do so.

One of the Band's final duties was to accompany the Battalion as they marched to the station at Blangy from Bouillancourt for their final train journey in France to Le Havre and then by ship back to England.

– Robyn Coates

Honouring their fellow servicemen and remembering those who were lost during the war was not the end of the story for World War I musician–soldiers who survived such as Norm McWilliam, Alf Rowell and Russ Rutherford.



DISCOVER MORE

[Read Russ Rutherford's story](#) written by historian and former Soldiers' Band member Amanda Bentley.

Returned soldiers bands around the country

Soldiers' memorial bands are largely, in the first instance, a World War I phenomenon. Battle on the scale of the Great War had not occurred before in human history; the scale of trauma and mourning was unprecedented.

These memorial bands were set up by individuals or groups for different reasons, and as such did not always persist past their initial purpose. Sydney, Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, Geelong and Bendigo all had memorial bands. These included the ANZAC Memorial Band (NSW), Lone Pine Anzac Brass Band (NSW), Returned Soldiers Gallipoli Band (WA), and Unley Returned Soldiers' Band (Adelaide, SA). Closer to home there was the Victorian Soldiers' Memorial Band (Melbourne).



The bands varied in their banding activities and had functions such as raising funds for housing for returned soldiers (ANZAC Memorial Band Sep 1916, NSW); recruiting for the war effort (August 1917 Soldiers' Memorial Band [Melbourne] conducted a two-month tour through the regions to try to encourage enlistment); contribution to numerous fundraising events for returned soldiers (Lone Pine Anzac Brass Band was active from 1916 to 1919. Formed from returned injured soldiers, it toured Australia raising money for wounded comrades in the Returned Soldiers' Association); playing to accompany returned injured soldiers (in Bendigo a band was formed from men who had volunteered for the war effort, but had been rejected because of physical impairment); fundraising for the band itself, including a masked ball held to raise funds for the WA Returned Soldiers Gallipoli band in June 1918.

As we can see, returned soldiers' bands were up and running through the war years and functioned according to the needs of their local community.

In Ballarat, by World War I there were already a good number of bands. These were representative of the sorts of bands found across the country as well as in the UK on which the Australian banding culture was modelled.

Ballarat became one of a select number of metropolitan and rural towns to support a soldiers' memorial band. It is hard to say how many other World War I memorial bands have survived as some have also changed their names, but the number is small.

Even fewer competed nationally. Out of 180 bands that competed in South Street between 1900 and 1951, only a handful were associated with the military (Garrison, Senior Cadets, Militia, Battalion or Regimental). Furthermore, only two were RSL bands: Geelong Exservicemen's Memorial Band and Ballarat Soldiers' Memorial Band. (*Mullen's Bandsman of South Street 1900-1951* [pp63-64])

It was possibly because of the enthusiasm for banding in Ballarat – home of Royal South Street, band Mecca of Australia with a rich musical cultural heritage having asserted itself as a cultured city of the Empire en par with other European cities (during the gold rush) – that this unique rural city of the late 1910s had capacity to imagine sustaining a civic band to honour its servicemen.

Sustain it did, although there were countless trials and tribulations along the way – as there are for any band that lasts 100 years (and counting). But neither fire, nor dwindling member numbers due to war or lack of war have ever stopped this band from continuing the tradition.

Through commitment and discipline in the first half of the twentieth century and then adaptability and creativity, the band has evolved to become the band it is today. The candle lit for servicemen and women still burns brightly.

But we are getting ahead of ourselves. When did Ballarat catch their very first official glimpse of the band?



Honouring peace

In November 1918 planned and unplanned peace celebrations broke out across the nation. In Ballarat we get an idea of the patriotic fervour that underpinned the celebrations through the involvement of the bands whose ranks the Ballarat Soldiers' Memorial Band was yet to join.

[On 12 November 1918] the City Band assembled at the city hall and, with the traffic stopped and the Alfred (Town Hall) Bells pealing, the bandsmen played 'God Save the King' while the crowd sang. Later, a giant procession formed behind the City Band as it marched from Ballarat East with the fire brigade and then, joining with Prout's Band, led a large crowd of people in from the west. The bands played 'The Marseillaise' the stirring 'Rule Britannia', 'God Save the King' and the hymns 'Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow' and 'Peace Perfect Peace'.

– Jillian Durance, 'The Band has Rendered Valuable Service – Victorian Brass Bands on the Home Front during the Great War', pp. 133 - 134, with information from Bob Pattie

Although conceived during the war, it wasn't until the following year on 20 July 1919 in the Peace Day parades that Ballarat officially heard the full sound of the Soldiers' Memorial Band in their first public performance.

According to the Australian Band Leader December 1971 article, the march tune they played was *Our Hands Have Met*.

As you will see in the next articles, the band may not have decided upon its name at this point. With no minutes books from this period it is hard to say if this was the case, but we know from band documents that the band did not see itself as becoming inaugurated until 1920.

The Age Mon 21 July 1919 reported on the celebrations in both municipalities of Ballarat:

Peace celebrations were carried out with enthusiasm in Ballarat on Sunday. There was a large influx of visitors from outside districts. Bunting was freely displayed at the Government buildings, city and town halls, banks, warehouses and other establishments. The streets of both municipalities were crowded during the day. Peals were rung at the City Hall, while the bells at St. Peter's Anglican Church were also chimed. A feature of the celebration was a street procession, which included returned soldiers, sailors and nurses, fire brigades, about 100 decorated motor cars, Returned Soldiers' Band, Highland Pipe Band and Ballarat City Municipal Band. Nearly 6000 State school children and about 450 pupils of registered schools took part in the demonstration by lining the streets ... The City Hall was brilliantly illuminated in the evening. The Returned Soldiers' Band and Ballarat City Municipal Band gave performances in the Sturt Street rotundas in the evening, when the streets were again crowded.

– *The Age*

The Weekly Times, Melbourne, Saturday 23 Aug 1919, published a sixteen year old's letter to his uncle about the Ballarat Peace Day Celebrations, giving further details of the contribution of the newly formed Soldiers' Band:

On the 19th of July Ballarat celebrated the signing of peace. A fortnight ago an impressive, united thanksgiving service was held in the Coliseum which is Ballarat's biggest hall, and which, although it is estimated to be able to seat 10,000 people, was quite full. Peace Day was a day of rejoicing. In every direction were to be seen flags and bunting. Nearly



every business place was decorated or made a display of a patriotic character ... [The school children] were marched from their respective schools to Sturt Street, where they lined the street four deep, and awaited the coming of the procession, which was due to start at 2 o'clock. Soon after 1 o'clock little streams of people began to move city-wards and join the mighty river flowing down Sturt Street. I had a good view of all that passed. The returned soldiers, led by their newly-formed band, came first, and then followed in motors the hospital nurses, with two genuine patients from one of the wards, and the Red Cross workers. Various patriotic workers came next, some in motor cars and others in decorated drags and lorries. Many other bodies, too numerous to mention, made displays or marched ... After the procession the returned soldiers formed up in front of the City Hall, where the Proclamation of Peace was read ... I only hope that this peace will be permanent and a blessing to everyone.

— *Weekly Times*, Melbourne, Saturday 23 Aug 1919

Another highlight in the band's early history was playing for the laying of the foundation stone for the Arch of Victory by General Sir William Birdwood 7 February 1920.



E. Lucas and Company staff welcome back servicemen after World War 1 and lay the foundation stone for the Arch of Victory. Note the band playing. Source: *The Courier*, 8 Nov 2018.



Not only did the Soldiers' Band play for the foundation ceremony; they played for its opening by HRH Prince of Wales.

When Edward, Prince of Wales visited Ballarat to open the Arch on 2 June, the band formed at the Ballarat Railway Station and marched ahead of the guard of honour and returned servicemen as the Prince was escorted to the Ballarat RSL.

– Amanda Bentley's *Ballarat & District in the Great War* Facebook website



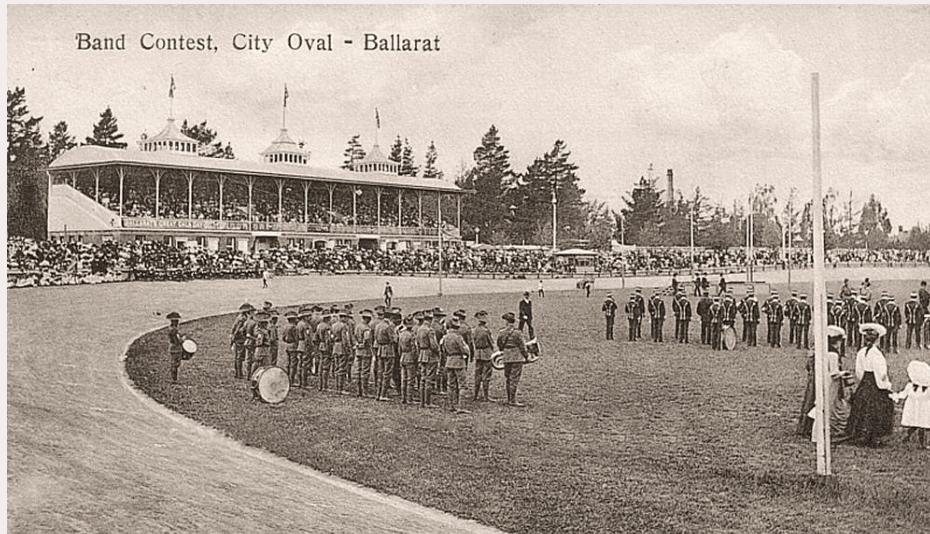
June 1920, Arch of Victory opening. Source: Royal South Street timeline

Alf Rowell was appointed bandmaster in 1920 and the band became registered with the ruling body Victorian Bands League the same year. After this strong start, it was time for the Soldiers' Memorial Band to begin preparations to compete in the illustrious South Street Competitions in 1921.



Royal South Street competitions

Here is a timeline of the Royal South Street (RSS) competitions.
(The main source of this information is the Royal South Street website,
<https://results.royalsouthstreet.com.au/>)



Band Contest, City Oval, Ballarat. (Source: www.ibew.org.uk/vbbp-oz.htm)

1900: First Bands competition. Brass band and brass solos.

1901: Brass Band Contests and Brass Solo and Party Contests.

VBA formed to cope with the number of entries due to the popularity of the competition.

Fred Sutton of Sutton's was the President.

1903–1915: Brass band and brass solos (except 1909 where there were no solos).
In 1914 Drum and Bugle Band section of the competition was also held.

1914–1919: The Great War

1916: Only a Brass Band Marching Competition was held, no solos. First, second and third place went to Ballarat Orphanage Brass Band, Prout's Ballarat Brass Band and City of Ballarat Brass Band respectively.

1917: No band comps held

1918: Brass Solos only

1919: No Band comps or solos

As part of a worldwide pandemic killing millions of people, the Spanish flu hit Ballarat in 1919. The flu is believed to be spread by American troops in Europe and brought back to parts of Australia, including Ballarat, by soldiers returning from World War I. An estimated 12,000 died in Australia.

1920–1924: Brass band and solo comps

In 1921 Military bands entered RSS as a section. Choral and Brass band entries exploded with 20 choirs and 48 bands set to compete.



The same year Ballarat Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Band competed for the *first time* at South Street and placed 3rd in 'C' grade test piece (*Ernani*) and own choice; 4th in the Quickstep.

This was the year that Ballarat East and West amalgamated.

1923: Ballarat Soldiers' wins 'B' grade under Alf Rowell

1925–1931: No bands competed due to not enough entrants, contests suspended
(In lieu of South Street Comps, other competitions were held e.g. in the spring of 1926 Ballarat's £1000 Band Competition was put on by the Victorian Bands Association. With grade sections A, B, C and D like in RSS and prizes such as the Allan-Boosey Cup.)

1929: State School Brass bands were added and attracted considerable interest. Also Wall Street crash and start of the Great Depression.

1930: State Primary and Central School Brass comps were held at The Coliseum.

1931: State Primary and Central School Brass comps continued

1932–1934: RSS band competitions were held, but no solo comps.

In 1932 Ballarat and District Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Band competed in 'A' Grade with test piece *Honour and Glory* by Hubert Bath under Frank Wright, the last year before he departs for England.

The Ballarat and District Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial Band did not compete in 1934 according to RSS records but were the Bickart Cup winners in 1933 for highest aggregate in selection and quickstep 'B' Grade. Contradictory with the program records which say Soldiers' won 'B' grade in 1932 (F Wright) and 1933 (J Watson).

1935–1947: Again RSS brass band comps suspended due to not enough entrants
(encompasses pre, war and post WW II periods)

1939– 1945: World War II

1948: First competition back – Ballarat Soldiers' won the 'B' Grade section this year under H L Rasmussen. Adjudicators were R J Estall (NZ), F (Massa) Johnston, H Shugg

1949: Frank Wright received a hero's welcome back to Ballarat for his visit home after sixteen years abroad. He was the adjudicator of the Band Contest and conductor of massed bands. Frank Wright medal is awarded.

1966: Ballarat Soldiers' won the 'A' Grade Own Choice under Frank James

1968: Ballarat Soldiers' won the 'A' Grade Quickstep

1978: Last Quickstep competition

2001: Frank Wright Prize introduced

2015: BMCB placed 2nd in open 'C' Grade

2018: BMCB won the open 'C' Grade

2019: BMCB won Gold



Band fever

This article from *The Argus* (Melbourne) October 1913 gives a picture of brass band culture in Ballarat just prior to World War I. We get a glimpse of band fever on a par with football mania at the present-day AFL Grand Final.

Champion Band Contest, 27 October 1913, *The Argus*

Ballarat Results.

Geelong Harbour Trust Win.

(By Our Special Reporter)

BALLARAT, Saturday. - From every point of view the brass band contests in connection with this year's annual demonstration of the South Street Society have proved eminently successful. The attendance of the public was larger than on any previous occasion, and the playing of the bands, which were representative of four States of the Commonwealth, was of a higher standard. The society was fortunate in having fine weather throughout. It has been favoured in this direction for several successive years, and the consequent financial results have enabled the committee to reduce the heavy debt on its extensive hall in Grenville street.

This afternoon the sun shone genially on a crowd of about 15,000 people, who witnessed the concluding contests of the bandsmen in the A and B grade quickstep events. It was an excellent holiday gathering, including people from many miles around Ballarat, who arrived early in the day by special trains. Animated and picturesque as was the scene in the afternoon, it was eclipsed by the demonstration in the evening. Sturt Street, through which the bands marched in procession at intervals, was literally swarming with people from 7 o'clock, all hurrying to the City Oval for the culminating event in the competitions - the announcement of the results. There were fully 20,000 people at the oval. While they waited for the decisions of the judge, Mr. Edward Sutton, of Glasgow, capital outdoor entertainment was provided. From four capacious platforms variety performances were given to the accompaniment of music from the bands. Biograph pictures were shown on four screens, while a display of fireworks was made.

According to the timetable, the results of the contests would be thrown on the main screen by means of a lantern at 10 minutes past 10 o'clock. And so they were. It was then seen that Geelong had again carried off the chief prize of £200 in the A grade contest, and the champion certificate of the Victorian Band Association. The Harbour Trust Band was the winner. Last year the prize was won by the Geelong Municipal Band, which did not compete on this occasion. The big double event of the musical competitions - first in the open choir contest and first in the band championship - went to Geelong. The performances of six out of the seven bands were remarkably even. The Rozelle Band, from New South Wales, tied for second in the A grade selection contest, and were first in the quick-step, winning £80. The Boosey Shield was won by this band, with the highest aggregate of points in A grade contests for the years 1911-12-13. St. Augustine's Orphanage Band, from Geelong, took second prize in the A grade quickstep.

In the B grade selection contest the City of Ballarat and Malvern Tramways bands were regarded as much superior to the other bands. The Ballarat Band won the first prize of £60, and Malvern Tramways came second. City of Ballarat also secured a special prize of an electro-plated cornet. Prout's Ballarat Band, by its splendid marching, for which it is famed, won the B grade quickstep and £20, with Warrnambool Citizens' second. City of Ballarat, with the highest aggregate of points in the B grade competitions, took first place in the contest for the Hawkes Shield, which goes finally to the band with the largest number of points at the end of three successive years. In the C grade selection contest, Wagga Wagga Citizens' and St. Kilda City were placed equal. A protest has been lodged by the Victorian Band Association against the Wagga Wagga Citizens' Band.



The quickstep was taken by Warrnambool Town, with only half a point in advance of the Ballarat Orphanage. St. Kilda City obtained the highest aggregate in the C grade, which gives them a commanding position to the ultimate possession of the Hutton Cup.

– *The Argus*

In *The British Brass Band* (Trevor Herbert), Duncan Blythell's footnote 51 p. 237 in his chapter 'The Brass Band in the Antipodes', sheds further light on the interruption to South Street banding competitions in the 1920s and the rising tensions for South Street and the VBA:

The Ballarat contest went into abeyance after 1924 because of disputes between the management of the South Street Society (which organized the whole *eisteddfod*) and the Victorian Bands Association (under whose rules the all-important competition for bands was conducted). See *Australian Band News*, 20 (Jan–Feb 1925). Attempts by the Ballarat-based Victorian Bands Association to establish a contest independent of South Street in the later 1920s proved unsuccessful, and in the following decade the Association was replaced as the governing body of Victorian banding by the Melbourne-based Victorian Band League. See *Australian Band Leader*, 1/3 (1971), 10. The Ballarat contest was successfully revived after the Second World War.

– Duncan Blythell, 'The Brass Band in the Antipodes' in *The British Brass Band*



DISCOVER MORE

Read about the background to *The first South Street band contest in October, 1900* in Jeremy de Korte's online blog *Band Blasts from the Past*.



BACK TO SOUTH STREET

Just let me go back to South Street
For a week with the famous bands,
And take with me others who would compete
In Australia's Golden City of renown.

Just let me alight at the station
With cornet, trombone and drum,
And meet bandsmen from all over the Nation,
To whom South Street once more come.

Just let me line up in the station yard
And play through Handel's "Hallelujah
Chorus,"
Or "The Heavens Are Telling" by Haydn –
just as hard,
As bands played in the days before us.

Just let me march along Sturt Street
With gay crowds lining the way,
With step by step and beat by beat,
Is South Street just the same to-day?

Just let me see who is judging again,
Is it Stead or Bentley with ears for tune?
Short, Beswick, Sutton or Morgan – men
of fame,
Or King of them all – J. Ord Hume.

Just let me go through Inspection
As we did when we dressed with much care;
With the gayest uniform in our section,
That made all our rivals stare.

Just let me compete in the solos again
From the grand old Coliseum stage,
With "Adelaide" or "Gipsy's Warning" –
or "Pretty Jane,"
"Zelda" and "Miranda" of a later age.

Just let me mount he platform
And play through "Beethoven's Works."
Or any Alexander Owen's selections
That South Street bands would not shirk.

Just let me play through the Test piece,
Be it "Mercandante." "Mozart" or "Liszt,"
"Wagner," "Chopin" of "Meyerbeer,"
The tests that were tests on our lips.

Just let me march in the Quickstep
With Ord Hume's "B.B. and C.F."
"The Challenge," "Cossack" or "Ravenswood"
Or was the "Twentieth Century" the best?

Just let me see the others swing past,
Code's, Prout's, Rozelle and Boulder.
Wanganui, Newcastle and Bathurst Brass,
Great names that come dear to the older.

Just let me see those fine Geelong bands,
St. Augustine's, Municipal and Harbour
Trust.
Also Collingwood, Malvern, Richmond,
Prahran,
Perth City – all great power among us.

Just let me see Geelong Town again
With Sharpe Brearley at the head of affairs.
They ranked with Prout's in quickstep fame,
First in marching honours was often theirs.

Just let me see the giants of the baton,
Riley, Code, Bulch and Prout,
McMahon, Barkel, Jones and Hoffman.
Many, alas, have gone out.

Just let me see others again,
Partington, Shugg, Johnston, Bowden.
Men who kept time in South Street's fame;
Wade and Baile must be among them.

Just let me think if I missed any,
Yes, there was Davison, Niven, Lewins –
any more!
Hopkins, Ryder, Billy May among many,
Not forgetting Frank Wright and J. Booth
Gore.

Just let me see the best of officials
And critics like Davey, Gartrell and Hellings,
Humphreys and Boyce – Kings of staff and
whistle,
May march us again – well, there's no telling.

So to-day just let me go back to South Street,
Most famous contest in the land,
Where many old timers I will heartily greet,
And yarn over years that were so grand.

– Mullen, 1951, pp. 2–3
Source: Jeremy de Korte Archive



The first 100 years



The 1920s

At a glance

Post-war reprieve – spend, spend, spend. In a bullish attempt to rebuild the economy, the Australian Government invest in infrastructure development to position the nation as a large exporter of primary resources. We follow suit with Britain and America in an overspending spree.

For many, this is a decadent decade of dancing, fashion, and fast living where entertainment is king. The media that has fed the public with propaganda to get us through the war years, transforms into a convenient and much-welcomed distraction from all that has gone before.

Radio enters the living room and changes family life and how we listen to, relate to and think about music, forever. Newly released music on records from England and America swiftly finds its way onto the public airwaves. Brass bands and dance hall music become a family radio time hit.

Radio is not the only new phenomenon in media entertainment to sweep the country. The 20s also heralds a new era of cinema for entertainment and at the end of the decade we hear the first blockbuster 'talkies' when picture theatres receive an investment by Warner Bros into large and expensive equipment that brings sound to picture, to the masses.

The Church Chronicle writes,

Ballarat had gone mad on amusements – even madder than Melbourne. Every night 10,000 to 20,000 people, are said to be at the pictures and a further 2500 are either at live shows, socials, skating or dancing.

– [http://125.royalsouthstreet.com.au/
timeline/1911-1920/](http://125.royalsouthstreet.com.au/timeline/1911-1920/)

In 1926 the Hoyts Theatre cinema chain is created, followed three years later by State and Regent Theatre cinemas opening in Sydney and Melbourne.

This decade also sees the beginnings of regular domestic commercial air travel. It is a decade of extraordinary technological change for the people.

Alice Guy-Blaché, the world's first female film director, made over 100 movies with sound before 1905. Cutting-edge filmmakers like Alice, and financial powers like Warner Bros, changed the way orchestral players made their living. First, by making silent movies, stimulating a lot of work for live musicians and, second, by adding pre-recorded sound and thereby quickly taking the work away.

Musicians are no longer required multiple times a week to meet the demand for entertainment, which created a gap in their regular income.



In 1921 the first live radio broadcast from South Street takes place. This hi-tech moment occurs in a reasonably low-tech world; after all, it wasn't until 1925 that Ballarat people began to enjoy their first fully operational public sewerage system.

In 1923 on 23 November, 2SB Sydney makes their first transmission and the 'wireless' is officially launched in Australia.

The first television technology is invented in 1927, but would not become popularised or affordable until the 1950s.

The following year, in 1928, Ballarat attempts its first live brass band broadcast, which was transmitted from the Soldiers' Memorial Bandroom.

While the 20s are characterised by decadence and progress, good things cannot last forever. In 1929 Wall Street crashes after a decade of post-war spend, spend, spend, activating the Great Depression, from which Australia does not recover until after World War II.



Hear Liz Jacka, (Author and Professor in Communications Studies for the Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences at the University of Technology Sydney) discuss the impact of radio on Australian family life and just how British Australia was in the 1920s in [this video clip](#) from the National Film and Sound Archive.



Listen to a 1929 recording of *Ballarat The Fair*, performed by Robert Nicholson; Composer: Ernest Grenfell; Lyricist: Henry Brew. Broadcast (De Luxe Series) W555

Henry (Harry) Brew was a founding member of the Soldiers' Band and took on the role of drum major in the band in the 1930s.

The band in the 1920s



1923, Early postcard of the Soldiers' Band performing the Quickstep 'B' Grade Championships, South Street, City Oval. Source: Kindly donated to the Ballarat Memorial Concert Band (BMCB) by Bob Pattie, original Wilkinson archive

The 1920s was a decade of highs and lows for the newly formed Soldiers' Band. There were wins, intrigue, victory by stealth, near merger, an Ugly Man competition and even the police were called upon at one point.

The band struggled to survive in the mid-part of this decade. Luckily, Frank Wright took over toward the end of the 20s, and the band was buoyed through to the early 30s under his musical directorship.

In this decade, sympathy letters for death or illness were often part of band committee business, including one to the Ballarat City Band. Carvery sets were the go for betrothal gifts to band members.

The band played for a South Street Appeal while South Street was in abeyance due to issues with the VBA. They put on their own band and solo comps in the bandroom to keep the contesting spirit alive when there were no South Street comps running. And, after having begun playing in their Diggers' uniforms, it wasn't long before it was time to return their khakis to the military and step out with an entirely new look. (Bow ties, no less.)

Almost 100 years later, in an envelope tucked away safely in the bandroom archives, a letter was found. Fortunately for us it contained the handwritten history of the band from 1920 to 1960. It was penned by William (Bill) Wilkinson, active member of the band and regular



committee member from the early 1920s to early 1980s. Bill Wilkinson played with the band from their first contest in 1921 and in every comp from thereon in through to the 1970s – a period of over 50 years. Bill's letter, augmented by the minutes, archive newspaper articles and former band member interviews from the 40s and 50s, form the basis for the first forty years of this band's history.

This is what Bill wrote:

Alf Rowell was appointed Bandmaster in 1920, and the band became registered with the V.B.A. the ruling body at that time. The band competed in "C" Grade the next year 1921 and secured 3rd in the Selection Contest. The test piece being Verdi's "ERNANI". "SPOHR" was played for own choice. "Naworth Castle" was the march played for the Quickstep. Donald Citizens won the Contest coached by "Massa" Johnston.



1920–24, Quickstep Competition, South Street, City Oval BP Arch

[The band also competed in Ararat and gained two second placings that year, followed by two firsts in Beaufort.]

In 1922 the band gained two firsts in "C" Grade in Daylesford and saw the last appearance of the Band in "C" Grade when they won the double in Selection and Quickstep. The adjudicator Chris Smith of Adelaide remarked that he had heard an "A" Grade performance of "Beethoven's Works" in "C" Grade.



1922, "C" Grade Win, band photo. Source: BMCB Archive

On this recommendation the Band was graded "B" Grade and again acquitted itself well in again winning the double in Selection and Quickstep in 1923.



1923, "B" Grade Win, band photo. Source: BMCB Archive

This was the year of the introduction of the dual Test pieces at South Street "B" Grade being "Jessonda" and "Valkarr" (an abridged version).

– Bill Wilkinson



DISCOVER MORE

Read [Alfred Rowell – the man behind the Soldiers' Band conductor's baton from 1920 – 1926](#), including firsthand accounts from former Soldiers' Band members of Alf as conductor and teacher.

1924 was a disappointing year for the band as far as South Street was concerned, being unplaced in both Selection and Quickstep (South Street records show 3rd in 1924 Quickstep), redeeming itself somewhat when three weeks later at Albury NSW during the Centenary Contest the band received 100 points for Selection under the same Judge Lt. Ord Hume. The test pieces being the same as for South St.'Il Corciato in Egitto' (Meyerbeer) and 'The Works of Haydn' (arr. Lt Ord Hume).



1924, Band competitions, Albury, winners 'B' Grade. Source: BMCB Archive

The following years, up till 1928, were anxious ones domestically, financially and numerically, membership dropped, but we still managed to compete at Maryborough VIC on New Year's Day 1928 under Bandmaster Bert Rasmussen who had built the Band up to a good standard but were beaten by Prahran City under the late Percy Code in 'B' Grade.

The late Frank Wright was appointed Bandmaster late in 1928 ...



c 1928, Ballarat Soldiers' Memorial Band, Frank Wright (Bandmaster). Source: Federation University Historical Collection

iv. AUSTRALASIAN BAND AND ORCHESTRA NEWS. October 26, 1927.

The Leaders of the Band World Prefer—

BOOSEY

Britain's Best Band Instruments

Mr. Frank Johnston, Collingwood, Citizens Band.

Mr. Arthur Stender, Australian National Band.

Mr. Alf Rowell, Ballarat City Band.

Mr. Jack Robertson, Champion Soloist.

Mr. Percy Code, Prahran City Band.

Mr. Percy Jones, St. Augustine's Band.

Mr. Alf Paxton, Hawthorn City Band.

Mr. Thos. Davison, Coburg City Band.

Mr. Les Hofmann, St. Vincent's de Paul's Band.

In the choice of these famous players you have a sure guide — benefit by their lead and equip yourself with a N.V.A.

Sole Agents for Victoria and Tasmania:
Allan's 276-8 COLLINS STREET, MELBOURNE

Sub-Agents for Tasmania: FINDLAYS PTY. LTD., Hobart and Launceston.

Printed by Mitchell & Casey Pty. Ltd., 21 Tattersall's Lane, Melbourne, and Published by the Proprietors, at 276 Collins Street, Melbourne.

... and although the Band had entered for the New Year Contest at Burnie TAS he could not accompany the Band due to orchestral commitments. The services of Percy Jones of St Augustine's Geelong was enlisted and although the Band acquitted itself well [gaining two second placings] were beaten by the Met. Fire Brigade who were then on the verge of promotion to 'A' Grade. The Test Piece was 'The Meister's Singers' (Wagner). Own choice was restricted to national songs of the British Empire.

— Bill Wilkinson

26 October 1927, *Australasian Band and Orchestra News*, 'Band Leaders of the World'. (Alf Rowell, Percy Code, Percy Jones were all associated with the Soldiers' Band.)
Source: BMCB Archive



Most of Bill Wilkinson's handwritten history formed the basis for an article published in *The Australian Band Leader*, December 1971.

What you are about to read, however, was never published in that article ...

We played a Selection 'Great Britain' a fine selection of Solos for every instrument including 'My Pretty Jane' for euphonium and 'The Sea is England's Glory' for Trombone. We had spent about three months on a Selection for own choice entitled 'National Songs of Great Britain and Ireland' but when Percy Jones took over from Frank Wright for the contest he suggested changing over to 'Great Britain' (Rimmer). This was about four weeks before the contest. This did not leave as much time to rehearse such a difficult piece.

'Massa' Johnston who had heard we were going fairly well made a trip to Ballarat and listened outside the fence at the Eastern Oval (it was customary to get as much outside practice as possible in those days) got a shock when he heard us playing 'Great Britain' that started a rush around to get a copy, it was reputed that there was only one copy in Melbourne, however he got a copy and won the contest. Hugh Niven was the adjudicator who remarked in his summary both Bands (there were only 2 Bands in 'B' Grade) gave different interpretations of the Test Piece both very fine,' whatever that meant.

– Bill Wilkinson

Band crisis

The 'anxious years' Bill Wilkinson referred to involved a rift caused by a move to amalgamate Soldiers' Band and City Band.

In Robert (Bob) Pattie's book, *The History of the City of Ballarat Municipal Brass Band 1900–2010* (p77), two newspaper articles are included that point to the difficulties the bands were having by 1926.

The candle was dimming for the Soldiers' Memorial but enough members rallied and did not allow the flame to go out.

The Australian Band and Orchestra News, 26 May 1926

... during the last few weeks your band (Ballarat Soldiers' and Sailors' Band) has passed through a very trying period, perhaps the most vital in its history, the proposed amalgamation scheme being the great question: The great majority of members, having signified their disgust at the thought of such a scheme, have also signified their intention of still giving their strongest support to the old band. We look forward to the coming year with its great possibilities, knowing that with the loyalty of all concerned the band must rise to even greater heights in the musical world.

The Courier, August 1926

Many people are under the impression the Soldiers' Memorial Band no longer exists having amalgamated with the City of Ballarat Band. However, it appears several members of the Band repudiated the act of amalgamation and decided to reorganize.

Some were in favour of the amalgamation but more were not (including founding members McWilliam and Rutherford as well as the Wilkinsons).



A merger looked like it was going ahead, but at the last minute it was rescinded and a split occurred. At this point Bandmaster Rowell left his post as bandmaster for the Soldiers' Band and a number of men followed him across to the City Band. Not only did they leave, they were accompanied by band instruments, cases and uniforms which the remaining Soldiers' Band members felt were not theirs to take.

The ensuing emotional and financial distress went unresolved for the rest of the decade (and well into the next), with many unsuccessful measures to have property returned. Instrument Trustees were instated, the services of numerous solicitors were employed and there was even involvement by the police.

While the issue remained outstanding, the band eventually and reluctantly put in orders for instruments.

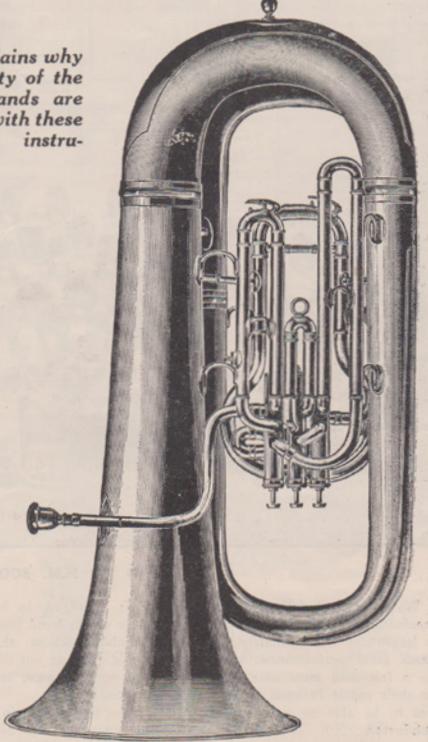
30 AUSTRALASIAN BAND AND ORCHESTRA NEWS. October 26, 1927.

Six Points of Supremacy in **Boosey's Imperial Basses**

BOOSEY'S COMPENSATING PISTONS ARE NOT AN IMITATION BUT A GENUINE ORIGINAL IMPROVED PATENT

which explains why the majority of the leading Bands are equipped with these wonderful instruments.

- 1** Wonderful Organ-like tone
- 2** Remarkably easy to blow
- 3** "Solbron" Vales—quick as lightning
- 4** Perfectly in tune throughout the entire register
- 5** Perfectly Symmetrical and compact model
- 6** A most important factor in winning at Contests



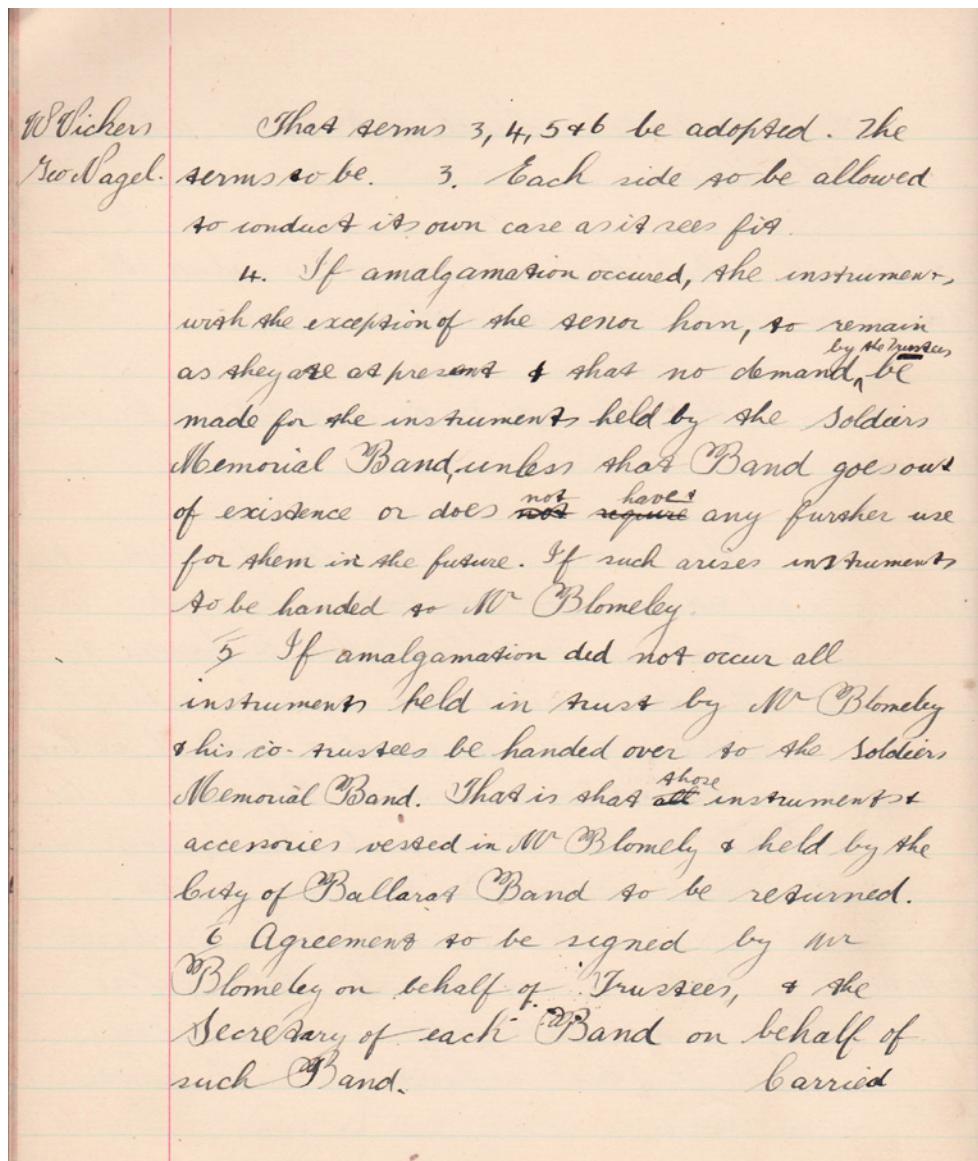
Contest Results Prove Boosey the Best

Sole Agents for Victoria and Tasmania:
Allan's 276-8 Collins St., Melbourne

Sub-Agents for Tasmania:
FINDLAYS PTY. LTD., Hobart, Launceston and Burnie

26 October 1927, Australasian Band and Orchestra News., Source: BMCB Archive

In 1929, by which time Ballarat City Municipal Brass Band's previous Bandmaster Frank Wright had moved across to the Soldiers' Band (1928), the following attempts to resolve the issue are recorded in the minutes (and we gain an insight here into what may have contributed to the problem):



27 June 1929, Excerpt from minutes of Special Meeting. Source: BMCB Archive

Throughout the minutes we learn how difficult it was for the band to move forward because they were not able to act on purchasing new instruments while awaiting the return of what they considered band property. The population of Ballarat at this time was around 35,000 people, the community tight knit. Finding replacement players was hard enough, let alone the funds to replace property. Times were tough.

So, among the great deal of discussion and special meetings held regarding property, there were just as many meetings and events held for raising funds. Here are a few of the activities the band got up to in order to achieve this, 1920s style!



Fundraising

Minutes, 8 April 1924

Talk of arrangements of a carnival or fair for raising money for new uniforms and general expenses. It was moved to organise a Tuesday afternoon Ladies meeting to discuss the same.

Minutes, 5 May 1924

At the ladies meeting they decided to hold a ball on Tuesday 20th May. Ladies supplying supper, decorations free. Mrs Bell's Orchestra free. To be held at the City Hall

Stalls for the Fair to be: Sweet Stall, Produce, Cake, Refreshments, Jumble, Flower, Put, Bran Pie, Shooting Gallery, Games, Lucky Envelope.

The Lucas staff were also invited to be involved.

Moved that Ladies action be endorsed carried

Minutes, 28 July 1924

White ribbon with band stamp to be issued to stall holders for the Fair

Mr Greenaway offered to ride Motor Cycle at City Oval on Saturday with advertisement attached. Accepted

Minutes, 4 August 1924

The mayor is to be invited to open the Fair. Councilors and members of Parliament to be invited.

By all accounts, the ball was a huge success and in 1999 (22 May 1999) *The Courier* reprinted a 1924 article which read:

The popularity of the Soldiers' Memorial Band, combined with the delight of dancing was responsible for about 300 citizens, mainly young people, attending at the City Hall on Tuesday last, when the ball was given in aid of the band funds.

In 1926, a special meeting was called for the purpose of raising funds for the band where it was moved to hold an Ugly Man Competition to augment the funds of the band. (Minutes, 12 September 1926)

Following this was a series of minutes entries relating to who the shortlist should be and to wait on the Fire Brigade for their selection of the Ugly Man representative.

What was an Ugly Man competition? A 1920s version of Movember?

Ugly Man was a fundraising movement initiated in WA when a competition was held to raise money for the Red Cross during World War I. It quickly built to a powerful fundraising and voluntary benevolent workforce association by 1917. The competition made its way to the eastern states certainly by 1918 as we hear from the *Maryborough and Dunnolly Advertiser*, Wednesday 11 Sep 1918, article titled: "Ugly Man" Competition - The Final Ceremony'.



An interstate official offering her services at the Crowning Ceremony was reported to write of her willingness to officiate in Victoria for pleasure with no remuneration needed for her services. She explained that 'at every place where she had officiated elsewhere' her crowning of the 'Ugly Man' had 'caused great merriment'. In this particular case it was agreed that 'each "Ugly Man's" committee be asked to supply three items to the concert programme which would precede the crowning ceremony'.

Items of entertainment perhaps?

The article went on:

The whole function will conclude with a grand ball, at which as many as possible will be asked to attend in fancy dress. Each 'Ugly Man' will be required to attire himself in costume befitting the nature and cause of his candidature and will be asked to provide retinue of six attendants - three ladies and three gentlemen - who will attend him on his march up the ball to the stage prior to the crowning ceremony.

– Maryborough and Dunnolly Advertiser

Tickets were sold for audience members and the Ladies of the Red Cross were invited to cater for refreshments and so make a profit for their cause.

When the Soldiers' Band held the Ugly Man competition in 1926 they raised £20 (over \$1500 in today's currency).

Minutes, 20 October 1927

Christmas Goose Club – 2000 tickets to be printed for Raffle and sold at 3/ea

Band fundraising had been made more difficult a few years earlier. In 1924, the Council had made a move to stop bands making collections on their civic turnouts such as at The Gardens or the Alexandra Rotunda in Sturt Street.

Councilor Levy is reported by the *Melbourne Argus*, Thursday 3 May 1924 p.16, to have put forward that:

The collections were objectionable in principle rate payers paid for improvements at the Gardens and when they went there to enjoy themselves a box was thrust in front of them.

Councilor Levy said that he would sooner increase the subsidy of £200 than that people should be penalised when they went to the gardens.

– *Melbourne Argus*

We can only imagine how much banding was respected and how important it was considered in civic life. These quotes imply that people had a right to access this kind of civic experience. It is also noteworthy that this was not a Ballarat newspaper report, but a news story picked up by a Melbourne publication. Banding, in the 20s, was still big news.

Minutes, 8 April 1924

Correspondence: City Council re Collection stating same would have to stop except by special permission occasionally.



Cr Elsworth [then President of the Band] spoke in reference to the letter from Council and stated he hoped the band would be able to make one big effort and so do away with the collecting.

It is noted by Bob Pattie that even though the motion to stop the collections was passed, they were still taken at regular Sunday turnouts by both bands right up into the 50s and 60s when bands would take it in turns to play the rotundas in Sturt Street, with cars parked backwards down the street and windows wound down just to hear them.

Jimmy Allen also remembers collections during wartime when the American forces were in Ballarat in the 1940s. Without these collections and other fundraising activities, the band would not have survived.

In fact in 1927 we get a hint as to what the band was up to:

Minutes, 6 October 1927

A fine collections box is donated by W Wilkinson and on it is to be inscribed "Contributions for Band Funds"

Some popular 20s turnouts for the band

Engagements list, 1924

Memorial Service, 'Eight Hour Day' Procession, Citizen Forces Parade, Recital (Gardens), Anzac Service, Grammar School Memorial Gates, Sacred Concert (Theatre), Australian Imperial Band, Ballarat College Memorial, Football Match, Australian Imperial Band (Football Match), 30th Fire Brigade, Heavy Weights Amateur Boxing, Flower Stall (Gardens), Torchlight Procession Fair, Armstrong Street Traders, Jubilee Fair, Community Singing, Commercial Travellers Concert (Charities), Sturt Street Alexandra Rotunda, Torchlight Procession Eighth Brigade Fair, Parade for Albury [see Albury Centenary Band Contest Souvenir Program Below], Recital for the Albury Hospital, Street Parade on return from Albury, Eureka Stockade, Christ Church Garden Fete, Funeral for Bandsman (A Willian).

Number of engagements recorded in the minutes:

1924 – 37

1925 – 18

1926 – 21

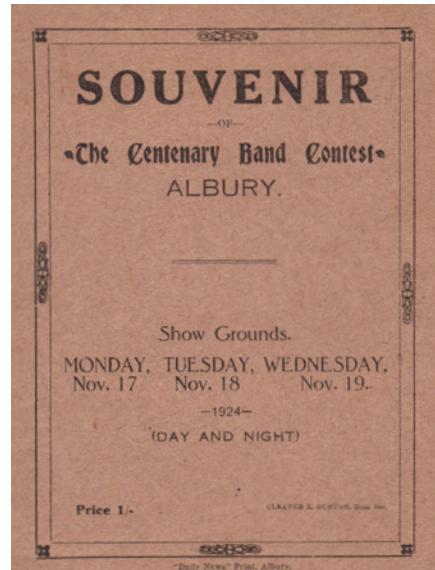
Many of these were fundraisers such as the Torchlight Parades in support of the Fire Brigade with whom they had a close relationship of mutual support. There was a turnout for a South Street Appeal. Others were charitable events like playing at the Albury Hospital, Daylesford Hospital and the 'Hospital for the Insane' were also on the band's performance roster.

Centenary band contest and Ord Hume

In 1924 Albury held a centenary celebration for the town; by then its own band had been playing for fifty one years. They decided to mark the occasion with 'The Centenary Band Contest'.

It was a self-proclaimed 'programme of largest musical festivities ever conducted in Albury'

- Prize money of £500 being competed for'. According to the Reserve Bank of Australia, in real terms at time of writing, that would be a whopping \$40, 000.



1924, The Centenary Band Contest, Albury, Souvenir Program. Source: BMCB Archive

**BALLARAT SOLDIERS & SAILORS'
BAND.**

A. Rowell (Bandmaster): Cornet.
R. Jerram: Cornet.
J. Allan: Cornet.
C. Hewitt: Cornet.
A. Leith: Cornet.
G. Thomas: Cornet.
D. Jones: Cornet.
A. Thane: Cornet.
A. Pearce: Cornet.
J. Hancock: Cornet.
H. Esmond: Trombone.
W. Wilkinson: Trombone.
G. Wilkinson: Trombone.
W. Cockerill: Trombone.
N. Nankervis: Tenor Horn.
E. Hehir: Tenor Horn.
H. Casley: Tenor Horn.
P. Hines: Baritone.
J. Reid: Baritone.
S. Allen: Euphonium.
R. Lockett: Euphonium.
A. Nylander: E Flat Bass.
A. McWilliam: E Flat Bass.
C. Cromwell: B Flat Bass.
G. Nagel: B Flat Bass.
R. Rutherford: B Flat Bass.
G. Benoch: Drum.
G. Bell: Drum.
J. Welsh: Drum.
R. Stevens: Drum.
W. Humphries: Drum-Major.
Cr. W. R. Elsworth, President.
P. A. Tonkin: Secretary.

1924, Albury Band Contest list of Soldiers' Band personnel. Source: BMCB Archive

THE BALLARAT

MR. J. ORD HUME

26 January 1924, *The Ballarat Star*, 'Mr J. Ord Hume: Popular with bandsmen'. Source: Troye



Lieutenant J Ord Hume

Lieut. J Ord Hume (1864–1932) was born in Scotland to a very poor family. His musical career spanned from his beginnings at age sixteen as cornetist in a military orchestra to professional brass band conductor, composer and world-renowned adjudicator. Like TE Bulch he used pseudonyms for his compositions and became a prominent figure in the development of the brass band movement through his activities as composer, performer, band leader and in Hume's case international adjudication.

He was adjudicator at the Centenary Band Contest in Albury 1924 in the same year he was adjudicator for South Street in Ballarat. This was his second trip out from the UK to South Street, his first trip being in 1902. It would have been an honour to have an adjudicator of his calibre giving feedback to the band.

The article 'Ballarat Competitions' from the *Adelaide Observer*, Saturday 8 November 1902, the year that Ord Hume first visited South Street begins with:

Ballarat is re-echoing from one end to the other with the music of brazen instruments. Every day bands are arriving at the station, where they are generally welcomed by officials of the South Street Society and leading citizens. They then form in order and march to their hotels, to the strains of lively music, that attracts a customary following, brought up in the rear with a miscellaneous assortment of small boys and a stray dog or two. Even the latter appear to possess a sort of musical instinct in Ballarat.

— *Adelaide Observer*

After his death Frank Wright wrote of Hume: 'As a composer, arranger and adjudicator, J Ord Hume was placed by his own abilities in the forefront of his profession'. (Frank Wright, 'The Late J. Ord Hume – An Appreciation', *The British Bandsman*, June 15, 1935, p.4.)



1924, Lieut. J Ord Hume photo in The Centenary Band Contest, Albury, Souvenir Program. Source: BMCB Archive



Another highlight for the band in this decade was the 1928 live radio broadcast from the bandroom.

Here's an excerpt from the minutes:

Sunday 9 September 1928

The generosity of Mr Kerr in broadcasting the Band from 3.A.L. Ballarat on Sunday evening Sep 9th 1928 was much appreciated by the Committee. It was the first time that Mr Kerr had ever attempted to broadcast a Band and it turned out very successful. Supper was handed around with the help of Mrs Rasmussen and Mrs Henderson and a very fine evening terminated the proceedings.

Did you know that radio broadcasters wore full evening dress, replete with bow tie, to broadcast?

And towards the latter end of the decade we see a shift in banding activities from civic and memorial activities (such as Anzac Day) to include fundraisers for limbless soldiers, those who have lost their sight through war and so on as the community grasp at ways to support those who served and lost during the previous decade's war.

Steph Mitaxa's son Noel tells the sad family story of his father's cousins Jack and George Zilles who returned from World War I with War Neurosis and would sometimes be found digging trenches in the back yard. Each person was finding their own way to respond to the horrendous experience of war, loss and identity.

Music had a bigger part than ever to play in the reparation and re-identification of a community.

And with the economic crash of 1929, funds were soon to be needed not just for aging soldiers with disabilities as they tried to support their families, but indeed for everyone.

Fortunately for the band they had a highly musical and motivated musical director in Frank Wright to strengthen their position and to lead them through the early 30s.



DISCOVER MORE

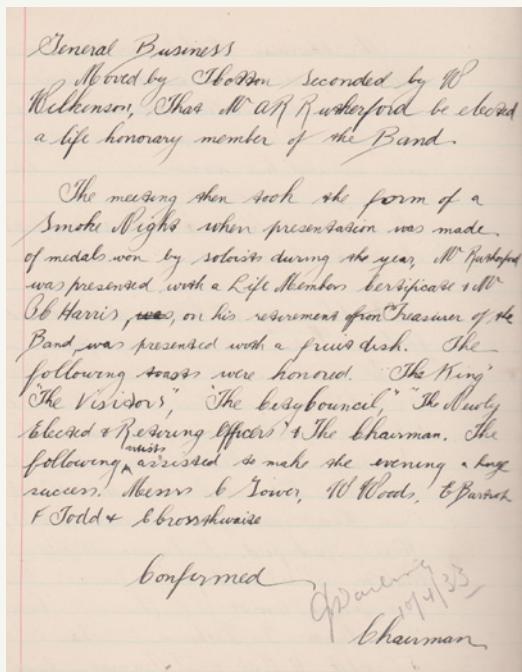
Step back in time to the comps of Ballarat 1902 with the full article, [Ballarat Competitions](#), from the *Observer's Special Correspondent 'Musicus'*.



26 October 1927,
Australasian
Band and Orchestra
News. Source:
BMCB Archive.

Read the warnings for bands in [Band Conduct and Etiquette](#) from the 1920s. How much has really changed?

Read about founding member and V.B.A. representative Russ Rutherford, in historian and former Soldiers' Band member, [Amanda Bentley's article](#).



19 April 1933, A
Rutherford, First Life
Member – excerpt
from minutes of
12th AGM held at the
Soldiers' Institute.
Source: BMCB Archive

Frank Joseph Henry Wright

2 August 1901 (b. Smeaton) – 16 Nov 1970
(d. London)

Frank Wright was born in Smeaton near Ballarat in 1901 to a musical family of gold mining origins. He left school at the age of fourteen to focus on music and studied assiduously up to ten hours a day. As a boy, he was tutored by Percy Northcott in piano, composition and orchestration. He then studied cornet from the age of fifteen with renowned player, teacher and conductor, Percy Code.

By seventeen Frank Wright had been awarded a gold medal for the candidate with the highest marks in the Overseas Dominions for his exam achievements (98 out of 100) through the London College of Music for the Associate Diploma (ALCM). This award was higher than the Commonwealth gold medal. When he was eighteen he became the Australian Open Cornet Champion equalling his teacher Percy Code. Frank played Code's *Wendouree* in the solos.



Frank Wright wearing Soldiers' Memorial Band Uniform with baton in hand and cornet. Source: Federation University Historical Collection



Frank at eighteen, winner of the Australian Cornet championships. Source: Federation University Historical Collection

Frank regularly cycled the twenty miles to Ballarat and then back again for lessons or band practice. Through the musical skills he gained at this time, he went on to travel the world. A 1919 article stated:

In Frank Wright the Ballarat District has produced a cornet player of outstanding gifts and unlimited possibilities. This youth, who resides at Smeaton, defeated the cream of players from Australia's leading bands in the South Street champion cornet solo.



They were not wrong about Frank's potential. This was only the beginning for Frank. The following year, in 1921 he took on the position of musical director at Ballarat City Band when Percy Code left for San Francisco.



Frank during his musical directorship with the Ballarat City Brass Band which he took on nineteen. Source: Federation University Historical Collection



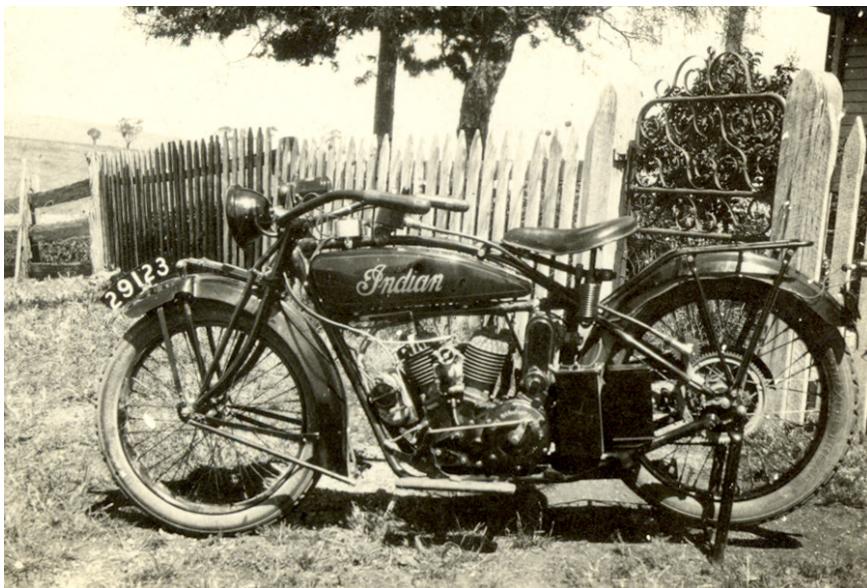
Easter 1923, Heading off to Brisbane with Ballarat City Band by train.
Photograph by Frank Wright (MD). Source: Federation University Historical Collection

He also conducted St Joseph's Orphanage Band.



1924, St Joseph's Orphanage Brass Band, Frank Wright (conductor).
Source: Federation University Historical Collection

According to Frank's history written in 'Legends in Brass' (p. 58), Wright's nephew Frank Ritchie recalled stories of his uncle having been 'flamboyant and gregarious' in his younger years.



1924, Indian Scout Bike belonging to Frank Wright at the property, 'Laura Villa' where he grew up in Smeaton (near Anderson's Mill).
Source: Federation University Historical Collection



Frank also lead the Victory Band (Creswick) during this period and had two private bands 'Frank Wright and his Coliseum Orchestra' and the 'Frank Wright Frisco Band'.



1925, Frank Wright and his Coliseum Orchestra at the Coliseum Ballarat.
Source: Federation University Historical Collection (Drummer George Bell [far right] was Bob Pattie's uncle-to-be and early Soldiers' Band member.)

And in 1928, he took on the Ballarat Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial Band musical directorship, building the band and leading them to competition success.



October 1930, Soldiers' Memorial Band rehearsing with Frank Wright at Tanunda SA.
Source: Federation University Historical Collection

In 1933 while Errol Flynn was making his debut in *In The Wake of Bounty*, Frank Wright was packing his bags and making arrangements for the long journey over to 'the motherland' to conduct St Hilda's Band and seek to further develop his career. His move overseas was likely motivated by the downturn in orchestral jobs during the period when sound was introduced into moving pictures and the economic climate during The Great Depression. He stayed with the Soldiers' Band until his departure.

Farewell celebrations for Frank Wright were held over three weeks in July 1933, including a concert held in City Hall. The Ballarat Soldiers' Band performed for his send-off at the Ballarat railway station as he left to connect with his ship the Balranald to set sail for England.

Pictured in the Farewell Concert Program is the Ballarat Soldiers' Memorial Band (Frank Wright, Conductor). Winners of "B" Grade Championships and 2nd "A" Grade Aggregate, South Street 1932. Further down in the *Allan's* advertisement it states: Ballarat Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial Band win "B" Grade Championships playing on 22 Boosey Instruments.



Two images of the program for Wright's farewell in Ballarat 1933.

Source: Federation University Historical Collection

Frank went on to gain stable employment and travel widely throughout his career; first, with St Hilda's Band.

St Hilda's Band performed in a pavilion in Hastings 1934. I wonder how he would have felt? A far cry from the Ballarat bandstands and the back paddocks of his hometown, Smeaton.

And we get a good idea of the calibre of this band when we see their performance poster. They were a top class band at the time Frank Wright took up position of MD.



5 August 1933, A Herald photographer took two photos of Frank's departure in Port Melbourne. Source: Federation University Historical Collection



St Hilda's Band, Cardiff Wales. Source: Federation University Historical Collection



St Hilda Band poster. Source: Federation University Historical Collection

Then, Frank landed a job as events manager for Greater London Parks and Gardens through which he was able to contribute to brass banding and other musical genres in England.



Duncan Blythell in his essay 'The Brass Band in Antipodes' writes (p. 229):

Australia's leading cornet player in the generation after Code, emigrated permanently to Britain in the 1930s, was quickly appointed organizer of concerts in London's parks for the London County Council, and established himself as a leading figure in the British brass band world.

– Duncan Blythell

By this time Frank was already an internationally recognised performer, conductor and adjudicator.



1932, Maryborough Queensland, Officials from the Australian Band Championships where Frank Wright was adjudicator: Joe Foster, Geo Cousins, Bill Caught and Frank Wright.
Source: Federation University Historical Collection

Adjudicators were positioned in a judge's tent so that they assessed a band's merit solely on what they heard, not according to any prior knowledge of the band or alliances.

Frank was also a professor (Guildhall School of Music and Drama and the Trinity College of Music in London from 1935), editor (*The Conductor, UK Magazine; music editor for Boosey & Hawkes from 1946*), composer and arranger and was given the honour of being made Master of the Worshipful Company of Musicians.



February 1933, Frank Wright outside judge's tent, Dunedin NZ. Source: Federation University Historical Collection



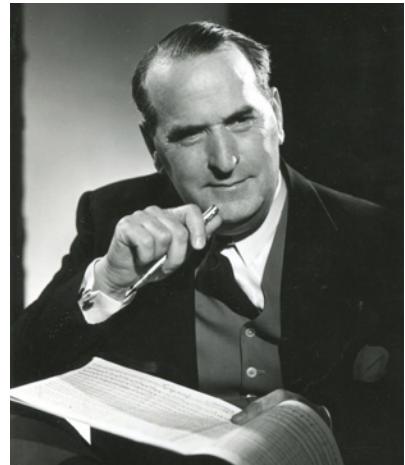
In 1949 he returned briefly to Ballarat to a hero's welcome where he adjudicated for the South Street competitions. In 1971 the *Australia Band Leader* noted that during his life Frank adjudicated at nearly every important band competition worldwide.

In the 1950s Frank Wright was called upon to arrange a selection of nineteenth-century compositions for contest pieces. His arrangements were written for and performed at the British Nationals in the 50s and 60s.

Wright's original works and arrangements for Brass include: *Sirius*, *Preludio Marziale*, *Threshold trilogy*, *Purcellian Suite*, *Whitehall*, *Boys of the Old Brigade*, *Diadem of Gold*, *Irish Folk Tune*, *Old Westminster*, *Sovereign Heritage*, *The Shining River*, *Le Roi d'Ys*.

In 1967 Frank Wright became a Member of the Order of the British Empire Member (MBE). He received this honour from the Queen in 1967 for his contributions to the arts.

In his position of music director (parks department) to the London County Council, Wright organised hundreds of outdoor concerts and events every year. One of his greatest achievements, according to *The Courier*, is that he initiated the outdoor performances at Kenwood inspired by his trip to the Hollywood Bowl. He effected the construction of numerous outdoor performance spaces, organised thousands of events and was responsible for initiating outdoor concerts not only at Kenwood, but also Holland Park and Crystal Palace during his career.



1960s, Frank Wright. Source: Federation University Historical Collection



Written in pencil on back:
Kenwood, Hampstead,
London, c1969 2).

Typed caption: A Remarkable Photograph. The many thousands of visitors to Kenwood, home of outdoor Concerts in Hampstead, London, will recognise the scene of the Concert Bowl, looking over the Lake. Our photograph was taken on 7 June this year and shows the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Frank Wright. The music performed was Mr Wright's *Preludio Marziale* and the occasion was the 100th performance at Kenwood.

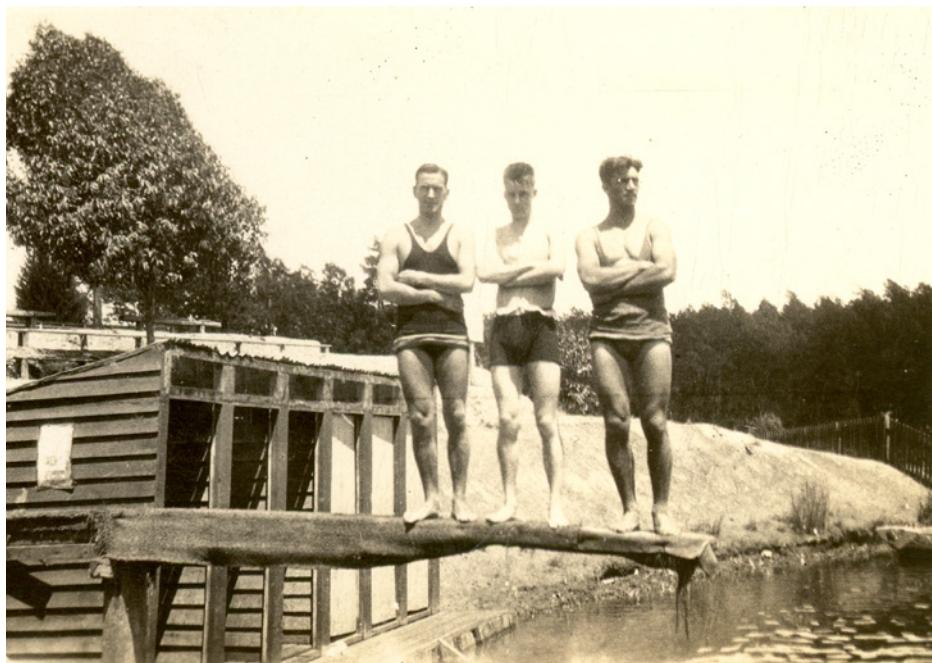
1969, Concert at Kenwood, Hampstead, London. Source: Federation University Historical Collection



Frank was so keen to continue with his musical life that he got himself discharged from the hospital in order to conduct in the Netherlands in the months before he died.

9 August 1970, Frank Wright conducting an orchestra with floral tributes to rapt audience (possibly Kerkrade, Netherlands). Source: Federation University Historical Collection

From the Lake Wendouree and Sturt Street bandstands to multiple performances at the Royal Albert Hall, throughout the UK and many European tours, Wright made a huge contribution to brass banding, not least to the continuing legacy of the Soldiers' Memorial Band.



Frank Wright, Jack Cartasso and Jack Zilles at Creswick Baths.
Source: Federation University Historical Collection



DISCOVER MORE

Wright never married so his collections of scores, photos and personal belongings of cultural interest are now held at Federation University Australia Historical Collection (Geoffrey Blainey Research Centre).

Search online under [Frank Wright](#) in Victorian Collections.



The 1930s

At a glance

Australians enter the decade with the Great Depression, and exit into large-scale war.

Aviation is taking off and Ballarat Airport opens. This will play a part in the war effort in the following decade – but nobody knows that yet.

Most people in the 30s remember the horrors of World War I and, in 1936, a memorial cairn is built at the end of the Avenue of Honour by the members of the Ballarat and District Soldiers' Fathers Association.

Britain calls in its financial loans to the colony and as a consequence worker wages are cut. By 1932 nearly one third of Australian workers are unemployed.

While people struggle to make ends meet, the arts and entertainment help lift spirits. 3BA Radio goes to air and South Street is enabled for regular live broadcast. By the 1930s the Ballarat 'talkies' are also in full swing, with cinemas wired for sound at Her Majesty's, The Regent and The Coliseum. In 1932 the Australian Broadcasting Commission is established and 1936 sees ABC Orchestras set up in each state.

In this decade, white Australia celebrates its sesquicentenary and the Aboriginal political movement begins with a national gathering for a corresponding Day of Mourning.

King George V dies. Aviator Amelia Earhart disappears during her solo round-the-world flight mission. South Street's theatre The Coliseum is burned to the ground.

Prime Minister Robert Menzies becomes a Patron of South Street in 1939, the same year that Australia is at war with Nazi Germany.

The band in the 1930s



1932, Quickstep South Street Comps, City Oval. Source: BMCB Archive

For the Soldiers' Band, the 1930s was a decade of difficulty. Starting triumphantly, the band capitalised on the good work it had achieved in the late 1920s with Frank Wright. But, as we know, Wright was not to endure past 1933.

During this time, Ballarat bands were forced to register with the Melbourne-based VBL, and South Street band competitions finally resumed.

The Soldiers' Band, having innovated the radio waves with their live bandroom transmissions in the 1920s, continued broadcasting from the Returned Sailors' and Soldiers' Institute (R.S & S.I.L.A) at 2 Lyons Street South. Coconut matting for the floor and hessian coverings on the wall were installed for the purpose.

Building on the momentum of the Wright years, the band had success with James Watson who took the baton 1933–1937. But when war commenced, the band experienced unprecedented disruption due to loss of members, transfer of duty to the regimental band and a band tragedy that hit in 1939.



Most of the history in this chapter is from Bill Wilkinson, peppered with archive photos, news clippings and snippets from the minutes.

But first, here is an overview from the minutes:

Chairman	Date	Summary	Chairman	Date	Summary
W. Wilkinson	20. 2.30		Darling	17. 7.32	Special meeting - Secretary V.B.L. Mr. Sullivan
A. S. Darling	26. 2.30	}	Darling	24. 7.32	Special meeting - Band enter South Street Competition and
W. Wilkinson	22. 3.30	Queen Carnival	W. Wilkinson	9. 8.32	join Victorian Bands League. Resignation to V.B.A.
A. S. Darling	3. 4.30				Graded "A" with the Bandmasters consent (apparently he
A. S. Darling	15. 4.30				did not)
A. S. Darling	30. 5.30	Annual Meeting	W. Wilkinson	26. 9.32	Special meeting - Report on V.B.L. Bandmaster to pick
W. Wilkinson	15. 5.30	1000 buttons ordered for contest appeal			contest band.
A. S. Darling	19. 6.30		W. Wilkinson	10.10.32	B. Harding permit Eupho from Melbourne - Band to enter "A"
A. S. Darling	18. 7.30				and "B" grade contest at South Street and the members
W. Wilkinson	14. 8.30	Band to enter Tanunda contest - leaving Ballarat October			obtain leave from work, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and
		20 and returning 27th. Coronation Ceremony 12th August			Saturday and be available 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.
W. Wilkinson	28. 8.30		Darling	8.11.32	Band won "B" grade aggregate - Eickart Cup. Take an
Hewitt	18. 9.30				interstate trip 1933.
Hewitt	6.10.30		Darling	5.12.32	Lodge appeal against re grading to "A" grade
A. S. Darling	18.11.30	Band to compete Christmas contest - Bendigo. Commence	Hewitt	19.12.32	Special meeting - Bass instrument was found on doorstep -
		raising money for Tanunda 1931.			handed to police under protest through solicitor -
A. S. Darling	18.12.30	Purchase Leedy drum. Band picnic Wilson's Reservoir			instrument found to be property of Band. Solicitor
A. S. Darling	15. 1.31	Private wire be installed for Broadcasting Band. Theatre			instructed to initiate proceedings for the recovery of all
W. Wilkinson	12. 2.31	concert May, July, September, November 3BA			instruments held by the City Band which are the property
A. S. Darling	24. 2.31	Photos of band winning street march and quickstep Tanunda			of this band (Ballarat & District Soldiers & Sailors
		to be purchased.			Instrument Fund Committee)
W. Wilkinson	19. 3.31	Minutes handwriting changes - possibly being F. Richardson	Darling	9. 1.33	J. Ratcliff appointed Deputy Bandmaster due to the leave of
A. S. Darling	21. 4.31	Annual Meeting	Hewitt	2. 2.33	absence of Bandmaster at New Zealand contest
W. Wilkinson	14. 5.31		Hewitt	16. 3.33	Sub Committee to wait on Solicitor re missing instruments
F. Richardson	9. 7.31	Leave granted Frank Wright to adjudicate Maitland contest.	Hewitt	4. 4.33	Mr. A. Trahair to represent band V.B.L.
		Purchase of hessian to cover walls of Institute for	Darling	10. 4.33	Annual Meeting - Cr. Darling (President) C.J. Hewitt,
Darling	24. 7.31	broadcasting.			P. Mather, F. Richardson, W. Wilkinson, G.M. Cameron (V.P.)
Darling	13. 8.31	Coconut matting for floor; fireplace be installed			Bandmaster, Frank Wright; Drum Major, Warrant Officer
		Resignation and clearance of John Zillies. List of			A.E. Jones.
		singers for broadcasting - C. Gower; W. Scott; N. Dunstan;			Special meeting - Verbal resignation of Bandmaster as
		G. Callinan; G. Beckwith, I. Brimcombe; E. Daff; S. Jones;			from 29th July - Applications be made.
		Ted Hockings; J. D'Albora; Jim O'Shea; The Goons;			Resignation of F. Wright; resignation of Mr. Geo. Smythe
		Mrs. Ritchie; Miss Dickenson; Miss Miller; Miss C. Allen;			as librarian
		Mrs. Morrison; Miss Chrissie Moore and Mrs. Burke			Special meeting - Applications for Bandmaster - 5 from
		(Miss Alhons)			Melbourne; 5 from S.A.; 2 Queensland; 3 Vic. country;
W. Wilkinson	10. 9.31	Purchase 6 music stands			15 rejected - 22 applicants. The Sub-Committee approved
Sprake	8.10.31	To attend Tanunda 1932			in order - J. Watson, W.L. Taylor, W.S. May, Geo. Simpson,
Darling	10.11.31	Donation of set of music folders. Resignation of A.E.			If S. Watson not available, Geo. Simpson to be appointed.
Hewitt	8.12.31	Burtons and A. Henderson.			Mr. Jerram appointed deputy conductor until Mr. Watson
		Queen Carnival 1932 Committee between			takes over. J. Zillies resigned - clearance granted and
Darling	19. 1.32	Trip to Buninyong at Easter. Medals offered for solo			Soprano returned. Band divided into 3 groups for a
		contests.			popular bandsman contest.
A. E. Jones	2. 2.32	Mr. James welcomed	Hewitt	12. 7.33	S.M. Watson welcomed as bandmaster. enter "B" grade
Darling	5. 3.32	Special meeting - constitution be changed. "The Band must			South Street.
Hewitt	19. 4.32	be affiliated with the Victorian Bands League Association"			Major A.E. Jones transferred to Bendigo - resignes 5th Nov.
		12th Annual - Mr. A.R. Rutherford be elected Life Member.			New system for signing uniforms & instruments etc.
		Retirement from Treasurer of C.E. Harris.			A. Trahair resigned as V.B.L. delegate. Warrant Officer
		£35 for Tympani purchased from Allan & Co. Band apply for			Harry Dawson appointed Drum Major.
		grading in Victorian Bands League.			Leave of absence granted Secretary until Annual Meeting -
Darling	17. 5.32	List of bandmen be forwarded to V.B.L.			Geo. Wilkinson acting Secretary.
A. E. Jones	14. 6.32	Special meeting to meet representatives V.B.L. - due to			W. Trahair acting Assistant Secretary
Darling	10. 7.32	misunderstanding VBL did not arrive.			Junior Band formed

1930s, Overview from minutes 1930-34. Source: BMCB Archive

Band success under Wright

In 1930, the Band competed at Tanunda S.A under Frank Wright with only partial success being beaten by Theberton - S.A. The adjudicator, the late Harry Shugg said he did not like our Hymn 'Nearer My God to Thee' being played like a Waltz. We had been told that he liked Hymns played brightly. How wrong can you be, or was it sabotage? I cannot vouch for the authenticity of the following because I was not at the Contest, the only one I missed since I joined the Band in 1918, but I have it on good authority :- When the Band took the stand Frank said "Now we'll show them how to play". The adjudicator is reputed to have said in his summary "I'll have no one showing me how to play". Another instance of when Silence is Golden.

- Bill Wilkinson



1930, Frank Wright conducting Ballarat Soldiers' Memorial Band at Tanunda. Source: TBA



October 1930, At Tununda competitions, S.A. with Frank Wright and Warrant Officer A E Jones. Source: TBA



1930, Postcard of Soldiers' Band Street March in Tanunda, note the thronging crowds.
Source: Robert (Bob) Pattie donated to BMCB Archive



This is an excerpt from a news article from the *Ballarat Courier*, 27 October 1932:

The band is now recognised as one of Victoria's leading concert bands, and boasts of being the only country band in Australia to maintain a regular monthly broadcast programme with an A class broadcasting station.

Under the baton of its present conductor, Mr Frank Wright, the band has maintained a high standard of efficiency. Cr A J Darling as president of the band, takes a keen and active participation in all its activities, whilst the position of secretary during the past four years has been filled by Mr Thos. W. L. Cotton.

Taking an interest in all important public functions and being annually recognised and subsidised by the Ballarat City Council, this band is immensely popular in our inland "golden city".

— *Ballarat Courier*, 1932

The minutes from the early years are beautifully transcribed by the secretaries in copperplate script. Here is a sample of Mr Cotton's handwriting:

<i>I. Cotton</i>	<i>That a Brews resignation be held over</i>
<i>Geo. Nagel</i>	<i>carried</i>
<i>W. Wright</i>	<i>That after a meeting of £15.7.0 summarised</i>
<i>J. Wilkinson</i>	<i>as follows: Secretary's honorarium £10.10.0, Tullib</i>
	<i>& King's 17/6 Pears & Sykes £2.10.0, Miss Campbell</i>
	<i>10/6, Water Cunin 10/- be passed for payment carried</i>
<i>Geo. Nagel</i>	<i>That we play at Britannia on nights</i>
<i>A. H. Henderson</i>	<i>allocted & that Secretary apply for a further</i>
	<i>two months. carried</i>
<i>J. Wilkinson</i>	<i>That the master of Alfred Hall in case of</i>
<i>W. Allen</i>	<i>Bris be closed be left in the hands of the Sec. ^{carried}</i>
<i>W. Wright</i>	<i>That if Vocalion contract be received we go</i>
<i>J. Wilson</i>	<i>so Well by bus, if not we go by train carried</i>
<i>Geo. Nagel</i>	<i>That band take part in concert at</i>
<i>W. Wright</i>	<i>Collium on 5th June carried</i>
<i>J. Wilkinson</i>	<i>That the master of a box for music stands be</i>
<i>W. Wright</i>	<i>left in the hands of W. Wilkinson & A. E. Wilson carried</i>

1930, Minutes excerpt, Mr Cotton's handwriting. Source: BMCB archive



1932 saw the resumption of the South St Contests (they had been suspended since 1925), the Band winning both Selection and Quickstep Contests under Frank Wright.

Selection Test Pieces - *Honour and Glory* (Hubert Bath), *Gems of Melody* (Liszt) – RSS

– Bill Wilkinson



1932, Soldiers' Band, Winners 'B' Grade, South Street. President: A Darling (Mayor of Ballarat), Sec. Thomas Cotton, MD Frank Wright. Source: BMCB Archive

In the minutes of 8 Nov 1932 we find this entry:

"The Bickart Cup" won by the Band for the "B" Grade Aggregate at the South Street Band Contest was presented by Me, W Wilkinson, on behalf of the members of the winning Band to the Pres Cr A Darling to be kept in the Band room.

– Bill Wilkinson



The band also competed in 'A' Grade that year and although unsuccessful in the Selection Contest, secured 2nd place in the Quickstep and did sufficiently well in Selections to get 2nd place in 'A' Aggregate* (The Quickstep points were included in the points for the aggregate at this time, not so now).

– Bill Wilkinson

[* Besson Shield Awarded for 'A' Grade Aggregate 2nd placing, *Oliver Cromwell* (Henry Gheel), *Honour and Glory* (Hubert Bath) – RSS]



1933–1937, Photograph of Soldiers' Band with Bandmaster James Watson. Source: Bob Pattie Archive

Watson takes the lead

After Frank left for England, James Watson took over [1933] and the Band was again successful in winning the Selection in 'B' Grade.

– Bill Wilkinson

[Second in 'B' Grade Quickstep and were once again awarded the Bickart Cup – RSS.]

Watson was chosen from thirty candidates and he and his wife moved from Mackay, Queensland to enable him to take up the position.

A junior band was formed in 1934.

The Band had no success in 1934.

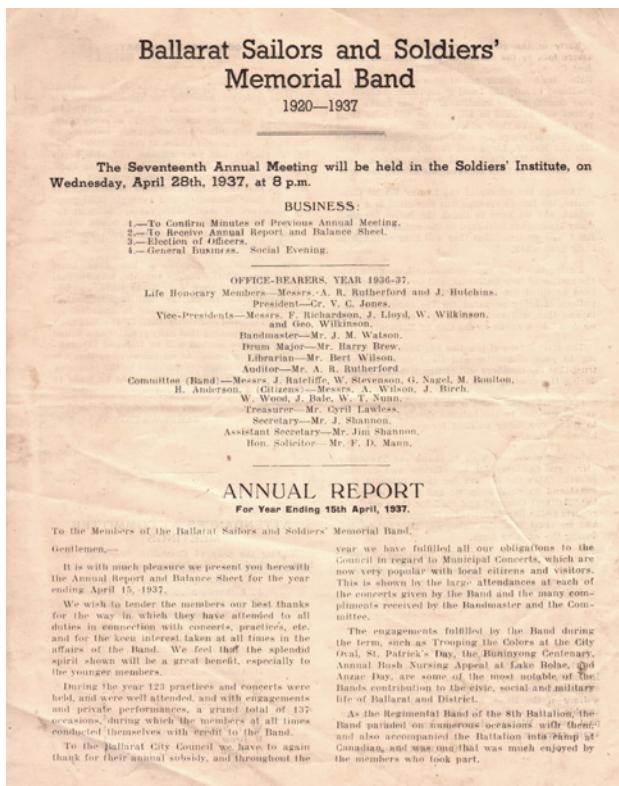
[Unplaced in "B" Grade Selection, third place in "B" Grade Quickstep - RSS].

(South Street Competitions were suspended until 1948).

James Watson continued until 1937 when Gerald King of St Augustine's Geelong was appointed Bandmaster and continued until 1939 when he went into the military forces.

Gerald did a fine job, teaching some young players and rendering some fine programs during the non-contesting period.

– Bill Wilkinson



Leaf through the
1937 AGM Booklet with
conductor's comments.

Source: BMCB Archive

At the April AGM 1938, new uniforms were reported to be well underway.



First Floral Festival for Ballarat

In 1938 Ballarat created a celebration like no other. Millions of natural and handmade flowers dipped in wax adorned the streets, shopfronts and trams in what was more than a sesquicentenary celebration. It was Ballarat's way of raising hope during a bleak period. Thousands of people from Melbourne and across the state travelled to participate in the celebrations. The festival was held again in 1939 but did not continue as planned due to World War II.

Of course, the Soldier's Band was there. This is the band portrait and the behind-the-scenes photo that was taken just before the official shot:



Here is footage of the celebration that took over the whole town in *The Ballarat Centenary Floral Festival (1938)* from the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia.



1938, Soldiers' Band Centenary Parade Ballarat. Source: BMCB Archive



[See enlarged version of photo \(page 1\).](#)



And here is the behind-the-scenes version of that 1938 Centenary Parade photo.
Source: Max Harris Collection, Ballarat Mechanics' Institute



[See enlarged version of photo \(page 2\).](#)

Regimental band leads up to war; tragedy strikes

The band was acting as the Regimental Band [their new position congratulated upon at the AGM, April 1930] until war broke out in 1939 and was called into Camp for Home Service. That left us with only a skeleton of a band, some too young and some too old for service, but we managed to carry on.

The year 1939 was not a good year for the band, aside from the fact that most were called up for service. The band experienced one of the worst tragedies that could happen to any band: Fire!

The bandroom, which was an annexe to the military orderly rooms, was burnt down. The bass instruments, which were at the time left at the bandroom, and a few spare cornets, two trombones along with chairs, stands and music were lost in the blaze. We still managed to carry on with privately owned and borrowed instruments and faced with the problem with finding another bandroom.

– Bill Wilkinson

The Age, Tues 19 December 1939

NEW INSTRUMENTS FOR BAND.

Following the destruction by fire of a number of the Instruments of the Soldiers' Memorial Band recently, new Instruments, costing £750, are expected to be available for the players to-day when they return from the military camp.

– *The Age*, Trove

Parades a big hit

St Patrick's Day was one of the annual events for which the Soldiers' Band played.

Here is an article from 1937 describing the sort of Ballarat civic events that made it into the Melbourne news. James Watson was the bandmaster at the time.

St. Patrick's Day Festival, Ballarat

Spectacular Procession Through City Streets

Children's Gala Entertainment

ST. PATRICK'S festival was celebrated on Friday in Ballarat. By 11 o'clock the clouds had cleared away, and brilliant sunshine shone from blue skies on one of the most picturesque and interesting processions held in recent years.

The procession moved off shortly after 11 o'clock to the accompaniment of the Soldiers' Memorial Band, which, under its conductor (Mr. J. M. Watson), played a number of appropriate Irish airs. It was headed by Supt. Hehir and Inspector Simpson (Police department). The Soldiers' Band followed the Bishop's car. Then followed cars containing representative members of the clergy. Then came the main procession in the following order: H.A.C.B.S. banner and members, ladies' branch H.A.C.B.S. with decorated car, C.Y.M. Society, St. Patrick's College students, St. Joseph's Home Band, Bungaree C.Y.M.S. members and parish unit (to the number of about 100), led by their chaplain, Rev. Fr. Patten; I.N.F. banner and members, and the ladies' branch in a decorated car. Then followed the boys of the Christian Brothers' School, Drummond-street, C.W.S. Guild decorated car. Children of Mary

since accounted for the big display made by this section.

HIS LORDSHIP REVIEWS PROCESSION.

As the parade returned along the south side of Sturt-street, the Bishop of Ballarat (Most Rev. Dr. Foley), together with prominent members of the clergy, withdrew from the procession at the Cathedral corner and reviewed the procession as it swung past.

The Soldiers' Memorial Band wheeled to the right, and from its new position played inspiring marches as the column passed, each individual saluting the Bishop by raising his hat and turning his head towards his Lordship's car. This spontaneous gesture of affection was greatly appreciated by Bishop Foley.

The officials were: Marshals, Messrs. J. Coghlan, L. Tudor and P. Corby; procession committee, Messrs. Hammill, Velton, A. Hager, J. Callahan and Brennan; treasurer, Mr. W. White; secretary, Mr. J. J. Shelley; assistant secretary, Mr. G. Hager. The general committee consisted of men representative of all the district parishes and Catholic schools.

capacity and many late arrivals were unable to gain admittance. Two of the outstanding features from the aesthetic viewpoint were "Sunshine and Rain," staged by the girls of Loreto Abbey (Mary's Mount), and the pageant "From Past and Present," presented by the students of the Sacred Heart College. In each of these items the staging and costuming represented the last word in refined appropriateness, and each was received with salvoes of applause. Another interesting and meritorious number was "The Fairies' Melody," which was admirably sustained by St. Joseph's School girls. As violin solo, Miss Poppy Olsen played "Molly on the Shore" (arranged by Percy Grainger) and Mr. Basil Jones, of Geelong, son of Mr. Percy Jones, was equally artistic in his interpretation of "The Dance of the Goblins" (Bazzini). Misses Greville and Golden contributed a song and dance with a combination of graceful movements and sweet voices, the girls of St. Alipius' School appeared in national dancing, and a delightful scene entitled "Dutchies" was provided by the scholars of St. Columba's School, while the *surhymnies* of St. Aloysius' School

25 March 1937, St Patrick's Day, Ballarat, *Advocate* (Melbourne). Source: Trove

Read this one from two years later. Note the first radio broadcast from a 'radio equipped car'!

THE ADVOCATE 27

Ballarat Honours St. Patrick

THAT the theme or motif of St. Patrick's Day procession in Ballarat was Education was well evidenced by the numerical strength of the parade, and the fact that for the first time the whole of the girls' colleges, as well as the boys', were represented in force. It was the first time that the various convent schools had been associated in such a procession except as spectators.

The innovation was appreciated not only because it gave the girls' schools the rare opportunity of showing their strength and their real interest in the festive day, but because it offered the chance to spell education in capital letters over what was the best procession staged on this day for many years. Practically the greatest part of it was devoted to youth, for not only were the colleges and convents in evidence, but also the notable homes conducted by the Catholics at Nazareth House, St. Joseph's and elsewhere. The various lodges were also well represented in the procession, though, as is the experience with all such, the numbers marching in regalia were limited.

There were features in the procession that deserve special mention. One of these was the tableau of Irish songs. This was accompanied by the recorded broadcasting of songs from a radio-equipped car.

Another striking tableau was that of "Eire and Her Children," staged by St. Joseph's Home, and featuring colleens and kilted boys in a picturesque pose. The Sacred Heart Convent girls marched behind a beautiful replica of the school badge, and were 150 strong. Indeed, when it comes to numbers, it was estimated that the various colleges, schools, convents, etc., paraded fully 1000 strong in students alone—a most impressive display of youth, and one of which all associated could well be proud.

DECORATED CARS

There was a very fine aggregation of decorated cars, that of the Bungaree contingent being perhaps the most elaborate, while other cars carried the Bishop of Ballarat (Most Rev. Dr. Foley) and the clergy, and another had on board four of the veterans of St. Patrick's Day celebrations, Messrs. W. White, who has been treasurer for so many years,

MAGNIFICENT PARADE

following order:—Bishop and clergy cars; festival veterans' car; H.A.C.B.S. banner and members; ladies' H.A.C.B.S.'s decorated car.

St. Joseph's Home Band; Bungaree C.Y.M.S.; St. Patrick's College; Irish National Foresters and banner; Christian Brothers' School, Drummond-street; Women's Social Guild car; Christian Brothers' School, Ballarat East; St. Columba's School boys; Children of Mary decorated car.

Soldiers' Memorial Band; Sacred Heart College; Loreto College; Lyons-street School; St. Aloysius' School; St. Joseph's Home tableau; St. Patrick's Tennis Club; Orphanage Band; St. Alipius' Girls' School; St. Columba's Girls' School; Nazareth House, Villa Maria, boys; St. Joseph's Home boys; decorated cars.

There was an exceptionally good lot of decorated cars, and much taste had been displayed in the adorning of some of them, and they helped to make the procession a success.

The time-honoured banners of the H.A.C.B.S. and the I.N.F., which have seen many a parade, were, as usual, well in the forefront; indeed, they were given places of honour, which was as it should be, for these were the pioneer friendly societies of the days when the city was "built on gold."

GIRLS MARCHED WELL

Of the latter, we can only speak in terms of praise, and it was a pleasure to hundreds of people to see the girlies marching.

The honour of leading the girls fell to the Sacred Heart College, and they presented a fine sight, which was a feature of the procession. They marched with precision and grace of movement. Barbara Hanrahan, a child of nine years, bravely led the school, followed by the school banner; then came 120 students, with the juniors leading in smart military formation.

Wearing a martial air, and with rhythm in every movement, that spoke of careful training, came the students of Loreto College, Dawson-street. With banners proudly borne, and with discipline rarely seen in such youthful ranks, followed the

travelled into Sturt-street, north side, and down to Ballarat East, returning on the south side. At the Lyons-street intersection the Bishop's car drew to one side, and he took the salute as the various component parts of the parade came to a halt and dispersed prior to the afternoon's big racing fixture at the Miners' racecourse.

BALL AT ST. PATRICK'S HALL

The ball proved a fitting climax to the day's festivities, and its popularity was evidenced by the large gathering, representative of Ballarat and the surrounding districts, which assembled in the hall.

The ballroom was canopied with broad streamers, in green, gold, and wine shades, radiating from a central pendant of massed autumn flowers. Floral motifs and garlands adorned the walls.

The Bishop (Right Rev. Dr. Foley) honoured the gathering with his presence. He was accompanied by Rev. Fr. E. Galligan (administrator), and several members of the clergy from Ballarat and district parishes were also present.

The Catholic ladies' committee provided an abundant and delicious supper. A great deal of splendid work was done by Mr. M. Caffrey as organiser and supervisor; Mr. J. J. Shelley as secretary, and Mr. W. White as hon. treasurer. Miss Holmes presided over the bridge tables.

Geelong

BELL BROS.
Kilgour Street Bakery,
Geelong

Brown Bread a Specialty.

Bacchus Marsh

BRIDGE INN

BACCHUS MARSH.

(Under New Management.)

Opposite Maddray Park and Railway Station.
Jack Brennan (late of Panton Hill) will
Welcome Your Patrons,
Good Accommodation, Hot and Cold Water
throughout. Phone: Bacchus Marsh 31.

23 March 1939, Ballarat Honours St Patrick's Day, *The Advocate* (Melbourne). Source: Trove



Jack Allan: a brief tenure

The service of Jack Allan was procured and with his ability as a player Conductor we rendered some fine programs until he also joined the military forces. So Jack Allan only carried on for a short period.

– Bill Wilkinson

Jack Allan was one of the best cornet players in Australia. He was the next generation on from Percy Code and Wright. He was taught by Alf Rowell.

– Robert (Bob) Pattie, Ballarat City Band

Bob's father Ken Pattie, Ballarat City Band Life Member, considered Jack Allan the best cornet player he had ever heard, 'nationally and internationally'.

See the c. 1920–23 photo of the band in the previous chapter on the 1920s. Jack Allan is the young lad holding the cornet seated on the floor to the left of Bandmaster Rowell.

The 1930s also heralded in a new era for banding, with the VBL taking control of South Street and leaving the Ballarat-based VBA for dead.



VBL certificate.
Source: BMCB Archive



The demise of the VBA

While the Ballarat Soldiers' Memorial Band first registered with the Victorian Bands Association (VBA) – whose head office was then in Ballarat – the band was eventually forced to recapitulate along with Ballarat City Band and many other regional bands across Australia and register with the Victorian Bands League (VBL) in the early 1930s.

There was controversy around the beginnings of the Melbourne-based Victorian VBL and the resulting demise of the Ballarat-based VBA.

The VBA started in the very early 1900s to cope with the influx of brass band registrations for the South Street competitions. But when the South Street competitions aligned themselves with the VBL in 1932, it was the final nail in the coffin for the VBA.

Founding member and first life member of the band, Russell Rutherford, had been the VBA delegate for the Soldiers' Band for many years throughout this period. In 1931 and 1932, the last two years of the VBA's fraught existence, Russ ran as president of the VBA.

The Ballarat bands held out in support of the VBA for quite a while but eventually had to register with VBL to be eligible to compete in their world-famous hometown Eisteddfod, South Street.

To find out more about the intricacies of this history, read Jeremy de Korte's fascinating post [Affiliation and location: The Victorian Bands' Association to the Victorian Bands' League](#).

The new VBL, keen to establish itself, set up massed bands events at the MCG and ran competitions around Victoria. Read this sample program from the [Victorian Bands' League Massed Bands' Recital 26 November 1933](#).

These two articles published in the Melbourne newspapers, *The Age* and *The Herald*, show the predicament facing the band and the lead-up to why the band reluctantly left the VBA.

BAND CONTROL STRUGGLE

Ballarat May See Crisis

BALLARAT. Thursday.—The struggle for supremacy in band control between the Victorian Band Association, formed in Ballarat nearly 30 years ago, and the newly-formed Victorian Band League, of Melbourne, is approaching a crisis. The approaching band contest of the South Street Society may become the battle ground.

The Victorian Association has been informed by the New South Wales Association that it will stand solidly behind the old organisation, which means that New South Wales bands will not be permitted to compete at Victorian contests under League rules.

The South Street Society proposes to hold its next contest under League rules. It has been informed that 45 bands have obtained the music for the coming contest, which will be the same as that for the Adelaide and Tanunda (S.A.) contests.

The S.A. Association is supporting the League, but many Victorian country bands have decided to support the Association.

30 June 1932, *The Herald*, 'Band Control Struggle'. Source: TROVE

SOUTH-ST. BAND CONTEST.

Two Ballarat Bands Join Victorian League.

BALLARAT. Monday.—The Victorian Band Association to-night received the resignation of Ballarat Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial Band. Mr. A. R. Rutherford (president), who is the band's delegate, said the decision had been made for very clear reasons, and only after hard thinking and hot words. The band would never have resigned from the Victorian Band Association, to affiliate with the Victorian Band League, but for the fact that it felt obliged, as a Ballarat band, to enter for the South-street band contest, which was being held under the patronage of the league.

The secretary (Mr. W. Martin) said he had had no communication from Ballarat City Band, but he understood it also had joined the league for the same reason.

A New South Wales bandsman wrote stating he wished to enter for the South-street solo work, and inquiring his position. The secretary stated he had replied that the New South Wales association was affiliated with the V.B.A., and that the player should place his position before that body.

Mr. C. H. Dale was elected president, Messrs. H. Tucker and A. Henderson vice-presidents, Mr. W. Ramage registrar, Mr. W. Martin secretary, and Mr. E. J. Evans assistant secretary; executive committee, Messrs. A. Boyce, E. H. Williams, F. Spielyogel, G. Bunting and S. Samson.

Intending competitors are reminded that entries for all subjects positively close on Friday next, 19th inst., and may be lodged at Allan's Music Warehouse, Collins street, Melbourne, or posted direct to the general secretary (Mr. L. A. Beckman), Box 33, P.O., Ballarat.

16 August 1932, *The Age*, 'South-St Band Contest'.
Source: TROVE



DISCOVER MORE

After many years of dispute and unrest, Australian players enjoyed Ballarat's famous South Street competitions again. Here are some images from that year's comps:



1932, South Street comps. Source: VBL scrapbook



The 1940s

At a glance

The population of Australia touches on eight million by the end of the decade. Australians enter the war against Nazi horror in Europe, and Japanese tyranny in the Asia Pacific, as they join forces with the allies for humanity. There is rationing of meat and clothing and soldiers can scarcely afford alcohol.

By 1942 Singapore falls and 15,000 Australians are taken prisoners of war. Australian World War II casualties: 180,864 wounded, 33,826 killed (8000 of those who died were prisoners of war).

Starting off the decade, Australia is deeply and culturally aligned with Britain, but things are about to change.

Mary Gilmore's rousing poem *No Foe Shall Gather Our Harvest*, published in *The Australian Women's Weekly* 29 June 1940, demonstrates the cultural alliance retained with Britain right from the first stanza. Here is an excerpt:

Sons of the mountains of Scotland,
Clansmen from correi and kyle,
Bred of the moors of England,
Children of Erin's green isle,
We stand four-square to the tempest,
Whatever the battering hail—
No foe shall gather our harvest,
Or sit on our stockyard rail.
...

— Mary Gilmore
<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/51271905>

If you look at the \$10 note in your pocket, you will find a picture of Mary Gilmore there.

In 1942 Churchill makes it clear that, if necessary, he will take all measures to defend British soil and will not make troops available to help defend Australia against Japanese attack. Australia makes a counter-choice. At the end of 1941, Labour Prime Minister John Curtin's New Year message to the people is, 'Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom'.

America responds and Australia agrees to become the official base for US supreme command for the Pacific War. By 1943, there are 250,000 American troops in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane, as well as in regional towns including Ballarat, preparing to fight.

In the aftermath of World War I Australians are not comfortable with the notion of conscription, so soldiers who join up are only required to defend Australian soil. However, Curtin realises that, to quash the Japanese efforts, Australian troops are required in the Pacific and South East Asia. It takes until 1943 for the Australian Government to agree to conscription for sending AIF (Australian Imperial Force) officers overseas.

With America's political support for Australia, and the presence of US Marines in Australia during the war, American culture is imported firmly into Australia. This cultural transplant affects music, fashion, lifestyle and aspirations for the rest of the century.



When farm workers enlist for the war effort, Australia loses many of its food producers. There is a much-needed solution to this problem in The Australian Women's Land Army, which forms in July 1942. Women earn new respect from men in rural communities where they take on the brunt of manual farming labour.

In 1940, The ABC employs their first woman broadcaster, Margaret Doyle, and in 1943 Edith Lyons and Dorothy Tagney are the first two women elected into Australian Parliament. The tide begins to turn for women's rights to work, to have a voice and to be heard.

Germany eventually surrenders in May 1945, followed by Japan in August, formally ending World War II in September 1945. Surviving soldiers return home and the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester make a visit to Australia as families across the nation reassemble their lives.

The 1946 Australian postwar immigration scheme creates another wave of multiculturalism for Australia, on a scale that has not been seen since the gold rush.

Media technology continues to transform people's lives every day and in 1945 the Australian National Film Board forms. In 1947 the ABC begins an independent radio news service.

The status of 'Australian Citizen' is created for the first time through *The Nationality and Citizenship Act* in 1948. In 1949 Robert Menzies leads the Liberal Party into power. The party remains in leadership for the next twenty-three years.



A bandsman in Manpower and the navy

It is hard to know what a musician might have experienced during the world wars of the last century. Luckily, their stories have been occasionally documented in personal letters like the ones that Alf Rowell wrote to his beloved (see pp. 24–25). Oral histories were taken, but they don't often focus on the role of the musician. Returned servicemen were encouraged to return to normal life. To move on. And sadly, many musicians died at war, their voices extinguished. So this is not a largely heard story.



1942, *He's Coming South* propaganda poster
WW II. Source: Australian War Memorial

It is a rare privilege then, to hear a contemporary account of the experiences of one such musician. And, if you played in the Ballarat Memorial Concert Band in the late 1990s or early 2000s, you may have even played alongside this charismatic gentleman.

Max Beeson was a teen in World War II and, to Max's disappointment, his mother refused to sign the papers that would enable him to join up when he was still under eighteen years of age.

'A lot of the young fellas used to think, "this is good, we're going to war"; it was a bit of a fun thing.' Max's wife, Angela, adds: 'When you're a teenager you don't realise'.

Max wanted to 'do his bit' for the country so, at the age of fourteen, he left Preston Tech where he had been enjoying playing in the brass ensemble, and started work for the government-operated 'Manpower'. This was before the government exerted control over the Australian national workforce in April 1942.



DISCOVER MORE

This short article, [Reserved occupations, Second World War](#) by the Australian War Memorial explains how Manpower operated.

They had the manpower, they controlled all the employment and they sent you where they wanted to, an ammunitions factory or whatever. Making uniforms, boots, making ammunition, arms, all sort of guns, artillery.

– Max Beeson



Max lived in Coburg, travelling by train to Newport each day to help prepare Caterpillar tractors, sent over from America by the thousand, to be readied to deliver up north for defence action.

After about six months of arduous commuting, Max was re-stationed to a timber yard in Brunswick, making wooden boxes to carry tinned food to send over to the troops. He remained in this employment until he joined the navy. 'We were pulling out nine-feet logs from mountain ash. If they fell on your foot you knew all about it!'

As soon as he came of age, he signed up for the navy. Having first learned the flute in 1937 and having played brass in the school ensemble in 1940 and 1941, Max was not immune to the magnetism of music.

I was eighteen, in the navy, doing training. I heard this band playing and I thought 'Christ, what's that? Where's the band?' And they said, 'That's the navy band'.

When I heard the band, that finished it.

– Max Beeson

In both world wars, military musicians had dual roles, usually as medical support. Navy musicians who trained and worked alongside Max were no exception. Max served in the navy as a musician from 1945 to 1953. Here are some stories from those years.

On the aircraft carrier we did first aid, that's where I first got interested in it. [Max went on to become a paramedic.] And fire fighting. That was our action station. But on the cruisers we were down what they call a *transmission station*, and that controls the big eight inch guns.

[We were on] HMAS Shropshire, the one that we went to Japan, where I saw all the after-effects of the atom bomb. I saw all of that. Normally we were musos, but that was our action station down the transmission station.

We played for all the ceremonies, ceremonial sunsets, officers' dinners, we played at one of the big posh pubs at Shanghai when Lizzie and Philip got married. All the bigwigs decided to put a dinner on in their honour, they couldn't get an orchestra and you'll never guess who drew the short straw! The band off the Aussie, us. We never got our tea til half past ten at night. When all the drunks went home. There was plenty left, I can tell you.

– Max Beeson

With a small audience including the author, Heather George and Karen George, and his wife Angela, Max entertained us with stories from the carrier ships:

A funny thing happened, I was on the aircraft carrier HMAS Sydney (<http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-sydney-iii>), in the band, and when it came out from England there were six ex-royal marine bandsmen on it and, when it came out here, six Australians got drafted on to make the band a twelve, plus the bandmaster. These pommy blokes were real good players. And it was alright, we got on pretty well. And we went down to Hobart because the Navy used to go down there every January for the Regatta, so we were down there.



For church parade every Sunday morning on the flight deck, all instruments had to be cleaned and serviced on a Saturday afternoon. So in those days all the brass instruments were brass, they weren't silver and you only had to be there at sea for a week and they were green, because of the salt air. So that Saturday afternoon I spent two hours cleaning my 'Double B'. Anyhow, next morning we went down the band store to get our instruments. We had to go two decks up by ladders which brought us up to what we called the 'after lift well', where the planes were lifted from the hanger deck to the flight deck. The band falls in there and we're playing 'Hard to Vote' which is the regimental march of the Navy Band while the lift comes up. On this morning, we're standing there, the bloke pulls the lever, lift comes up, ding ding ding, we're playing dum da da dum da da, got up the top, he pulled it [the lever] too far, and we went down again!

Heather: Now you see us, now you don't!

Max: That was a balls up!

This pommy bloke he played eupho and cello. In those days, if you played brass you had to play a string at certain times – cello is nearly the same music as the eupho. This is in 1950. So I clean me bass, next morning we went down the church parade as I said, went to get the bass out of the case ... it's not there! We're down three decks, couldn't find it. So I went up to the bandmaster (he was a mongrel) and I said to him, 'Sir someone's pinched my bass'. To which came a gruff reply, 'What do you mean someone's pinched your bass?' I said, 'It's not in the case'. He says 'There's an Eb bass down there somewhere'. I said, 'I think there is, I'll go and have a look'. So anyhow I found it because there's only one bass player and I opened the case and the damn thing was green, coz no one used it, you see. Couldn't get the valves moving, this was a quarter to eight and we're supposed to muster at ten to eight. So anyhow, I said to one of the other players, 'Have you got any valve oil?' And he said 'Yeah', so I got the valve working and tore up to the flight deck, no after lift or fall in, and do you know what the bandmaster said to me? He said, 'Didn't you clean it?' That's what the sort of mongrel he was.

Anyhow, to cut the long story short, we couldn't find the bass. So I think it was on the Monday morning there's a big search about the ship for the bass. Lofty who was one of the poms, eupho and cello player, he confessed ... he threw it over the side!

The story is, he come back as full as a boot from the pub, went down the band store, got the string bass out of the case, and he couldn't get it up through the band hole because in the Navy at 21:00 hours all hatches are shut in case there's a collision in the night. And so he couldn't get it up through the manhole so what does he do? He goes back and gets the 'Double B', went through the manhole and kept going. The instrument went down through sixty feet of water!



HMAS Sydney prepares to raise from the lift well to the flight deck and make ready a Sea Fury for launch while Anzac takes up rescue destroyer station astern.

Source: Royal Australian Navy



So on the Thursday they got Navy divers down to bring it up, in the mud. They brought it up and I said to one of the divers, 'Me mouthpiece is missing' and he said, 'What's that mate?'. So I showed him what one was and he said 'I'll go down and have a look for you'. So he went back down and he couldn't find it. Anyhow, when you do something wrong it's 'off caps'. So we had to front up to the commander over this business. Blah blah blah, blah blah blah blah, the commander said to him. Lofty replied, 'I couldn't get the string bass up so I put the Double B over'. He said 'What for?' He said, 'I wanted to teach it to swim!'

That was the first I've ever seen a Master at Arms laugh. In the old days they used to have the whip and use it.

– Max Beeson

In 1946, Max went offshore in Hiroshima just after the war.

I saw what was left of Japan. The atom bomb. Me and me mate were walking down the street, and a bloke was walking the other way towards us like this [limping with body slanted and distorted]. And I said to my friend, Norm, 'What do you think is wrong with this poor old sod?'. Anyhow, when we got up close to him we were able to see that his right arm was fused to his body, his ear was gone, no eye. He was only one. Others were limping, and others were getting round on sticks, some were all disfigured. When the bomb went off I think it was 300 degrees, the centre of it was, and from there it fanned out [showing with his hands the way the burn from the bomb spread].

It was timed to go off 130 feet above the ground and that's exactly what happened. And Nagasaki was the same, we went there later, that was the same. Tokyo wasn't far behind it.

The Japanese used to give cheek to the yanks a bit, but the Aussies? No way, no way. They were frightened of us, because the word got around what happened.

I went with my friend Norm down to the market [Japan 1946] to meet some Japanese girls we'd become friendly with and they could speak fluent English. We used to take soap and talc powder over because you couldn't get any of that. Especially the chicks because they'd like a nice smoke, the smell of it. We used to give it to them. We could have got a lot of Yen for it, but we gave it to them.

And I said to the eldest one, 'How come you speak English so well?' She says, 'Oh, we were taught English because we knew the Japanese Army was going to overrun Australia'. They were taught that. They had money printed and all.

– Max Beeson



It is true that the Japanese military had printed a number of invasion money currencies to be used as a stable currency in the takeover of countries in the Pacific. It is also true that in 1942 the Japanese military decided it was too risky to undertake an Australian invasion. The same year, the Australian government intercepted and decoded intelligence to this effect but decided to withhold the information from the Australian public until the middle of the following year, 1943, in order to save face after making it central to their war propaganda claim – and perhaps also to retain a very powerful fear motivator.



1940s, Japanese invasion currency: a one shilling note. Source: Australian War Memorial



DISCOVER MORE

Read Peter Stanley's 2010 ABC news article, [What 'Battle for Australia'?](#) exploring the issues of whether Japan intended to invade Australia.



The band in the 1940s



1941, Annual meeting program cover. Source: BMCB Archive

McGregor Bollard took over from Jack Allan and carried on for a couple of years until he left the town. Lew (Lewellyn) Thomas carried on as bandmaster until the mid-40s.

We know a bit about Lew thanks to his grandson, bandsman David Morris. Lew was one of four boys and three girls from a musical family, with their father being one of the first registered music teachers in Victoria (before Victoria was registered as a state) as well as a choral conductor. From all accounts David Morris found that the Thomas brothers were 'stellar musos'.

One of Lew's brothers, Hal (the eldest of the boys), wrote a piece while living in Ballarat for the war effort called *I'll fill his vacant place* – a piece for piano and voice. According to the family history, Hal didn't have to work for a few years because of the proceeds of this song.

David Morris has a photo of Lew and his brothers playing in the Lyric Theatre Orchestra in 1911. He explained that *not just any bandsman* would have been eligible to have played in the orchestra because there were ladies in attendance. Apparently these three 'passed muster' and were deemed to have been of good enough character to include.



View the score
I'll fill his vacant place by Hal Thomas on Trove.



Bandsmen of the era were drawn largely from the working class and were considered to be 'rough round the edges' by the society's upper echelons.

Lew played tenor horn and was a contemporary of the famous horn player, conductor and teacher Percy Code. When Code returned from playing in America he is said to have invited Lew to play in his Melbourne orchestra. Who knows where this would have taken Lew, as Code went on to conduct the Australian Broadcasting Company's orchestra for many years? But Lew declined the offer to leave Ballarat because he and his wife were expecting a child.

So why didn't Lew go to war? Lew was a Welsh Nationalist who never went to war because of his beliefs, but instead worked as a bootmaker in his Eyre Street shop, playing in the band for recreation and community service. This choice afforded the Soldiers' Band a much-needed fill-in bandmaster during the lean war years.



1945, Soldiers' Band with Lew Thomas, Bandmaster. Source: BMCB Archive

Rasmussen returns

Battalion Bandmaster Bert Rasmussen was reappointed after his return from active service overseas.

His association with the Ballarat Memorial Soldiers' Band was long standing and he had already led the band for a time in the 1920s until he was forced to take work in a theatre orchestra for financial reasons.



1948 saw the resumption of South Street Contests and contesting in general. We were again successful in winning the 'B' Grade Selection Contest. The Band was upgraded to 'A' Grade in 1949 and competed at the Australian Championship at Launceston Tas. Gaining second place to Collingwood who were conducted by the famous 'Massa' Johnston.

– Bill Wilkinson



c.1949, Soldiers' Band, South Street Quickstep competitions. Source: Fred Fargher Archive



Bill Fargher with his son Fred on the Launceston trip. Source: Fred Fargher Archive

Long-time bandsman Bill Fargher's son Fred Fargher remembers staying at the YMCA in Launceston for the Australian Championship, sharing it with Maryborough Brass Band: 'It was just this huge open area with all these army bunks all around.'

I remember the trip over and I particularly remember Bert Rasmussen. It was very, very rough [the ocean]. It was Easter period, my Dad was sick, everybody was ill. And I didn't get seasick and I remember them all being so grey and horrible. It was an overnight trip on the old Taroona. We left at four o'clock in the afternoon from Melbourne and went through the heads at about six.

I can still remember the impact of the swell all of a sudden hitting the ship. And I remember arriving and all the band members were saying 'Oh God never again'. Bert Rasmussen, Bill Wilkinson and somebody else all booked aircraft flights back. They were determined not to have to do that again!

But Fred travelled back by ship, and the return journey was 'as calm as a mill pond'.

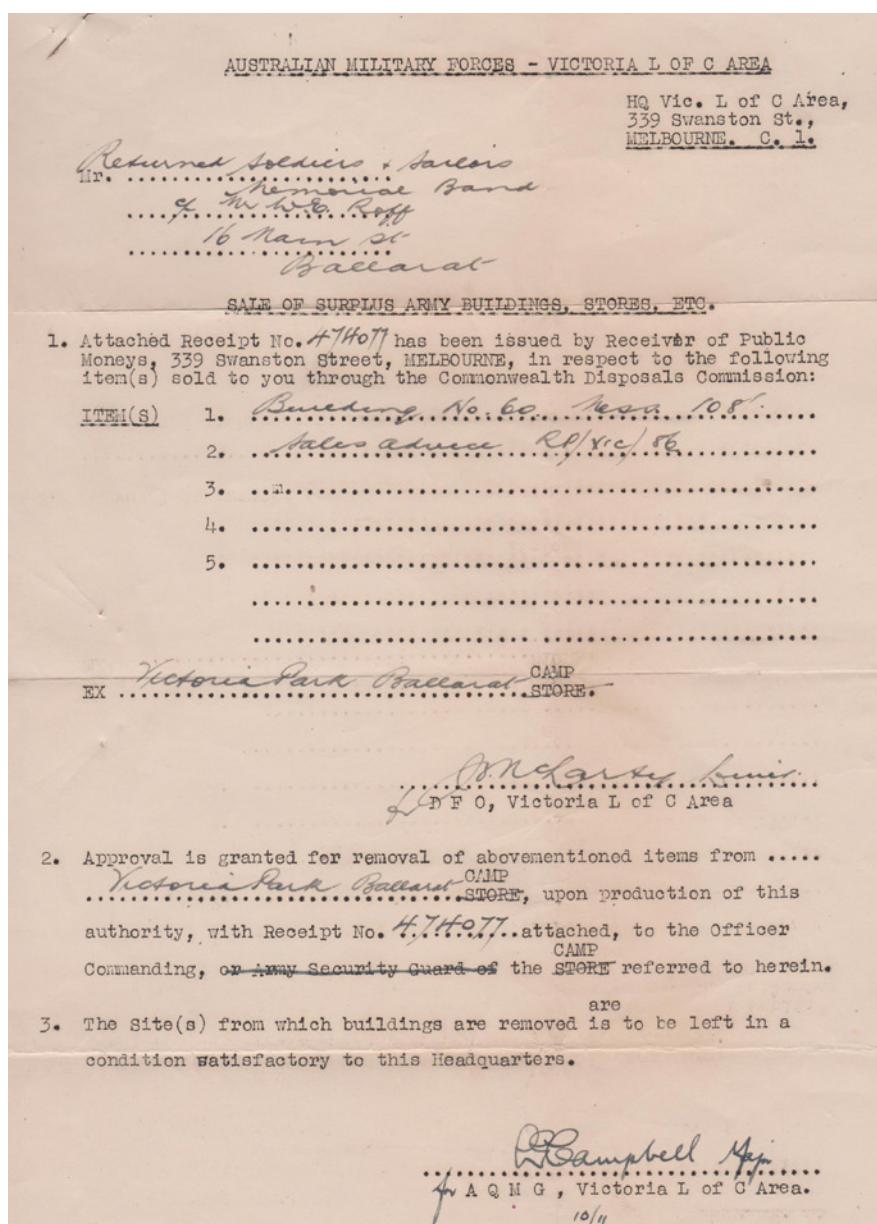
New premises for the band

Bill Roff became president of the band around 1943. According to Bill Wilkinson's history, Bill was, 'responsible for the purchase of the site for the bandroom, and the erection of the present building'. This happened in the years following World War II because it was an ex-army hut that, according to President George Horwood in his annual report of April 1981, was bought on 9 November 1945 from the Commonwealth of Australia for £192 and relocated from Victoria Park.

In the minutes it is recorded:

Moved into Band Room August 11th 1946.

Last Parade at 107 Camp Street, May 26th 1946.



1945, Document showing sale of surplus army building from Victoria Park. Source: BMCB Archive



Jimmy Allen, life member and player for forty-five years with the Soldiers', played with the band in the 40s as a young lad. Jimmy Allen reminisces with Jim Dennis on the most important banding performances in his life and the move to the new premises in Eastwood Street:

Jimmy Allen: The most important one we done when the war was on; we were too young to go in the army but we used to do church parades up in the army camp up in Victoria Park. We used to play the music and they used to march down to the church. Every Sunday. I got a certificate at home from the governor actually for what we used to do up there in the convalescent camp ... I would say I was going up there for about four and a half to five years and they used to pick us up in army trucks and take us up. That was for the returned soldiers who were injured. So it started a couple of years after the war started.

We used to look forward to it too because in those days the rations were on and when we were doing those church parades, we were allowed to go into the canteen at Victoria Park and we used to buy cigarettes for our father. That was the Soldiers' Memorial Band and then they altered it because there were no 'Airmen' in the name.

We used to have not a bad little band then ... pretty good. The bandsmen in those days used to be pretty keen kids didn't they, Jim?

Jim Dennis: Oh yes, it was a great form of entertainment. There was no TV. Families were pretty much providing their own entertainment and listening to the radio, listening to bands play on the radio. They'd go up to the Lake [Wendouree] and to the Gardens [Ballarat Botanical] where all bands, not only the Soldiers' Band but the Ballarat City Band, would go up there and would do concerts on a regular basis. They'd even go on the steam boat, the paddle boat.

Jimmy A: Every Sunday, every second Sunday, we'd go on the boat.

Jim D: Yeah, do performances up there so it was a great family thing. So, you'd get concerts and you'd get these kids coming through. 'Hey Dad, I want to play the trumpet!', 'Oh Dad, I want to play trombone!' So you'd have this feeding all the time, it was an essential part of life, a central part of entertainment. Music.

Jimmy A: We got donations from here, there and everywhere. We put hours and hours and hours into banding. We used to play regularly every second Sunday at the Gardens and vice versa with the City Band. The alternate Sunday we would play in one of the Sturt Street Rotundas, either the Titanic or Alexandra. When the Yanks were here right opposite the Alexandra Rotunda they used to run the M.P.O. (Military Police Office), where the photographer is now, and we had music that used to turn them on and they'd be snapping their fingers and jumping around. And we'd get donations and the donations were good. The Yanks had plenty of money.

Before then, we were at the Drill Hall [currently Dan Murphy's]. Alf Rowell rehearsed with the City Band there and we rehearsed with Rasmussen in the Drill Hall.

Young players for the band

The best way to keep a steady stream of junior players joining the band, was to seek them out and train them up.

There were many mentors for up-and-coming players who gave generously of their time to continue the brass band tradition in Ballarat. Young lads like Jimmy Allen learned to play in Bandmaster Alf Rowell's Brass Band at Pleasant Street Primary School and committed bandsmen such as Bill Fargher tutored young students in their homes, voluntarily, on behalf



of the band. All to get the next generation up to scratch to join them in their love of brass banding.

Bill Fargher taught Norm Newey, who played in the band around 1950–1970 and who contributed so much to music in Ballarat through performing and teaching brass. Bill also taught his own son Fred Fargher (as well as their young neighbour) until Fred's love of dance captivated the young boy's every waking moment, ignited by Wavie Williams Pantomime Company. At this time young Fred did not know that he was soon to give up the cornet to dedicate his energies to dance and theatre, to become an influential choreographer in BLOC and LYRIC theatre companies, and eventually to host his own tonight show on BTV6.

Wavie Williams Pantomime Company

Wavie Williams Pantomime Company was set up to raise money during WW II and provided a welcome community counterpoint to the grim realities of war. Wavie's company became immensely popular for its annual large scale performances, drawing enormous crowds to Her Majesty's Theatre throughout the 40s and 50s.

In this photo we see a group of young dancers including Ballarat vintage collector, Leah Willian's Aunt Jean (labelled 'me' in the photo). Leah interviewed her elderly aunt to find out more about her experiences with the company during the war. Jean remembers shows such as Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs and Cinderella. She loved 'being involved, loved the dress ups, the dancing, the costumes'. Jean remembers Wavie to be 'good and kind and very nice' leading the popular shows for which 'Her Majesty's was always sold out'.

Jean also remembers that they used to raise money for the costumes by having a Rabbit Drive. Wavie would hire a bus and they would all drive into the country and run around and chase rabbits to sell.



1946, Wavie Williams Pantomime Company troupe. Source: Leah Willian, great niece of early Soldiers' Band drum major Alexander Willian



Norm went on to play in private bands with Bill Fargher and gained enormously from his musical mentorship.

Fred shares his memories of his father's musical work ethic and being in the junior band with Rasmussen:

I can remember Mr Rasmussen saying, 'How come you know those notes?' ... 'My dad taught me'. My dad was a stickler for me knowing the theory of music, how to read music and knowing the staves. There weren't many people in that original intake when they had the idea to start the junior band. I remember there would have only been eight or ten of us sitting around that blackboard with Bert Rasmussen.

Allan Reid who worked for Burt Wilson, the electrician, he was a really good cornet player and he was learning before he came into the junior band. I remember because I was really impressed the first time he sat alongside me, it was his first band practice and he could play ... he was really good.

They were playing Wednesday and Sunday morning. It was my only way of getting out of church! When I gave it away, my mother insisted I had to go to church [again]!

Sgt HL Rasmussen: battalion musician, field ambulance and bandmaster



28 June 1940, Sgt HL Rasmussen, Leader 2/8th Australian Infantry Battalion Band, Middle East, British Mandate of Palestine. Palestine Kilo 89. Source: Australian War Memorial Accession Number 002227

Junior band members from the 40s and 50s remember their time with Bert Rasmussen. Fred Fargher recalls:

He would fire up, lose his temper easily, but he probably had reason to. I don't know that band members from the day did a lot of home rehearsal. It was very much at the bandroom; you sort of tried to get it right and then a lot of them wouldn't have touched the pieces. I remember the year, the test piece, I think it was the Frank Wright year, I'm not sure, the test piece was a version of Tchaikovsky's fifth symphony and I can remember that year the band was playing really well and they were determined to be top of the 'B' Grade, and I think they were and I think they won it.

Dad rehearsed and rehearsed with the trumpet line in our living room ... I knew Tchaikovsky's fifth symphony backwards by the time they went up with it. Dad took it seriously. I was made to take it seriously, but I'm not sure, when I think back that a lot of the players [did] ... I can't remember



who the drum player was that left the band, but he was simply the bass drum player and they had a lot of trouble replacing him ... and I remember who they got for a short period of time and he was hopeless. He had no sense of rhythm and I remember Bert Rasmussen with him, trying to control his temper because the bloke just couldn't keep in time!

Norm Newey also remembers an intriguing story about Bandmaster Rasmussen:

Under Rasmussen at the old Alfred Hall, it must have been the very early 50s and Rasmussen was a very tense bandmaster and there was something going on in the euphonium section in the middle of one section. He picked up the stand and he slammed it down in front of the second euphonium player as if to say, 'You play it!'. This was in the middle of the performance, being judged and everything. He was savage and he was so tense, I can remember that.

I didn't realise it at the time, but these guys had just come out of the second world war.

– Norm Newey

For these young lads, it would have been very hard to understand what these ex-servicemen had experienced.

It is hard for us to imagine now.

Thanks to Neil Leckie's research at the Ballarat Ranger Military Museum, a letter written by Rasmussen to his daughter, and an account given just before his death when he was eighty-nine, we have an insight into Rasmussen's wartime experiences. We also gain an understanding of his life just before he came back to lead the Soldiers' Band, through the postwar 40s and into the 50s.

I hope you are sitting down ...

Herbert Ludwig Rasmussen, born in 1895, hailing from the District of Ballarat, served in both wars as battalion musician, field ambulance and bandmaster. He joined the 1/8 Battalion in World War I and 2/8 Battalion in World War II. According to the 2/8 Battalion history, Bert and his son Les were the only father and son combination in the battalion.



1940, the original members of the 2/8th Battalion Band, Palestine. Source: *The Second Eighth, A History of the 2/8th Australian Infantry Battalion*, published by the 2/8th Battalion Association, Melbourne 1984. Provided by Neil Leckie, Museum Manager, Ballarat Ranger Military Museum

The original members of the Battalion band, Palestine 1940. Back Row: T. Schaffert (POW Crete), R. Ferrier, R. Rowe, L. Bulled (POW Crete), J. Greer (died while POW Crete). Second row: A. McCormick, L. Rasmussen, T. Davey, G. Farmer, J. Perry, J. Hallett, D. Kent. Third row: B. McMahon (POW Crete), G. Blowers (missing, Crete), J. Lynch (POW Crete), H. Rasmussen (POW Crete), J. Langshaw, J. Towers, D. McGregor (POW Crete), N. Scott (POW Crete). Front: E. Tinker, C. Kemp, J. Morton, L. Randall.



The 2/8th Battalion, as part of the 6 Division, undertook training in Egypt and Palestine from 1940 in preparation for their first battle against the Italian forces in Libya. To develop their fitness they swam in the Mediterranean. To develop their *esprit de corps*, they played competitive cricket, hockey and held inter-unit regimental band contests.

In the *History of the Battalion* (p. 13), the results of one of these band competitions is recorded: 'The Battalion band, which comprised many excellent musicians, and was under the leadership of Sgt Bert Rasmussen who had been the bandmaster in the first 8th Battalion, won the competition.'

After the Libyan campaign, the battalion's service continued; by now they had been absorbed into the 19th Brigade due to a restructure in the AIF, following a British military model. Rasmussen's experience, when compared with civilian banding experience, was nothing short of extraordinary. (We will read in his own words what happened to him, in a moment.)

It [2/8th Battalion] played only a small role at Bardia (3-5 January 1941) but suffered the heaviest casualties of any Australian unit during the battle for Tobruk (21-22 January 1941), after having to attack a strong point constructed around a line of dug-in tanks. The 19th Brigade led the divisional advance onwards to Benghazi, which was reached on 6 February; the Italian forces surrendered the next day. In early April 1941 the 2/8th deployed to Greece. It fought a fierce battle with German troops at Vevi in the country's north on 11 and 12 April but, overstretched and assailed by a vastly superior force, was forced to withdraw. The battalion became disorganised, lost a great deal of its weapons and equipment, and many of its troops were separated.'

– Neil Leckie, *Country Victoria's Own: 150 Year History of 8th/7th Battalion Royal Victoria 1858–2008*.

On the night of 26 April, the men were evacuated from Kalamata. They departed in two ships: 199 men were taken straight back to Egypt, while another 394 made an unplanned, circuitous and very unfortunate landing on Crete. Sgt Rasmussen was among those who made a Crete landing.

This astounding story of Bert Rasmussen's POW capture by the Germans gives us an insight into the sorts of duties that musicians performed as part of the battalion, the high value placed on musical instruments during the war and the dangers that musicians faced.

Bert Rasmussen was 89 years of age on April 1, 1984. He gives a brief account of his capture:

I will give a brief account of a certain event in Greece. No credit to certain members of the Battalion. You know the mix up when the Battalion reached the wrong place in Greece.

Then we had to move to Florina, the Battalion was digging-in in the hills, and the CO the next morning sent me back with two trucks loaded with the Battalion stores and four men. We landed back about 30 miles or more in a valley, they unloaded the stores, two boxes of band instruments amongst them. I was ordered not to move more than thirty yards and wait for orders.

About the third night or so I thought I could hear troops moving back up on the road which was a few hundred yards away. I went up the road and a New Zealand captain (Tanks) asked who I was etc. And I explained that I was in charge of the 2/8 Battalion stores. 'That's strange, your Battalion went through here two days ago. You will have to burn all your stores.' 'But,' I said, 'I can't as there are two boxes of band instruments there.' He said he was in charge of the light aid to help stragglers.



I got back to camp and my men were pulling a case of Australian beer out of Brigade Headquarters' burning dump. I got as many bottles as I could and took them up to the road to the New Zealanders. On the way back the New Zealand officer sent a man after me to say he could give me a couple of trucks.

It started to drizzle rain; we loaded the instruments and some tents and travelled a couple of days before we met the 2/8 Battalion.

The Adjutant 'Ranji' said, 'Did you save the instruments?' I said, 'Yes.' He said, 'A bloody good job!'

They kept the instruments until we reached the coast a few days later and the bandsmen took them aboard the Costa Rica, some of the bandsmen were on another ship. When the Costa Rica was sinking we were lucky to get off with our lives. We were told to leave everything and get off, there was no hope of saving the instruments. I just threw off my boots and jumped into the sea; a motor boat from the destroyers picked us up.

On Crete Major Key sent me down to the wharf with about twelve men to go on a hospital ship; he gave me some secret papers before to hand to 'Ranji' but the German paratroopers came. I burnt the papers before being taken prisoner.

I met one of the New Zealand drivers while prisoner and when he saw me he said: 'The bloody Aussie who got the beer from nowhere!'

– *The Second Eighth: A History of the 2/8th Australian Infantry Battalion*, 2/8th Battalion Association, Melbourne, 1984, pp. 359–360. Provided by Neil Leckie, Museum Manager, Ballarat Ranger Military Museum.

Later in the same history we hear an account from a fellow Crete POW about their experience in the POW camp.

Bob Slocombe was Pioneer Platoon Sergeant from the 2/8 who ended up in Hohenfels as a POW in the same hut as his fellow battalion serviceman Rasmussen. They were the only two from the 2/8 cohabiting with others in their 6-by-2-tier bunkered small hut from 1942 to 1945.

Bob describes sauerkraut that tasted horrible, poor nutritional intake and severe rations which left some with bleeding gums and loose teeth. By 1944 he weighed 8 stones 2 pounds. For a young man half-an-inch shy of 6 foot, who usually had a fit weight of 13 stones, he had lost a lot.

During the day to pass the time, they participated in education classes, concerts, plays and Gilbert and Sullivan musicals. By night they played cards. And when they were well enough, they played Aussie Rules football.

When fuel rations ran low the men burned materials from the hut itself to keep themselves warm. They then stole materials from the camp at night to repair their huts. At one point the German soldiers were tired of this and opened fire on the men with their machine guns. Bob recalls that some of the men from their hut made a narrow escape with their lives.

On 6 January 1945, *The Australian Women's Weekly* published the following letter from Rasmussen to his daughter Mrs NB Miller in Nhill:

How happy I am to get your letters. Mail day and Red Cross parcel day are the big events in our life. Knowing we are not forgotten has helped us through many a dark day.



Twice a week we go for a three mile walk into the country. We have a guard with us, but it is great just to be out of the barbed wire if only for a short while.

– ‘War prisoners’ many interests’, *The Australian Women’s Weekly*, 8 January 1945. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/47117707>?

Finally, late in March 1945, the camp was disbanded leaving those too ill to travel to be picked up by the Americans, and those who were well enough travelled with the German guards in what is described as ‘a somewhat aimless journey in the chaos of dismantling a war’. But they were weak and susceptible to dysentery. On their way they encountered concentration camp survivors: ‘We thought we were skinny but were heavy weights compared to them. Their eyes and skulls looked so large in comparison with the rest of their bodies.’ (*The Second Eighth: A History of the 2/8th Australian Infantry Battalion*, p. 318)

We are fortunate to be able to hear firsthand accounts of what it was like to play under the baton of Rasmussen in the Soldiers’ Band in the 40s and 50s. Cornet player, Kevin Howell, was one such 50s member, a teenager at the time. Kevin remembers: ‘Bert was a grand old man and he was champion euphonium player of Australia at one stage in the early days so it was exciting to be around those people’.



26 May 1946, Memorial Band's final parade, completing four years' voluntary service. Source: BMCB Archive



Snapshot of postwar Ballarat

Lindsay George was another member of the band who played through these years. Lindsay's memory of playing with the band on 13 March 1947 speaks to the physical nature of war recovery and the role the band could play.

The Ballarat Soldiers, Sailors and Airman's Memorial Band played at the official 'Turning of the First Sod' at the site of what is now the White Swan Reservoir Retaining Wall – a holding dam for the Ballarat catchment area.

The Band set up to play on a cleared and prepared hill, which was one of the two that formed the ends of the retaining wall (the first clay cored, earth and rock fill at the time).

The project was used to create work for demobilised Servicemen returning from active war service. To supply fill for the wall, mullock heaps from discarded mines, in and around Ballarat were transported by truck to the dam wall. It took five minutes for a truck to pull into position and to be loaded with five buckets of mullock from a powered shovel and then to move off leaving a spot for the next truck. So on both sides of the road between the wall and the loader shovel, the trucks were at regular five minute intervals. This continued until the dam wall was completed.

I well remember waking up one morning to the noise of a huge loader shovel being placed into position opposite our house in Albert Street. I remember that the removal of the heap started around October, as this was the Bands contest time and that it snowed, blanketing the huge heap, which was about three hi-tension electric poles high. Slowly but surely the waste or mullock from the deepest gold mine in Victoria was carted away. The Sebastopol Kindergarten now stands on the site, beside the hall, which served as the pay office for South Star Mining Company.

And so the Band played on.

– Lindsay George, AGM program, 2001.

In a decade characterised by war, once again, a band for returned servicemen played its part in consolidation and reparation of a community reeling from the effects of trauma and loss.

Note the motto under this 1941 program's photo: A Living Memorial to those who paid the Supreme Sacrifice during the Great War, 1914–1918.



Leaf through the 1941 program from the annual meeting held at Electra Hall, Camp Street.

Source: BMCB Archive





Introducing Percy Code

Percy Code played as a soloist with world-famous English Brass Band, Besses 'o th' Barn, after his 1910 win at South Street. He returned to Australia and settled in Ballarat for a time where he was choir and band conductor and taught and influenced a generation of Ballarat and District brass players including Frank Wright.

Percy Code was a big name in Ballarat and people used to go to Percy Code's place for lessons, near St Peter's church, a few doors up from there. You'd knock on the door and he'd probably be taking someone, and you'd go in, it was like going to the doctor, you'd sit in the waiting room, and your turn came to go in with Percy.

– Bob Pattie, Ballarat City Band

He performed in America with the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra and went on to become principal conductor of ABC radio's orchestra, broadcasting nationally for decades from the 20s to the 40s.



Mr. PERCY CODE, Winner Champion Solo, 1911
PREFERS BOOSEY INSTRUMENTS

1911 postcard, Percy Code, winner Champion Solo. Source: Bob Pattie Archive, kindly donated to BMCB



Bathurst, massed bands, Percy Code conducting, postcard.
Source: Bob Pattie Archive kindly donated to BMCB



Percy Code (left) and Wilkinson (not Bill). Source: Bob Pattie Archive donated to BMCB



DISCOVER MORE

Read the history of the 8/7th Battalion.

Did you know that World War II made an irreversible difference to women's status and opportunities in the workforce? The Australian Women's Land Army was a game changer. Learn about how an outwardly male-dominated World War II helped women gain purchase in the war against inequality in Women in wartime.



Hear recordings of HL Rasmussen leading the 8/7 Infantry Battalion Band playing *Night in June* and their own Battalion March *I'm 95* recorded in 1959 on the SongWays Ranger Barracks page.

Plus, learn more about the extraordinary Drill Hall building where the Soldiers' Band rehearsed before moving to the ex-army hut on the Eastwood Street site in 1946.



1943, 'Join us in a victory' job poster, Maurice Bramley colour photolithograph on paper. ARTV00332, Source: AWM Collection



Marching



Soldiers' Memorial Band looking relaxed mid-century as they change tunes as they pass the Titanic Bandstand (opposite cnr of Sturt and Camp St, Ballarat). Source: BMCB Archive

Brass band marching in 20th Century Australian life has two main elements: the quickstep and street marches.

What is the quickstep?

The quickstep is a type of brass band marching competition. It was held in various locations across Australia and New Zealand. In Ballarat it was held between the years 1900 and 1978 at South Street (with several periods of no competitions due to war and lack of entrants).

Marching competitions (but not the quickstep) reappeared in different formats in South Street after 1986; interestingly, the same year in which no brass band section entered.

- 1987 – Street March competitions, aggregates 'A' to 'D' grade
- 1988 – Festival Day Street March, no aggregate grades
- 1989 – Street March

Again in 1990 we see no brass band sections in the competition and, from 1990, there are no marching competitions held at South Street, to the time of writing.



Manoeuvres on the march

By contrast with Britain, the emphasis in both Australia and New Zealand was on visual spectacle as well as efficient playing, and quick-step march competitions, with the bands executing elaborate manoeuvres while playing on the march, became a major feature of most contests. The rules for marching contests eventually achieved a terrifying complexity, with the marks being awarded more for smart appearance and successful drilling than for musicianship.

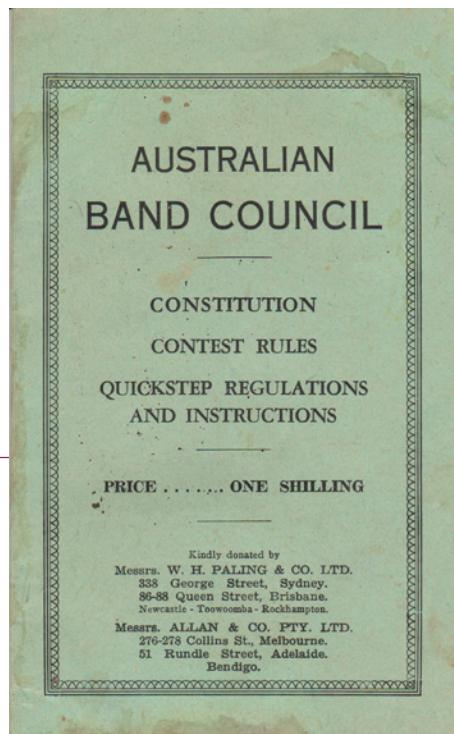
– Duncan Blythell, 'The Brass Band in the Antipodes' in Trevor Herbert, *The British Brass Band: A Musical and Social History*, p. 236.

It is small wonder that Harry Mortimer, who adjudicated at the New Zealand national contest 1953, was led to remark: 'I hate to think what some of my best bands would sound like if they had to play on the march as your men have done. I've never seen anything like it.' (For this quote, Duncan referenced Newcomb's, *Music of the People: The Story of the Band Movement in New Zealand 1845–1963*, pp. 92–94.)



Leaf through the 1934 Australian Band Council booklet Quickstep Regulations and Instructions.

Source: BMCB Archive



Attention to detail – so as not to chance losing a single point – was not just given by the bandsmen:

But the greatest contribution was made by the small army of womenfolk who accompanied the Band at competitions.

Points could be lost for dirty shoes, missing buttons, untidy hair, etc. With that in mind, once the players had assembled on parade, these good ladies would swarm over them, armed with clothes brushes, spit-and-polish, and all accoutrements required to remove a minuscule of fluff that could tarnish the image of their charges. All of this of course was a labour of love.

– Maureen French, *Following the Bands*, 2013, p. 64.



But is the quickstep competition a nineteenth century UK innovation? Gavin Holman, project manager of the worldwide band history resource www.ibew.co.uk, explains the history of the quickstep in England:

The quickstep contests were, and are, much simpler here. No fancy drill or manoeuvering. Just march from A to B as smartly as possible (both in deportment and musical terms), followed by the static “contest level” march piece performance, where appropriate. Where both elements were in play, the road march was usually less technical than the static march.

Quickstep contests were either an adjunct to a main test piece contest – usually one of the smaller “local” events, or a contest in its own right. The major competitions (National, Regional, Open etc.) never had a march component. Popular contest formats included:

- a) set or own-choice test piece,
- b) entertainment (usually 20 minute set)
- c) March + Hymn + test piece (where the march was played static on stage).

Other variants, of course, exist(ed).

Drill-based show bands did make an appearance here in the middle of the 20th century, and some still exist, but they never really took on (unlike the USA).

– Gavin Holman

Quickstep is a big deal

In around 1912, '13, '14, they used to have a public holiday so the people could attend the bands marching on the Ballarat City Oval.

– Bob Pattie

But support was still very strong in the 40s, 50s and 60s:

There was a lot more interest in brass bands, per se, at the time [40s]. The South Street band competition was big deal. We used to go up to the City Oval for the quickstep competition and LOVE it. It was grand. And there were a lot of bands involved because there was A, B, C and D grade.

– Fred Fargher

Fred attended band comps with his family to see his father, Bill Fargher, play with the Soldiers' Band even before he was old enough to join the junior band. Noel Mitaxa has similar strong memories of seeing his father Steph Mitaxa, stalwart member of the Soldiers' Band, performing at South Street from the 1930s to the 1970s.

The masses of crowds at the City Oval. The quickstep along the fireman's track ... It was overwhelming.

– Noel Mitaxa

Noel remembers fondly many occasions of running up and down the huge staircase when he was a small child – the grandstand at the Ballarat City Oval. He hadn't been there in over half a century, yet still clearly remembers the banisters and the staircase.



It was quite safe because kids could run around and you could go back to mum and dad.

– Noel Mitaxa

As you may gather, the quickstep was taken very seriously in the world-renowned South Street competitions and for most of the life of the competitions, the quickstep points were included in the points for the aggregate.

It was a big deal. And if the band entered in the competition and they won the music playing and everything, they wouldn't win the championship because they'd have to win the quickstep as well.

– Jimmy Allen

Paces could make the difference between winning or losing the competition. It was a very specific, technical part of the competition that could be judged objectively. Every band had the same music in the quickstep competition, the same set of notes to play, but how they handled their paces could either set them in the lead or leave them disqualified.



1959, Soldiers' Band South Street, Quickstep competition. Source: BMCB Archive

Two people, pictured in South Street quickstep competition photos, are not in the band: one is the adjudicator of the music, the other is counting the steps.



Bands used to write to the council to ask permission to use the City Oval for quickstep practice in the lead up to South Street comps.

We had to march one 120 [paces], exactly 30 inches [per pace] in 60 seconds and you had to start with your heel on a line and you had to finish with your heel on the line and it was exact. And that's what you were judged for the 'straight'. And that's why you had a pacer and you had a timer and then you did one of about three set diagrams of left turns, right turns, counter marches, side to side, rear to rear and you were judged on everything all the time.

You had the adjudicator standing there looking at you and as soon as you stopped playing and you come to the final halt was when the adjudicator had to stop taking points off. And we had a drum major that was pretty switched on and the band members, some of the senior band members were switched on and they chose a piece of music and they had it down, absolutely so pat that at the end of the march when we come to heard the whistle for three paces to halt, we halted exactly at the end of the music and the adjudicator had to stop but he couldn't look down the lines, he couldn't take points off.

Normally you come to a halt and you have to play to the end of the music and it could be another ten seconds or so. And we halted and stopped at the same time and the adjudicator was most annoyed. 'Get your band off!' All legal and above board. It usually didn't happen like that. It was very precise.

– Jim Dennis, Ballarat City Band

Discipline and precision

It was highly disciplined. The uniforms were military style with stripes down the side. The livery was very precise. You had to be judged, you would line up in formation and a separate adjudicator what come by and look at you and he'd march up and down the line and you'd have to have an inspection. The drum major could declare anything that was wrong and if somebody's button had come off at the last minute, they could declare it. Your hair couldn't come over the collar. We used to have a fellow come round and he'd brush your collars and your shoes had to be black and shiny, absolutely clean you had to be at attention with your heels together and your feet had to be 15 degrees, not 16 or 20 or 10. 15 degrees. We had a fellow [City Bandsman], he was an English fellow, he normally used to stand up like that [not within the regulations] and we had to declare it every time and the drum major would say,

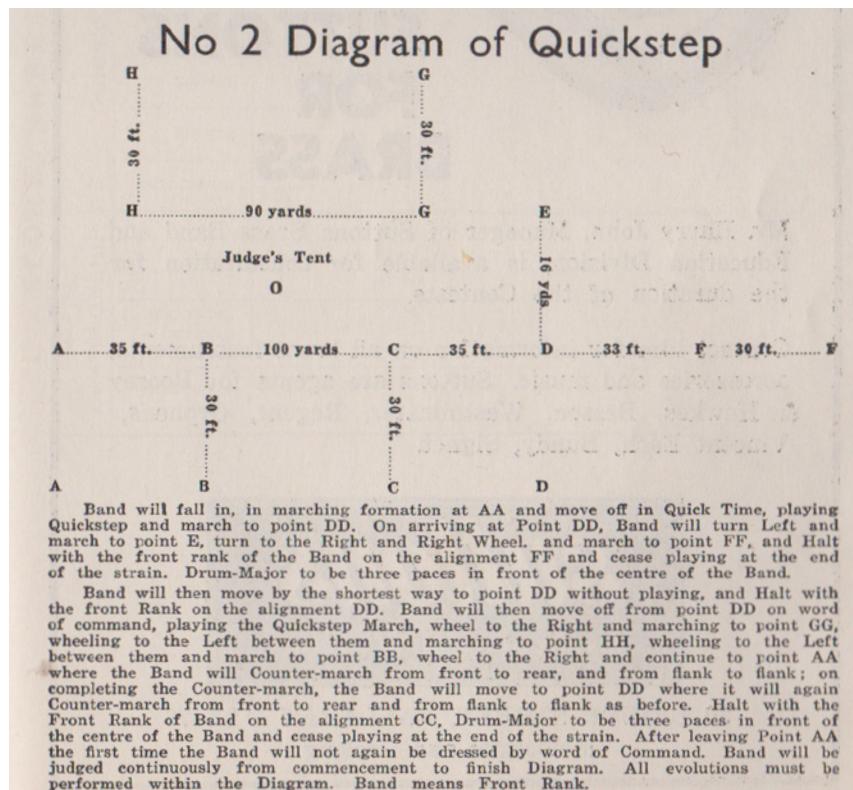
I have two things to declare sir, one of them is we have a gentleman there, he naturally stands like that, he's not able to put his feet at 15 degrees, he's like that and he can't do it.

You'd declare it and you wouldn't get points taken off.

The instruments had to be clean, absolutely clean and precise. The adjudicator or inspector would come along and if he took your instrument then you'd look him straight in the eye, he would take your instrument and you wouldn't take your eyes off his eyes. You wouldn't offer it to him. He would take it out of your hands, say you had a cornet, he'd take it out of your hand, your hand stayed where it was he would look at the instrument, take points off if it was dirty and he had to put it back in your hand *exactly* where it was, and you didn't say thank you, you didn't nod, didn't do a thing, just had to be so spot on and of course that's well gone. With time, people's haircuts are different, people's livery are different, our attitudes are different.

– Jim Dennis, Ballarat City Band

Here is a diagram from the 1967 South Street program, the year the Soldiers' Band came third in the quickstep.



1967, South Street program, Quickstep diagram. Source: BMCB Archive

Norm Newey remembers the quickstep from the Soldiers' Band days:

It was 120 steps and Lyndsay George was spot on with that. That's two beats to the second and he used to start the band off and be spot on. The adjudicator would be running between the lines all the way down. You'd do a right left turn, counter march where you go down the aisles turn back up again and you'd reverse your direction.

Formation: left turns, and straight left turns and wheels and there's all sorts of things. It was good. A wheel is when you go round on the curve but a left turn you go 1, 2, 3 and turn suddenly and you're going at 90 degrees virtually.

– Norm Newey

In 1968 the Soldiers' Band won the 'A' Grade quickstep competition ahead of some of Australia's top brass bands of the time:

Ballarat Soldiers' Memorial Band	Ballarat	Victoria	175	1st
Footscray-Yarraville City Band	Footscray	Victoria	174	Equal 2nd
Malvern Municipal Brass Band	Malvern	Victoria	174	Equal 2nd
Melbourne Fire Brigade	Melbourne	Victoria	170	4th



1968, The Soldiers' Band won the 'A' Grade for Quickstep.
Source: BMCB Archive

They were quite a prominent contesting band in those days and they were very good marchers because they were all soldiers and so we would win the quickstep competition everywhere we went. I can distinctly remember we won the 'A' grade quickstep and then won our own 'B' grade quickstep so they were quite a disciplined marching band.

It's very much relaxed now, they don't have those competitions, but it was very much army style and the adjudicator was an army drill instructor.

– Kevin Howell

It is interesting to note how closely the experience of playing in the Soldiers' and playing in a military band was at this point in time:

I think really close, very close. I did national service. I didn't get to do the ordinary training, they nabbed me because I was a cornet player. And we went into a very, very good band then and all the same sorts of thing. The same sorts of marching and the same sorts of playing. But very much related to the sort of band the Soldiers' band was.

– Norm Newey

And the diagram for marching was a set program for all the bands. The guards [Royal Guards at Buckingham Palace] do this they go up, and then turn around and you see that and the best example of that is the Edinburgh Tattoo. They still do those things for the discipline of marching. Marching bands heritage is from England.

– Kevin Howell

Marching makes memories

We know what an impact the marching comps had on earlier, long-standing players like the Howells, Norm Newey, Lindsay George, Jimmy Allen, Bob Pattie and Jim Dennis because when they tell the stories about the quickstep, they light up. For South Street, they had one minute, once a year, to prove their precision.



We were taught and we practised. A lot of people can't play an instrument and march or walk so we practised that because if you wanted to march in the band you had to be able to do that. It was quite exhilarating actually, well as a lad you're quite proud, you know a band uniform and the sound gets you too. Yeah, I always enjoyed that.

– Kevin Howell

Visiting Soldiers' band drummer Lyndsay George in the nursing home when his memory was all but faded in the last year of his life, mention of the quickstep brought back vivid memories:

He's the adjudicator, the guy who is counting the paces. You had to do so many paces.

Marching was not confined to the annual South Street quickstep competitions, though. Street marches have been a major part of Ballarat life since the mid 1800s.

Street marches

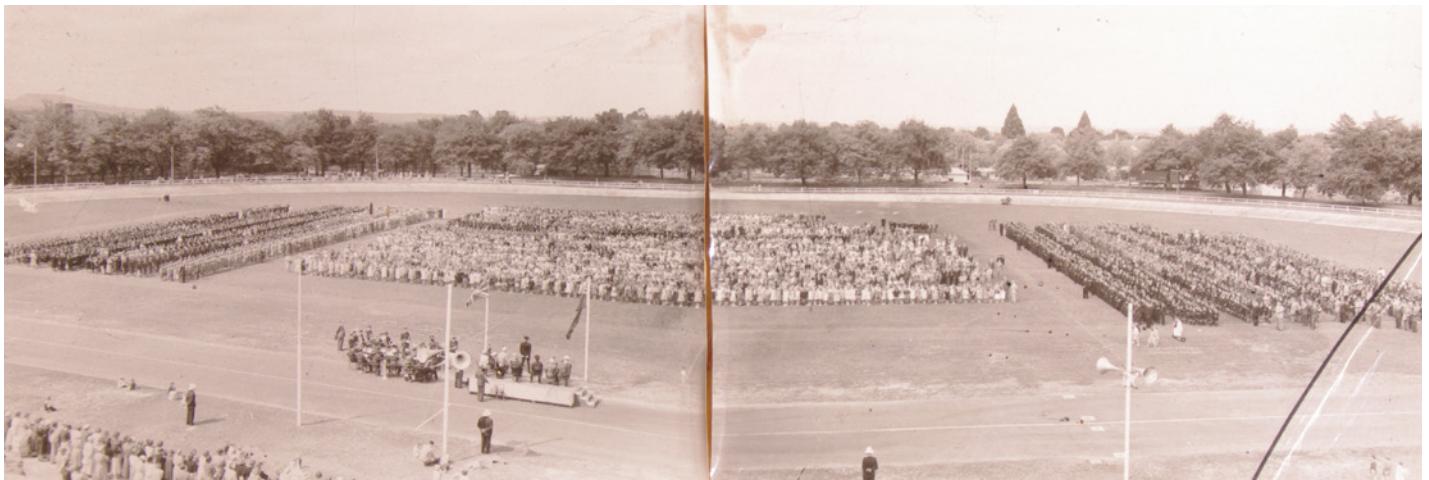


c.1967, Begonia Parade Sturt Street. Source: Max Harris Collection, Ballarat Mechanics' Institute



For the Ballarat Soldiers' Band, the Begonia Festival Parade, ANZAC Day marches, funeral processions, St Patrick's Day, Sunday church marches, civic celebrations such as centenaries and royal visits were all important events, which underpinned the cultural fabric of the city. Street marching lends sobriety, authority and significance to all of these mass social occasions.

Here is an example of a mid century civic gathering on Ballarat's City Oval where the band played for the visit of the Governor-General.



1955, Children's Display, City Oval for visit of Governor-General. Band plays seated next to the officials' stage. Source: BMCB Archive

That is something sadly missing in Ballarat. I see street processions in Ballarat and I get so upset really, no bands march any more.

To hear a band marching down the street in the procession, a brass band there's nothing like it. I loved it. Like Lyndsay George, I loved playing marches. He always loved playing marches. I must have loved it because it was forty to fifty years ago and I could play the cornet still - it would take a while to get a lip again – note for note. I could still remember every note of about twenty marches. That's incredible that I can do that, so I must just have loved playing marches.

– Norm Newey

The Ballarat Begonia march has been reduced and reduced and reduced, extensively so. Originally it started off down Bridge Street [Bridge Mall], all the way up Sturt Street right up to Hamilton Avenue, turn right then march all the way round to where it finished now, round to the sound shell [North Gardens]. Then in the 70s it started at the hospital and it went from the hospital and went right up Sturt Street. Then, around the early 70s it started at the traffic lights at Pleasant Street, and did that for about two years and then it went from Pleasant Street, turn right and down to the lake and march around the lake. Then the next year instead of going from Pleasant Street and Sturt Street there it went from around the lake the next one up, and you marched around the lake, then two years later it went further up to Loreto College, so it was getting shorter and shorter. Now it's like a little doddle of 200 m down the road. It's absolute crap!

The bands should be marching at 120 bpm, well that's pretty fast military marching so you'd drop it back to 110 bpm. Barry Wilkins was pretty good at organising it. But now you've got bloody clowns jumping around, you've got unicycles going in and out, you've got a tractor engine that's going two miles per hour so then you've got a band that's trying to march. So you finish up, instead of doing a 30 inch pace, you get smaller and smaller. You're playing music remember, and you're marching



in time with what you're playing so you can't just slow down the tune, so you end up just marching almost on the spot. City Council is not necessarily aware of this. They haven't set the parameters and the guidelines.

– Jim Dennis, Ballarat City Band

This knowledge of Ballarat banding history speaks to the evolution of the role and practical functioning of the band and how times have changed.

To preserve this tradition and fundamental part of the town's living heritage, the council needs to be on board with the technical aspects of marching bands.

Drum majors



Early 60s, Soldiers' Band, South Street. Frank Rollard (MD), Aub McGregor (Drum Major).
Source: BMCB Archive

The role of drum major is to 'carry the mace, do the inspections, and lead the march because the judges are very pedantic about everybody being in step.'

– Margaret Howell Drum Major, Creswick Brass Band from 2006.

Good ones were coveted, some were tyrants, prizes were given in South Street to the top drum majors. And did I mention that they got to wear the best garb?



Check out the shoulder embellishments, gloves and marching mace:



1962, South Street. J Lowther,
L Garrett, W Cockerill, A McGregor,
K Howell, G Smith. Source: Geoff
Smith Archive

Bryan Crebbin, former Ballarat City Councillor and President of the Soldiers' Band through the 1980s, remembers the silver-haired distinguished-looking drum major leading the mid-twentieth century Soldiers' Band.

I used to look at some of the photos on the walls in the eighties and remember seeing that very distinguished looking man from my early days as a young lad in Ballarat. They were inspiring. It was meaningful. We never had television til later. Those sort of public events were big things and people went to them because they were public events.

A band made a statement at a city or town event: this is something to be proud of, to take notice of. Civic pride was still really embodied in the band at that time.

There were two Highland bands [not merging until c1993 Pattie p. 231] and two brass. There used to be parades from the fire brigade and bands would play in those. There was a fireman's championship. In the 60s there was a big fireman's demonstration across the different brigades and they marched up the Creswick Road to the showgrounds to where the demonstration was at torch light, they held oil lit torches in the dark on poles, with the bands playing for their march.

—Bryan Crebbin



Sometimes the parades would last for an hour with floats and bands passing.

The little spectators' feet would be tapping before they even got to see the bands because they would hear them long before they passed by.

– Keryn Crebbin

Not only does Bryan still hold the excitement of these parade memories all these years later, he also kept the flag that he waved at the Fireman's Parade as a young child.



1952, Fireman's Parade flag. Source: Bryan Crebbin

The VBL still runs drum major training days to keep Victorian bands on their toes (or is it heels?).



The quickstep in Britain

The quickstep, or march contest was a staple part of British contests from the 1870s – well before Ord Hume returned from the antipodes. These contests consisted of one or more of the following components, any or all of which would be assessed and/or scored:

1. Playing the march while marching on the 'road'
2. Playing a 'contest' march while static
3. Deportment (smartness of uniform and precision of marching)

The earliest general band contests consisted of bands playing their own choice of music, usually one or two pieces. Gradually the idea of a 'set test piece' was introduced to the mix of contests. Early performances certainly included the odd march/quickstep as a performance piece.

At the Jesmond contest on 17 May 1869 the music performed was a set march 'Scotch March' and own choice other piece. Combined prizes and placings.

The first separate prize for a quickstep was of £1 at the contest at Mirfield, Yorkshire on 6th August 1870.

At the Rawtenstall Contest on 24th Aug 1872 the fifth prize was awarded to Newchurch (the overall winners) after a quickstep contest to determine it, rather than give it to the fifth placed band, as only 5 bands competed

The first known full quickstep contest was held at Shibden Hall Park, Halifax on 12th July 1873. In addition to the main own-choice test piece contest (won by Linthwaite, 1st prize £25) there was a march contest won by King Cross Band, with prizes of £5, £3 and £1 10s.

Thereafter the quickstep or march contest slowly became a fairly regular aspect of band contests – either as an adjunct to the main competition, or as a separate event in its own right. There are still some being held annually today – e.g. Morley, Brighouse, and not least all the Whit Friday contests in Saddleworth and Tameside.

– Gavin Holman (The Internet Bandsman's Everything Within www.ibew.co.uk)



DISCOVER MORE

Royal South Street results can be searched for by filtering banding results in:
<https://results.royalsouthstreet.com.au/>

A brief history of brass banding at South Street can be found by scrolling down on:
<http://125.royalsouthstreet.com.au/disciplines/>



The 1950s

At a glance

A new era of idealism, stable employment, prosperity and boom, boom, boom for babies.

Black and white television becomes commonplace in the home, giving us a direct line to American and British popular culture. Within the intimacy of the family lounge room, television furthers the transformation that radio brought since the 1920s by adding picture to sound. Rock 'n Roll dancing and fashion take centre stage of young people's hearts and minds (and feet). Newscasts, variety shows and American advertisements for mod cons such as refrigerators and washing machines are in.

The Civic Hall opens to coincide with Ballarat hosting Olympic canoeing and rowing competitions at Lake Wendouree, and the Begonia Festival kicks off, attracting visitors from far and wide including the newly coronated Queen Elizabeth, followed a few years later by her mum.

In 1956 while Ballarat hosts Olympic games, South Street holds its competitions at the new Civic Hall built on the site of the old Haymarket. The city farewells Alfred Hall – the iconic venue, with an audience capacity of over 5000, which had been hastily erected in time to welcome Prince Alfred. This venue was built in 1867 but by the 1950s had become an uncomfortable health hazard. When it was constructed, it provided an architectural bridge, physically uniting Ballarat East and West (now the site of Big W).

In 1955 the millionth post-war immigrant arrives in Australia in November and Dame Edna makes her stage debut. Melbourne's Moomba Festival kicks off (inspired by Ballarat's Begonia Festival). The polio vaccine becomes available to the masses.

By 1959 Australia's 1.5 millionth post-war migrant is received into a population of 10 million, and work begins on ending the White Australia Policy. The same year, South Street broadcasts the second half of the Prize Winners' Concert through BTV6 to the box in people's living rooms, from a packed house at the Civic Hall.



Ballarat's Henry Sutton: ahead of the times

Australia's history refers to Henry Sutton as the great grandfather of technology and was Australia's Edison.

Around 1870, at the age of fifteen, Henry Sutton first conceived of a method so that any big event in Melbourne could be visually transmitted to Ballarat by medium of the telegraph line.

By 1885 Henry had invented what he called 'The Telephane'; later this was known as the first feasible television system. In 1890 Henry went to England where he demonstrated his Telephane to the scientific community and published his paper on his Telephane in England, France and America. Henry's paper was republished again in 1910 by *Scientific American*.

Henry did not patent the Telephane but John Logie Baird did use Henry's principles to invent television some 43 years later. The Telephane is considered to be Henry's magnum opus by some people.

– Lorayne Branch



DISCOVER MORE

Read more about [Henry Sutton](#) on the Federation University website.

The band in the 1950s



1950s, Soldiers' Band, South Street Quickstep Competitions, City Oval. Source: Norm Newey Archive

We are now moving into the realm of living memory. So, with Bill Wilkinson's handwritten history through to 1960, as well as the minutes and newspaper articles from the band and private archives, we also have oral histories to guide us through the banding highlights.

Thanks to *The Courier*

Generous permission from Ballarat's *The Courier* has allowed us to include newspaper articles and images in this history.



Bill Wilkinson's notes for this decade focus on band competition results. It seems that under the bandmastership of Sgt. Herbert Ludwig Rasmussen, the band was doing very well.

In 1950 gaining 2nd place* to Collingwood who were conducted by the famous 'Massa' Johnston.

[*This was in York Park Launceston for the Australian Championships, 4th October 1950. Later that month in the South Street Ballarat Competitions they placed 3rd in 'A' Grade aggregate - Ballarat Brewing Co. Trophy, 3rd in Quickstep and 3rd in the Allan, Boosey & Hawkes Trophy]

1951 saw the Band back in 'B' Grade when we again won the Selection Contest at South St. [Honourable mentions in Test, Own Choice, Quickstep and in the 'B' Grade aggregate - RSS]

1952 was the year of the 2nd - 2nd Test, 2nd in our Own Choice, 2nd in the Quickstep [2nd in the 'B' Grade Aggregate - RSS]

1953 1st 'B' Grade Own Choice [2nd 'B' Grade Aggregate - RSS]



Listen to 1953 Own Choice – White Rider side 1 and side 2.



1953, Own Choice – White Rider. Source: Lindsay George Archive

2nd 'B' Grade Quickstep South Street



1953, Quickstep – BB & CF. Source: Lindsay George Archive



[4th in the Test and 2nd overall in the 'B' grade aggregate]

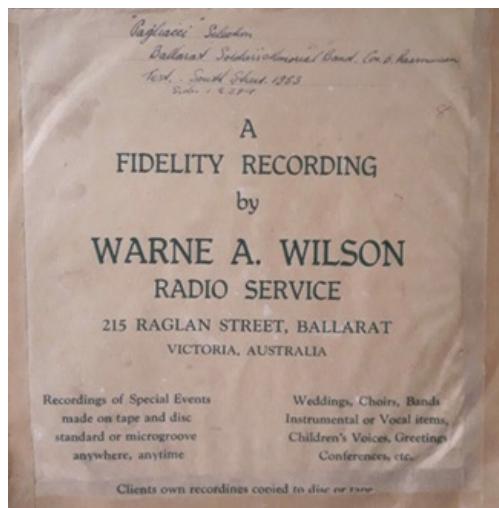


Listen to 1953, *Test piece – Pagliacci selection, side 1, side 2, side 3, side 4.*



1953, *Test piece –
Pagliacci selection.*
Source: Lindsay
George Archive

These 1953 recordings were made by Warne A Wilson, Ballarat recording engineer, whose business included providing recordings through the 50s and 60s of music competitions, including South Street, VBL competitions and musical theatre performances such as Lyric and BLOC shows.



1953, Soldiers' Band record sleeve showing Warne A Wilson production. Source: Megan Talan

Young players, big changes

In the early 1950s, as was the case in every decade since the band formed, there was a strong need for junior players to secure the future of the band.

What were the young members up to? The memory on the next page comes from one of the early years of the ex-RAAF hut bandroom, when it was situated on the Yarrowee ('drain') down on Eastwood Street, nestled in among houses.



I remember vividly at the time, the drum major was Charlie Thomas, he was a very tall military trained gentleman. We were getting close to performing, I don't know if it was a Gala Day, because there was always a march up Sturt Street in those days. Whatever it was we were to be involved in, we had a Sunday afternoon rehearsal with the band and we got out onto Eastwood Street. There was not much traffic in those days. I'm talking 1949 or 1950. Charlie Thomas drilled us and the impact for the first time of *moving* while I was playing, because I had just sat and played [up until then]. And all of a sudden you had to march, and march in time.

It was sort of exciting. I can remember feeling a bit exposed that we were out. And of course everybody in the street would come out of the houses to watch it, so it was odd and very easy of course with your embouchure to lose it because, of course, you were moving.

The discipline was good training.

– Fred Fargher

Junior band members in Fred Fargher's 40s post-war cohort were starting to peter out. Fred, by now had been ensconced in Wavie Williams Pantomime Company for long enough to know that, even with his ability for music, movement was his first choice over the cornet. With too few junior members, it was time to find some new young players to catch the banding bug.

BAND-MASTER'S DELIGHT



Eight sons, ranging in ages from 6 to 20 years, and all members of the Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen's Memorial Band, is the proud record of parents, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Howell, of 76 Hertford street, Sebastopol.

The boys, trombonist Bill, 20; bass drummer John, 18; bass player Don, 16; euphonium player Walter, 15; cornet players Kevin, 12, and Douglas, 11, and tenor horn players Darryl, 9, and Austin, 6, have been members of the band for different periods from six to twelve months.

Kevin is the pride of his brothers, he plays second cornet and has played solos.

The only musical limb remembered in the family tree

is a brother of the boys' grandfather — Gomer Thomas, well known Ballarat cornet player of a few years ago. He will be long remembered for his playing of the "Last Post" at commemoration services.

The boys all learned to play their instruments after they joined the band and have taken part in several concerts. They were induced to join through the offices of Mr. R. Seccombe, secretary, who is a friend of their father.

These are the eight sons of the one family, all members of the Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen's Memorial Band. They are: back row (left to right), Walter, 15, John, 18, Donald, 16, Bill, 20. Front row, Kevin, 12, Darryl, 9, Austin, 6, and Douglas, 11.

1954, 'Band Master's Delight', *The Courier*. Source: Kevin Howell Archive



This is the start of it all and I was one of eight boys, they are my seven brothers with me. I was twelve then so it was 1954 and the story is there [Band Master's Delight article], a friend of my father suggested that maybe the boys should come down. The Soldiers' Memorial Band (the Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Memorial band was the full name), they thought it was a good idea that they start a junior band because all these men were all returned servicemen and they were quite elderly. Not all of them but most of them and they had very few members in the band that were of an age that would see the next decade or so. In their wisdom Dick Secombe, I think he might have been Secretary at the time, he said 'I know Harry Howell and they've got eight boys, let's see if they might be interested in joining'. So they started a junior band and we *were* the junior band. There's only three of us left [alive] now.

We all went to Hertford Street and Redan School and we lived out in the country there. The four elder boys (pictured in the back row of the photo), were given an instrument first and I was really peeved about this, I thought 'How dare they!'. I was the oldest of the four younger boys and they brought these instruments home which was a trombone and a tuba and something like that, the large instruments, and they're trying to get a noise out of these in the back yard. We had cows in the paddock so we could hear all this brrr bbrrrrp bbrrrr and the cows came galloping up. They thought it was the bull coming! (laughter).

It was a few weeks, maybe a month or something and I was given a cornet and the younger brothers were given some instruments. I loved the cornet and I was keen and I practised.

So that was our start with our involvement with the band and it lasted right through the 50s through to the late 60s.

– Kevin Howell

Kevin Howell's impressions of his first bandmaster:

In my time there was Bert Rasmussen, our first. A very strict discipline. I think that made the quality of the music. Music is fun – and serious music can be fun too when you're on top of the discipline you knew what you had to do. And if you left your music home and you didn't know your part, well ... you were in trouble! At the time our drill instructor was a man named Aub McGregor. He worked in Ballarat for the water board or something like that. But he was a big man. As a young man you took notice of him!

– Kevin Howell

Not only did the new young players invigorate the band as they moved up from the junior to the senior band, but non-playing family and community members provided an equally important lifeblood.

During the twenty-year period when his father was secretary, Kevin remembers that they had a close-knit committee. Cr Bill Roff was the president and he was also the mayor of the city at one point. The band was always busy. They rehearsed every Wednesday and Sunday morning for performances and competitions.

Brothers Bill and George Wilkinson who started in the band with their father in the early 20s were stalwarts of the band. With Bill, as actively engaged on the committee as he was in the 20s, and his brother George, a dentist who regularly checked the kids' teeth as they rolled in for band practice.



Noel Mitaxa, son of bandsman Stef, remembers the informal dentist appointments, as well as his dentist's nickname.

Porky would say, 'I think your teeth need fixing' and he'd arrange free dental care for the band. Dad kept his own teeth til he was seventy nine. Never had false teeth!

– Noel Mitaxa

Over a number of years you got to know the members of the senior band and they really took us in. Scally-wags they were, they were returned servicemen they liked to have a smoke and a drink, you know. I can remember going up to the RSL and they used to have smoke nights. They called them smoke nights. They'd go along and they'd all sit around the table and they all be smoking and having a drink and they'd have some entertainment and the entertainment was the brass band, or the junior band. And they loved it.

– Kevin Howell

Although they never talked about their war experiences with the younger band, Kevin says that, 'You knew some of them were hurting ... we had respect for them as returned servicemen but we never really pried into that. I was the same with my grandfather, he went to the Boer War'.

Kevin fondly remembers the kinship in the band between the older and younger players. For instance, he used to go down to the pie cart with Jimmy Allen after rehearsals and back for a cup of tea at his house.

I remember one day sitting between Bill Fargher and Norm Newey and I was just a little youngster and the bandmaster asked me to sit there and not to play. I couldn't play just sit there. But then he stopped the band and said, 'Kevin, where are we?' And I pointed. So it was that sort of discipline.

If I have a memory of all of it, it was all about discipline. Absolutely. Not only music, but the way you behaved.

It's a very special and long lasting bond that is formed. The members of the band became lifelong friends when you spend that much time together. So there's a really close bond.

– Kevin Howell

Results in the mid-50s

The band continued on in 'B' Grade in the mid-50s.

1954 3rd 'B' Grade Test Piece

1955 1st 'B' Grade Test 2nd 'B' Grade Own Choice 2nd 'B' Grade Quickstep

1956 3rd 'B' Grade Own Choice 3rd 'B' Grade Quickstep South Street



Soloists



Pre-1954?, Norm Newey, Les Casey, Allen Reid, NN, Souvenir Snaps Agent J Ewins & Sons
111 Sturt St. Source: Norm Newey Archive



1959, Junior Bandsman, Geoff Smith, before taking second place in the
Bb cornet section of South Street. Source: Geoff Smith Archive

The soloists' success of the late 50s is listed on the inside cover of a spiral-bound archive scrapbook from the 50s:

BACK Row. →
L to R = C.R. W. ROFF (Pres) P. JAMES (Sec) M. SMITH - A. CLARK

FIFTH Row.
L to R = Lindsay George - Geof Henderson - Neville Brew

FOURTH Row.
L to R = S. MITAYA, K. HOWELL, G. SMITH, N. NEWTON, W. FARMER, L. GREY, R. WILK

THIRD Row.
L to R = E. TONKS, D. SMITH, J. RINOLDI, R. VINIER, Bed. Wilson, A. HAWKE.

SECOND Row.
L to R = J. RATCHIFFE, K. BELL, A. JAMES, L. MENNER, L. ALLWOOD, J. LOWTHER, G. FITHRIDGE, W. COOK

Front Row.
L to R = J. ALLEN, Don Howell, D. Socombe, V. Hulme, F. ROLLAND - APPRECIATOR, W. WILKINSON (BANDMASTER), (DRUMMAJOR)
L. GARRETT, WAL. HOWELL.

BAND RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS.

WINNERS AGGREGATE. 1957. WINNERS QUICKSTEP 1957
SECOND TEST - SECOND OWN CHOICE, 1957. SECOND HYMN. 1957

SECOND AGGREGATE. 1958. SECOND QUICKSTEP 1958
3RD TEST. 1958. 3RD OWN CHOICE. 1958.

SECOND AGGREGATE. 1959. WINNERS OWN CHOICE 1959.
WINNERS. HYMN. 1959. 3RD TEST. 1959. 3RD QUICKSTEP

1950s, soloists noted in the 50s scrapbook. Source: BMCB Archive



1959, South Street, Frank Rollard, Jim Allen, Geoff Smith. Source: Geoff Smith Archive

A lot of our players were soloists and we were told, I think Bert Rasmussen said this, that if you got to play a solo in the band, practice a solo and enter the soloists competition, which was run prior to the band competition, on the day of the band. So if you've got a solo in the band all the nerves are gone because if you've already exposed yourself to this stage thing. And that was really a good thing to do. And people like Jim Allen, Norm Newey and myself we won South Street a number of times, in fact, one year Jim and I won our sections.

– Kevin Howell

I can remember playing in Her Majesty's Theatre to a full house for the champions. We did that a few times, Jim did and Norm Newey did too. Geoff Smith was another one. He was a cornet player. And Frank Rollard was another too. They were all in the Soldiers' Band and Frank conducted the Soldiers' Band for a couple of periods.

– Kevin Howell



Frank Rollard, South Street Soloist, *The Courier*.

Source: BMCB Archive



A competing bandsman from the same era recalls his South Street experiences:

They were good times, I used to enjoy them. Half the time you'd be on stage [South Street] shivering and bloody shaking and hoping you were not going to make a mistake and everything has to be spot on. I was very lucky because I had people like Bob Pattie, but also his dad who was one of Australia's champion cornet players and his associates, the old timers, the "Lee Wallises" and "Eric Stephens", and all those people. They'd all gone through the mill of competitions before hand. So as a young bloke, I was fairly confident when I was sitting there I would never play the integral important parts *they* had but I still had second cornet parts or whatever to play, it still had to be right. And it made you feel at ease to have these competent players who'd played in front of people hundreds of times. But it's still very daunting to look out - the worst thing you could do was to be on stage and look out - through the lights. In those days, the hall would be packed with a thousand people!

– Jim Dennis

Soldiers' Band soloist Norm Newey recalls the 50s banding buzz:

First ten years, I don't think I missed a rehearsal I just loved it. The camaraderie, it was so much fun. We used to finish our South Street competition and then you'd virtually get the test piece for the following year and start getting ready for the next year, and that'd go on all the way through the year.

– Norm Newey

Helping out

As well as South Street and other brass band competitions, the band participated in all sorts of community events. Most were community parades and fundraisers for charities. (See below for a sample list of engagements for '59–'60.)

We were about fifteen there, we used to go together. There's Allen Reid there in an old '28 Chev and we'd go to Maryborough on New Years' Day and help the Maryborough Band out. (laughter) We did that for five or six years. As a small group we used to go just to help the Maryborough band on their New Year's Day they used to have a big show there. Just give them numbers and boost them a bit, yeah. Dick Secombe was the bass player and he used to drive us.

– Norm Newey



Photo from the 50s, Maryborough New Year's Day, Norm Newey and Allen Reid.
Source: Norm Newey Archive



The bandroom

Norm remembers the ex-army hut that was the bandroom from 1946 to 1981:

It was cold in winter, hot in summer because it was a tin hut. My friend, Allen Reid, and I as kids we used to get our bikes in there and when there was no practice we'd ride our bikes round and round. We shouldn't have been doing it!

Norm's memory of the bandroom stretches back to those days of the 50s as he brings it to life for us:

There was an open area and in one end to one side there was a little room and on the other side there was a library and that was it, the rest was all open. With a big fireplace over the side for winter nights.

– Norm Newey

Let's take a short walk from the 50s bandroom to the heights of 50s modern architecture ...

The opening of the Civic Hall in 1956 was a mammoth event. It heralded in a period of new optimism and strength. The Soldiers' Band played on the second day of their opening celebrations.



View the 1956 opening of the [Civic Hall program](#) from the Victorian Collections.

The Begonia Festival: not one, but two royal visits

Inspired by the Ballarat floral festivals of 1938 and 1939, Ballarat held its very first Begonia Parade showcasing their world-famous flora.

The Floral Festival for the 1938 Centenary celebrations was so loved by locals and tourists alike that it was decided to make the Floral Festival not a one-off, but annual event. We can understand how important for community spirit the festival must have been during the Great Depression.

In 1939 the Floral Festival was held again, attracting thousands of people from across the state as well as interstate. It did not continue into the 40s due to the war.

It wasn't until 1952 that the community reconsidered the festival and so, with great enthusiasm, planning began for the Begonia Festival. The first festival attracted around 5000 people who travelled to Ballarat on a specially commissioned train service.



1956, Queen of the Begonia Festival Float.
Source: Australiana Research Collection,
Central Highlands Libraries



Without the Floral Festival of the late 1930s the Begonia Festival may never have been conceived.

The Floral Festival [1938 & 1939] included some of the features seen in future Begonia Festivals: a floral carpet, Festival Queen, floral displays, and a street procession with floats along Sturt Street.

– Ballarat Tramway Museum (btm.org.au)

Will the real Queen please step forward?

As well as having a Festival Queen, the newly coronated Queen, HRH Queen Elizabeth herself, came to visit the Begonia Festival in 1954. This was the second year of the festival, coinciding with the young regina's second year of reign. The rare 1950s colour image of the Soldiers' Band on the march below is from the slide collection of Mrs Bon Strange, gifted to the Ballarat library. It is most likely to be from the 1954 royal visit, indicated by the Union Jack and bunting including a crown.



c.1954, Soldiers' Band, Begonia Parade, Sturt Street, Ballarat.
Source: Australiana Research Collection, Central Highlands Libraries



1954: Queen's visit

There was much excitement across Australia to catch a glimpse of young Queen Elizabeth when she toured the continent.



1954, Royal Visit, Queen's Procession, Sturt Street, Ballarat. Source: Ballarat Historical Society

And HRH may have even mentioned the spectacle to her mum, because four years later, guess who paid Ballarat's Begonia Festival a visit?

1958: Queen Mother's visit

The Queen Mother graced the Begonia Festival with her presence in 1958 and fifteen members of the junior band played for her (eight of them were the Howell brothers!).



1958, Queen Mother's visit to the Botanic Gardens during the Begonia Festival, Ballarat.
Source: Ballarat Historical Society



The senior band also played:

The Soldiers' Memorial Band played items during the afternoon and entertained the quiet, patient crowd with music including 'Oh What a Beautiful Day'. As Her majesty drove slowly along the footpath the band played 'Over the Sea to Skye' in slow waltz time.

– *The Courier*



Read more about her visit in *Queen Mother Stops Royal Car at Home, The Courier, 1958*.

Who was there to greet the royal carriage which arrived from Melbourne at the Ballarat train station on this auspicious occasion? Margaret McWilliam, Drum Major of the Ballarat Ladies Pipe Band. If her surname sounds familiar, that's because she is the daughter of Norm McWilliam, founder of the Soldiers' Band.



2 March 1958, Ballarat Railway Station Platform, Mayor of Ballarat, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother greeting Drum Major Margaret McWilliam.
Source: Federation University Historical Collection

1956: Rasmussen hands over to Rollard

Bert Rasmussen resigned in 1956 and Frank Rollard took over bandmastership of the Senior Band and taught the juniors from 1957. Under his baton, the band saw some more wins to finish off this solid decade of discipline, hard work, contribution and achievement.

Late 50s South Street wins

The Famous South St. Band Contest AT BALLARAT, VICTORIA October 24th, 25th and 26th, 1957 Victorian State Championships

£1,920 Prize and Appearance Money £1,920

"A", "B", "C", & "D" GRADES
— £1,120 PRIZE MONEY —

£800 APPEARANCE MONEY will be divided amongst competing bands in such manner that each competing Interstate Band will receive twice the amount each competing Victorian Band receives.

TEST, OWN CHOICE, QUICKSTEP & HYMN CONTEST
in each grade

TEST MUSIC

"A" GRADE: "Festival Music", by Eric Ball.

"B" GRADE: "Ajanta", by Hans Uljee.

"C" GRADE: "James Hook", by Henry Geehl.

"D" GRADE: "Viccar Bray", by Frank Stokes.

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ADJUDICATORS :

MUSIC: Mr. J. J. Kelly, Ipswich, Queensland.

DRILL: Capt. L. J. Hill, Melbourne.

ENTRIES CLOSE 27th JULY, 1957

Complete Prize List posted free on application to:
L. A. BLACKMAN, General Secretary,
Box 33, P.O., Ballarat, Vic.

1957, South Street poster. Source: VBL Archive



1957 1st Quickstep and winners of 'B' Grade aggregate at South Street



1957, 'B' Grade Champions with Bandmaster, Frank Rollard. Source: BMCB scrap book archive

1958 2nd Aggregate 'B' Grade South Street [3rd 'B' Grade Aggregate, 2nd Quickstep - RSS]

1959 1st Own Choice 1st Hymn 2nd Aggregate South Street



1959, Soldiers' Band photo, City Oval. Source: Cathi Smith Archive



The same photo is in the band archive scrapbook and lists the names as follows:

Back Row L to R: Cr W Roff (Pres), P James (Sec) M Smith, A Clark

5th row: Lindsay George, Geof Henderson, Neville Brown

4th Row: E Tonks, D Smith, J Rinoldi, R. Vinier, Bert Wilson, A Hawkes

2nd row: J Ratcliffe, K Bell, A James, L Menner, L Allwood, J Lowther, G Ethridge, W Cockerill

Front Row: J Allen, Don Howell, R Secombe, V Hughes, F Rollard (BM), Aub McGregor (Drum Major), W Wilkinson.

James' notes from the annual meeting 23rd April 1960 read:

The high standard of the Band has been well maintained during the year [Apr 59 - Apr 60] and a great deal of credit must go to the Band Master, Mr F Rollard, who through his choice of music played has not only kept the members interested, but has drawn considerable applause from the public, on all occasions.

We offer our congratulations to our Soloists who, through their great efforts not only at the V.B.L. Contest in Melbourne but also at South Street, brought to Ballarat for the first time the V.B.L. Shield. [This was awarded for the most success in Solo competition]

It is also noteworthy that in previous AGM of 1959, a softening of a certain historic relationship was noted by Cr Roff:

Our good wishes are also extended to Sister Bands and it is good to note the spirit of co-operation throughout the community.

One bandsman's experiences with the *Last Post* during peace time

As a very young lad, Kevin Howell saw his great uncle, an ex-serviceman, play the bugle for the RSL. 'My father took me down there to see him sound the last post and I said to my father on the way home in the car, "One day I'm gonna do that!"'

Kevin swallowed hard before his next statement. 'He frightened the daylights out of me, he had one leg, a wooden leg, and one eye. Amazing.'

This great uncle never got to see Kevin play or know that he'd inspired him. But he was the reason that Kevin wanted to play cornet.

I've played in a number of funerals and for returned servicemen, I would sound the last post. I did that a number of times. A returned serviceman has the right to have a bugler sound the *Last Post*.

– Kevin Howell



2 October 1941, 2/27th Australian Infantry Battalion. Middle East, French Mandate for Syria and Lebanon, Lebanon, Tripoli Area. Source: Australian War Memorial (#010451)

I did play the *Last Post* for many years here. I remember I was fourteen and my father picked me up from school and they wanted a bugler down at the RSL and I went down and played the last post and I stood in the corner down in St Pat's yard there and the tram would go past and sound the last post and the old members took me into the bar and I sat down at the bar and had a glass of lemonade and then I was presented with a cheque for one guinea [one pound, one shilling, about \$35 in today's currency] which is quite a lot to a lad of fourteen. That was a big day and I'm quite proud of that. And that was it, so I did that on and off over the next years for the RSL quite regularly, the dawn service, I would play six times on ANZAC day, for the Singapore POWs, the Vietnam memorial, the arch of Victory and the service in St Patrick's Cathedral just prior to the main service. The last time would have been at the football on the Eastern Oval.

– Kevin Howell

Then in the late 60s on the way over to work in England, a strange twist occurred when Kevin's services were called upon again:

I was playing on the ship on the way over and the captain saw me, I was reading music and playing with the band and I got a slip under the cabin door, would I sound the last post for a funeral on the lower deck in a couple of days' time? So I phoned the person and let them know that I would be available. I go down and I'm looking around for the casket and the captain came along and we called him woof woof because he spoke like that and he said I've got a few words to say and then



I'll give you the nod and you'll sound the *Last Post*, so I thought it must have been a digger [ANZAC soldier] because they buried people at sea in those days – they don't do that any more now but this was back in '68 and they did then.

Anyway, I sound the *Last Post* and he thanked me and he was all in his regalia and I was looking around but there was a little box like this [motions to a box slightly smaller than a shoe box] sitting on the rail with the Union Jack draped over it. I couldn't work it out. So when the captain had said his few words, over it went into the ocean so I said to the lads and they were getting the crates of beer out for the wake afterwards, I said 'Who was that?'. They said, 'Oh didn't you know? That was the ship's mascot, the parrot!'. It was The Canberra and The Canberra was six years old and it had been on board for six years! So that's the thing about music, it will take you anywhere into anything.

– Kevin Howell

List of engagements from 8 June 1959 – 3 March 1960:

Civic Hall (Hospital), Regent Theatre (March P.O.W.), Cadet Church Parade, Turning on of Water Buninyong, Queen Elizabeth Homes, South Street Contests, Firemens Torch Light Procession, Pax Hill Scouts, Ballarat Show Marching Girls, Concert at Gardens (afternoon), Concert Alexandra Bandstand (night, same day as afternoon concert), Mary Mount Convent Concert, Travellers Procession Marching Girls, Eureka Celebrations, Mums and Dads (pre Christmas), Concert at Gardens (afternoon), Clunes Christmas Carols by Candlelight (night), Marching Girls to Theatre, Concert at Gardens (afternoon), Concert Alexandra Bandstand (same date, night), Queen Elizabeth Procession at the Showgrounds, Concert Titanic Bandstand (Sat. Morning), Her Majesty's Theatre, Begonia Opening at the Gardens, two Concerts at the Titanic Bandstand during the Begonia festival weekend.

– Minutes book



DISCOVER MORE

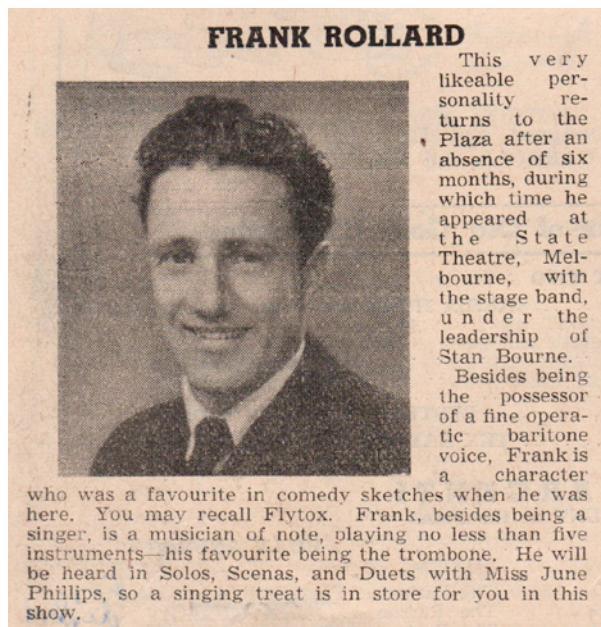
Read more about [the history of the Begonia Festival](#) from the Ballarat Tramway Museum.

Photos of the [Queen](#) and [Queen Mother's](#) visits to Ballarat and the Begonia Festival, 1954 and 1958 respectively.

Frank Bernard Rollard

Born 1917, died 28 June 1992 (Bowen, Queensland)

Frank Rollard was a brass player (trombone, trumpet, euphonium) and, among other musical projects, played in the Soldiers' Band. He took over as bandmaster from time to time and competed as a soloist in South Street for the Soldiers' Band. As well as being a band player, soloist, MD and teacher of the Soldiers' Junior Band in the 50s and 60s he was also a singer with – by all accounts – a lovely baritone voice.



November 1951, Frank Rollard, Plaza Theatre Northcote.
Source: BMCB Archive



As you will read, Frank joined the Army in 1943 and played at Dubbo in the training band, then in 1944 as concert party musician and, by 1946, travelled to Japan to entertain the troops, to lift their spirits. During wartime, popular musical acts incorporated humour and parody as vital light relief. Frank would have honed his comedic entertainment skills during this period while he served with the 'Kangaroos'. (Read more in the Kangaroos Concert Party Program on p. 137.)

1948, Kangaroos AIF show advertisement.
Source: BMCB Archive

He sang regularly at The Plaza Theatre in Melbourne, did revue and vaudeville shows and even moved to Brisbane in the early 50s to perform at the Theatre Royal. In these theatre shows he sang and played 'opera to pop' repertoire with a knack for comedy. Sometimes he was billed as 'the little guy with the big voice'.

Norm Newey recalls that the Soldiers' Band performances with Frank Rollard often had a twist:

We used to play up at the lake every Sunday or every second Sunday and we'd be playing something from one of the musical comedies and he'd turn around and sing the song. Sort of unheard of in a brass band situation. But he was a very good musician.

– Norm Newey

While it was quite usual for a singer to perform with a brass band in that era it was totally unheard of for the band *conductor* to be that singer.

For instance, in 1958 in the lead-up to the Queen Mother's visit, Frank sang the Begonia Festival theme song *I say it with Begonias* with the band as they toured the Wimmera promoting the festival to the regions.

Dennis Hawkes also remembers Frank, because as well as being his bandmaster at the end of the 50s in the Soldiers' Band and, training the junior players, Frank also taught a small selection of kids at North Tech. Dennis was one such student and remembers these times from when he was only ten or eleven years old.

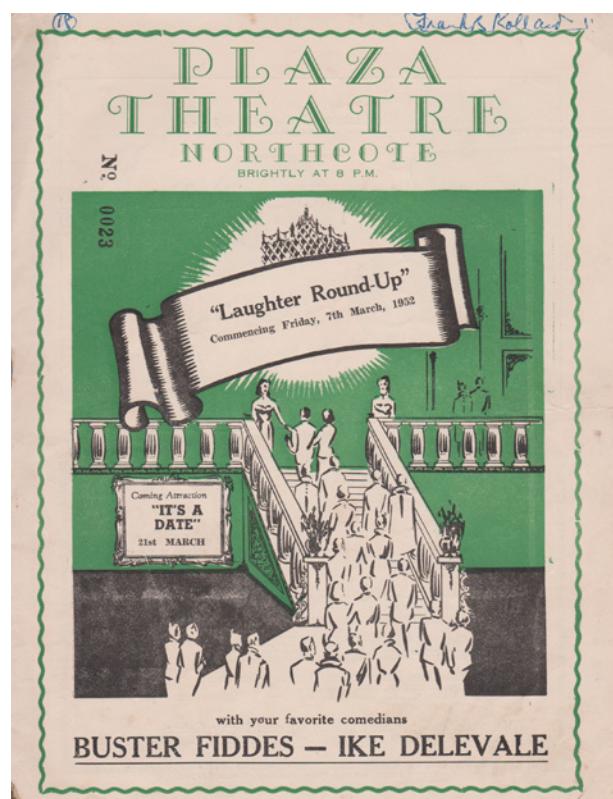
FRANK ROLLARD



from opera to pops

Our baritone, Frank Rollard, is as much at home in comedy sketches as in operatic numbers. Also Frank is the mainstay of the Dixieland Band, playing his trombone with all the confidence and dexterity of a Dorsey. There seems to be no end of Frank's accomplishments.

February 1952, Frank Rollard Plaza Theatre Northcote. Source: BMCB



March 1952, Plaza Theatre Northcote, cover. Source: BMCB



As I went to secondary school they started this little school band and Frank would come up of a lunchtime. He'd have his lunchtime from 12 to 1pm, same as the school. We'd all collect there, only about six of us. He worked in the foundry as a turner or fitter of some such. John Valve's is on the corner of Norman and Creswick Rd (vacant block now) they used to make big water valves and he'd ride his bike up to North Tech and he smelt of all the cutting fluids. It was just like smelling a motor mechanic's overalls, and he was a marvelous musician.

– Dennis Hawkes

In many ways, Frank was a self-made man, having grown up an orphan who may have even made up his own name.

In the band archives there is a handwritten note outlining Frank Rollard's banding history. It appears to be written by Rollard himself. (Note that this is a rough guide; it is not exact in terms of the dates.)

F B Rollard

A rough outline of banding history

- 1928 St Vincent De Paul's Boys Band (Les Hoffman)
- 1932 Competed in Sth Street in B + C Grades
- 1932 Kew Competitions
- 1933 Won Junior Amateur Solo (Eupho)
- 1933 Aug Joined Ballarat City Band (Alf Rowell) 1st B Grade 1934
- 1935 1st Prize South Street Tenor Horn Solo (Coliseum) P Jones? (Adjudicator)
- 1938 Competition P + A Parade Ballarat City 2nd Prize (band player)
- 1939 Competition P + A Parade Ballarat City 1st Prize (band player)
[1941 Married Hazel Irene Hyatt]
- 1943 Joined Army. Played at Dubbo in training band.
- 1944 Joined 4th Dvn Concert Party As singer and musician. [service No. V50624]
- 1945 Was selected in Army Orchestra as Trom + Singer
- 1946 Joined Japan in Army Concert Party Singer, Trom + Trumpet
- 1947 Back to Ballarat City Band
[1947 Birth of daughter Rhonda, appears to be the eldest of three]
[1952 Residency at Theatre Royal in Brisbane]
- 1954 Conducted Alexandra Town Band. Taught juniors.
- 1957 Conducted Soldiers' Band. Taught juniors.
- 1958 Taught School Band part time Ballarat North Tech.
- 1960 Played Ballarat Soldiers'
- 1960-65 Taught junior players Soldiers band.
- 1966 Conducted and taught Stawell Brass Band
[Census records show that in 1968 he was living in Stawell]
- 1969 Played in Soldiers' Band, at Ballarat East and Ballarat High School



1970 Won Ballarat + District School contest with Ballarat High School, BEHS, Grand Aggregate BEHS

1970 Third in South St, T.V. Talent Quest with Band of High School.
Also played in Soldiers' Band

1971 1st Prize with BEHS South St. 3rd BHS Royal South Street

1972 3rd Prize with BEHS

1973 1st Prize BEHS 3rd BHS Royal South Street. Won Veterans Solo.
Played with Ipswich Band.

1971-74 Produced Champion of Champions (Junior) at South Street

1972-74 3 times Champion Band at St John's competitions BEHS School Band

1974 1st Prize BEHS Royal South Street.

1975 Conducting Ballarat Soldiers' Band
[1975 His wife Hazel died and his mother in law also died this year]
[BEHS = Ballarat East High School]

Concert parties

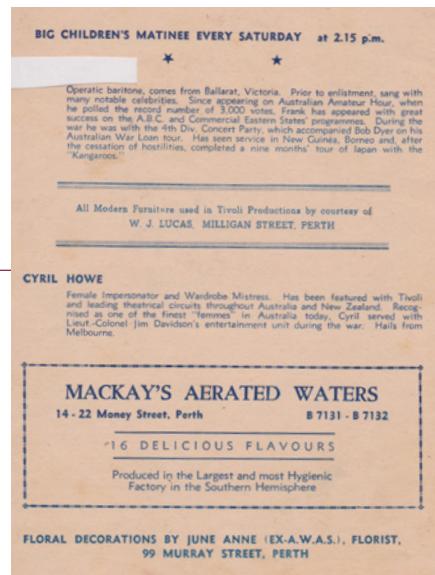
These excerpts from the Kangaroo's Concert Party Program in the BMCB Archive tell about the work of concert party troops in World War II of which Frank Rollard was a part.

The programs help us to understand Frank's own history and, in broader terms, shed light on another aspect of how music was used during wartime by members of the Soldiers' Band. This use is different to a battalion band musician's role in that these musicians had a sole duty to entertain (with no field ambulance duties). The musical performance centered on comedy, light music and entertainment.



Read excerpts from
the Kangaroos Concert
Party Program.

Source: BMCB Archive



Frank's talents were put to good use – the public's appetite for revues, comedy, send ups and parody did not wane throughout the war. In the postwar period, comedy was also a vital force as people worked hard once again to gain a semblance of normality.



The 1960s

At a glance

Beatlemania, space race, miniskirts, the contraceptive pill and the sexual revolution, votes for Aboriginal citizens, the war in Vietnam (on TV in the living room), decimal currency, long hair for men, the birth of the rebellious teen and the 'Generation Gap'. What more could you want?

The 60s is also the decade when Ballarat gets BTV-6.

With broadcasting commencing in 1962, BTV-6 becomes the prime source of television transmission for Ballarat (continuing as BTV-6 until 1989).

ABC transmissions enter Ballarat living rooms almost a year later. Early shows include: *BP Pick A Box*, *Revue '62*, *The Johnny O'Keefe Show*, *The Bert Newton Show* and *The Best Of IMT*.

1963 – Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip arrive in Australia for a visit to all states.

1964 – The Beatles tour Australia; they never make it to Ballarat but plenty of teens from Ballarat make it to Melbourne to see them.

1965 – Australia commits troops to the Vietnam War. Australia's involvement spans from 1962 to 1972.

1966 – Prince Charles attends Geelong Grammar's Timbertop the same year the first live transmission from the UK makes it across the Pacific, and Geoffrey Blainey publishes his book, *The Tyranny of Distance*.

1967 – The Beatles release *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, the first art rock album in the world. This new release heralds in Long Play format and changes popular music forever. The album memorably features brass on a rock album and the cover, which cements the Beatles' mythic status: it is set up like a psychedelic brass band photo with the bass drum firmly placed in the centre.

1968 – Significant ancient Aboriginal remains are found in Lake Mungo.

1969 – We enter a new era of technology and space exploration when a human sets a foot on the moon. This momentous occasion is televised to 600 million viewers worldwide. Australian viewers serendipitously receive the telecast .3 seconds before the rest of the world when NASA chooses the 64-metre-long Parkes radio telescope for transmission of the lunar landing.

Closer to home, in 1962 South Street is given 'Royal' status for its ongoing contribution to the community. Her Maj is bought by the Royal Society of South Street (RSS) in 1965 and renamed The Memorial Theatre. The building remains the property of RSS for twenty two years before they gift it back to the Ballarat City Council for restoration, renovations and maintenance.

The band in the 1960s



1960, Band photo. Source: BMCB

Following on from the momentum gained in the 50s, the 1960s was a peak decade for the band.

Again, we have a few words from Bill Wilkinson's history, along with the generous support of former members who loaned their memorabilia and stories, to help illustrate the decade. (Of course, there are so many more stories – they cannot all be included here. We are grateful to all those who were able to contribute.)

Frank James took on the role of bandmaster in 1960, standing in for Frank Rollard who was absent due to ill health for six months. Frank Rollard returned but by the end of 1962, Frank James was appointed bandmaster.

Early 60s highlights

Bill Wilkinson wrote:

Hawthorn Centenary Contest 1st 'B' Grade Quickstep 2nd Hymn 3rd Selection

[Although the AGM reports 2nd in selection and 3rd in Hymn.]

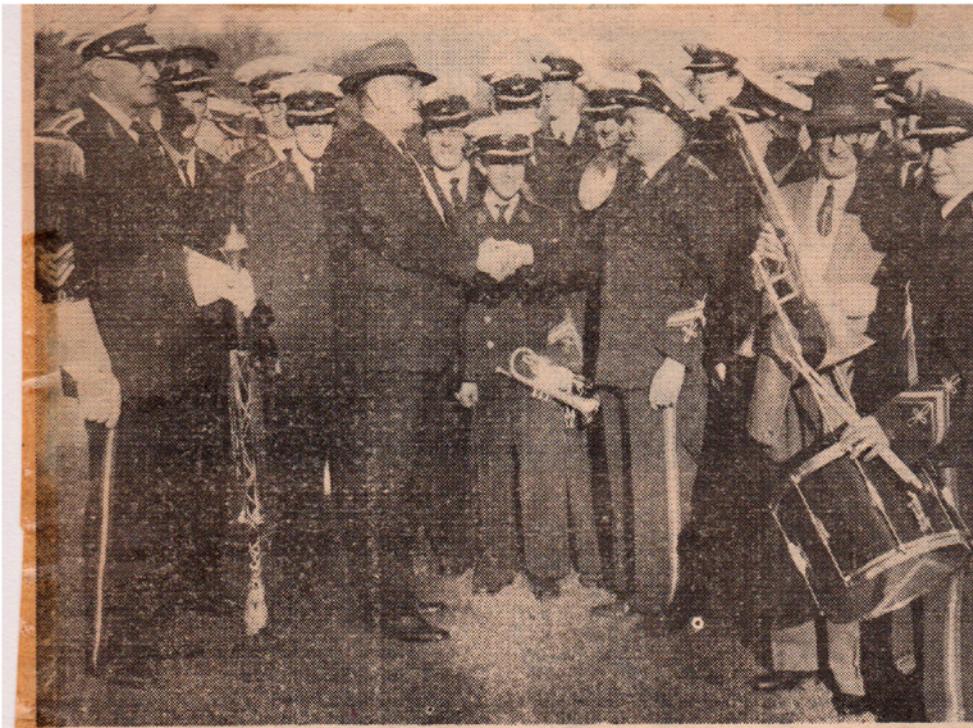
Tanunda S.A. 1st A Grade Quickstep, 1st B Grade Quickstep, 1st B Grade Test, 2nd A Grade Test and 3rd Street March

[In the minutes it is noted that no less than nineteen bands competed in the Street March.]

South Street - 1st 'B' Grade Test 2nd 'A' Grade Quickstep



1960, Tanunda trip. Source: Geoff Smith Archive



One of Ballarat's own bands had a win at the South Street bands competitions at the City Oval on Saturday. This is the Ballarat Soldiers' Band which won the B Grade Quickstep. The president of the band, Cr W. Roff, congratulates band member, Mr Frank James, after the win was announced.

Prints of photographs taken by "Courier" photographers are daily on display in the "Courier" window. Copies may be purchased on application at the Office.

1962, 'B' Grade Quickstep winners, *The Courier*.
Source: Geoff Smith Archive



Miss Annette Bridges (right) a supporter of the Ballarat Soldiers' Band, tries a cap on Lynnette Hawkes in the arms of her mother, Mrs H. Hawkes, after the band had won the B Grade title.

28 October 1963, Proud supporters after the 'B' Grade Win, *The Courier*. Source: Dennis Hawkes Archive

In the minutes of 1 May 1962 it is noted that:

Bandmaster reported the City of Ballarat Band who amalgamated with us on Anzac Day for the March & Hymns, a very successful venture. Several people from the RSL and City Council commented very favourably on the idea.



1960s, Band photo. Source: BMCB Archive

The band makes it to 'A' Grade

The band was the winner for 'B' Grade in '63 and we were then graded to 'A' Grade in '64. That was the first time they got to the 'A' Grade standard and that's quite something for a country band.

So from when we [the eight Howell brothers] started in '53, it took ten years to get from being a junior group to 'A' Grade level.

– Kevin Howell



1960s, Winning 'B' Grade Quickstep. Source: BMCB Archive



They always went back to the band room and then the adjudicator would come back and speak to the band. And sometimes other members of other bands would come back. It was always a great occasion in the Soldiers' Bandroom which was just up in Eastwood Street on the bridge. It was an old tin shed.

– Kevin Howell



1963, Back in the bandroom after South Street win. Source: Dennis Hawkes Archive

For a band to attain 'A' Grade status, a lot of things have to go right. They must be well equipped with a dedicated practice space, a crack Bandleader as well as dedicated members and supporters. Frank James had a secret to motivating member commitment. Band members who played under Frank remember how he attained such success with the band.

Frank James was a factories inspector in Ballarat, he had free time to go around and through the day he could check up on this one and that one. He had a bit of time to run about. I don't know what sort of player he was but he was an excellent conductor. He got a lot of success.

– Dennis Hawkes

There were very poor attendances at practices in the early times, until Frank James came along. Because Frank got around town each day, he'd round everyone up for the band at the same time, which made a huge difference to the band (laughing). As part of his job he'd be passing by and he'd call into where I was working and say 'Don't forget you've got band practice' and he'd do this to everybody, rounding people up all the time because his job enabled him to do that! Genius!

– Norm Newey



Leaf through some of the pages of the Australasian Bandsman, 1963 and 1964 (the year the Soldiers' Band made the front cover).



Source: BMCB Archive

COURIER - MAY 1 - 1965

Soldiers Band has championship grading now

The Ballarat Soldiers Memorial Band had been raised in status to a championship grade band, the secretary of the Victorian Bands League, Mr J. Marchingo, announced at the band's annual meeting last night.

This, he pointed out, was a step above A Grade.

Mr Marchingo said that the band had really earned the grading. It had been made because of its numerous successes during the past year.

He complimented the band on its fine junior section which formed the nucleus of a future band. In this way members had taken steps to keep the organisation going.

Mr Marchingo said that the Victorian Bands League was still growing. Its membership had grown to 29 bands which showed that despite such attractions as television, and other entertainments, bands were still popular and there were people willing to give up the part of them.

Cr W. Roff, president, praised the women's auxiliary and asked members to support its efforts.

The band was planning a trip to competitions at Dubbo next Easter and every possible effort had to be made to raise the money.

He said that he was delighted with the band's success.

It would take part in the contests at Caulfield later this year in its new grading.

Representatives from councils, Crs Mills and Mason from the City and Cr Taylor from Sebastopol Borough, wished the band success. They said they would do the best to support it in council whenever possible.

Mr W. Wilkinson, who proposed a toast to the City Council, said he hoped it would increase its subsidy to the band. This year especially, more money was needed as the band hoped to go to Dubbo.

JUNIOR BAND

The junior band made its first public appearance at the meeting last night when it played several items including a march and a hymn.

Speakers spoke highly of its performance after only six training nights.

In his report, the secretary, Mr H. E. Howell, said that the band's enthusiasm had been maintained because of a blend of youthful and older players.

He praised the deputy bandmaster, Mr F. Rollard, for his valuable work in teaching young members, and congratulated the president, Cr Roff, on completing 21 years in office.

The band was very near the top and hard work had put it there, he said. It would need to work even harder if it wished to stay there.



Examining the annual report before the Soldiers' Memorial Band's annual meeting last night were, from left, Mr H. Howell, secretary, Cr W. Roff, president, Mr F. James, bandmaster, and Mr E. J. Smith, treasurer.

1 May 1965, 'Soldiers band has championship grading now',
The Courier, Source: EJ (Mick) Smith Archive

This was a proud moment for the band, being promoted to the highest aggregate level.

It was brilliant because we were stuck in 'B' Grade for so long and sometimes 'B' Grade is the hardest grade to win because you've got all these other 'B' Grade bands striving to get to 'A' Grade.

- Kevin Howell

When the Howell brothers started in the junior band in 1954 the senior band was in 'B' grade, which is why the young members had to stay in the junior band until their skill level was high enough for them to join the 'B' Grade senior band.

One by one they had us in. And it did take a number of years to do that.

- Kevin Howell

60s recordings



23 August 1964, Photo of Warne A. Wilson record
'A' Grade VBL contest, Brunswick.



Step back in time to listen to 60s recordings of the Soldiers' Band:

Ballarat Soldiers' Memorial Band, Winners 'A' Grade V.B.L. Contest (Brunswick) 1964:

[The Australasian – March](#)

[Neapolitan Serenade](#)

[Overture to Poet & Peasant](#)

Do you remember a time when both sides of the 'disc' were used? Maybe, like Dennis Hawkes, you'll remember the inventions you made to get the record to play properly:

Sometimes they weren't balanced all that well and some of them have got an adjustable balance like a crane on a building, some didn't. The earlier ones didn't and if they would jump tracks on the front here, you'd tape a five cent piece or some tiny weight like a washer that made it a bit heavier on the stylus.

– Dennis Hawkes

Community events

Apart from the competitions there were, of course, hundreds of community events in which the young players could hone their skills.

We played around the town, we played in every hall, in concerts. I remember playing up in the Myer Mill building there when John Sorrell was the parking inspector in Ballarat and he dressed up as a fairy and came out singing 'No-one loves a fairy when she's 40'. We were just screaming with laughter you know! We put on a little concert in Howitt Street. It used to be Myer Mill there. It was a clothing manufacturer, so they had a concert hall and their social club put on the concerts and we did that a number of times.

– Kevin Howell

John Sorrell was appointed city traffic officer in 1951, but he was also a well-known Ballarat entertainer and had served in the Second AIF for five years.



As with previous decades, street processions were big in the 60s. And to achieve these magnificent displays of sight and sound, the band had to be match fit.

We marched from City Oval all the way to Bridge Street [now Bridge Mall]. In later years they started in different spots and we went down and around [the bottom of Sturt Street] and marched back up.

– Kevin Howell

Street procession organisation was detailed. The bands had to be spread out through the parades so there was not too much crossover of sounds; although, as Kevin explains from a player's perspective, 'you could still hear other bands'.



1961, Soldiers' Band leads the Begonia Parade, near tram stop, east end of Sturt Street. Source: Kevin Howell Archive

Note that by the early 60s the band was sporting new white, navy and gold caps.



Proud moments

In 1924 the Band received 100 points from Judge Lt. Ord Hume in the 'B' Grade Test Selection at the Centenary Band Contest in Albury. However, there was an occasion in the 60s that topped even that moment.

22 October 1966 in the Civic Hall, we played William Tell and we got 100 points for the Own Choice [South Street]. We were competing in the 'A' Grade, so that was the highlight of the band's performance really. 'Perfect display of band playing' were the last words on the document from the English adjudicator.

– Kevin Howell



Recordings of Ballarat Soldiers' Memorial Band, 1966 'A' Grade, South Street Performances, conductor Frank James.

Popular Number: Circus Capers (G. Vinter)

Own Choice: William Tell Overture (Rossini)

Test Selection: Saga of the North (Cyril Jenkins)



1966, Photo of 1966 'A' Grade Test Selection, South Street Recording by Warne A. Wilson. Source: Dennis Hawkes

In 1967 the band placed third in the 'A' Grade Quickstep South Street Victorian Brass Band Championships, but took out first the following year – 1968 – their last year competing in the 'A' Grade.



1968, Quickstep 'A' Grade Champions. Source: BMB Archive



In 1969 they placed equal second in the 'B' Grade Championships.

On a 60s summer night if you were in Sturt Street Ballarat, you would have been in for a treat:

In the summertime, back in the day, both bands were fairly strong. They used to play a show from 2 to 4pm in the afternoon: show tunes, music of the day, brass band sort of stuff. And the cars would be honk, honk, honk. We'd take it in turns with City Band one week and Soldiers' Band next week and at night the same band would play probably an hour, or maybe an hour and a half concert at the Alexandra bandstand and all the cars would back in there, honk, honk, honk on a beautiful Sunday summer night. This was in the 60s.

– Dennis Hawkes

Bob Pattie who played with the Ballarat City Band also remembers those heady days of banding:

Both bands used to play around the lake every Sunday. There's a bandstand at the lake called the McDonald's Bandstand. It's got nothing to do with McDonald's fast food restaurant. He was a councillor in Ballarat and he gave the money to build that bandstand round the lake. It's still there. One Sunday the Ballarat City Band would play there in the afternoon, at 2pm or so, then the next Sunday the Ballarat Soldiers' Band would play there. They used to alternate. Sometimes they used to play every week. They played in the Botanical Gardens as well. They had to do forty concerts a year to get money from the council.

In summertime they used to do two, so one would be in the afternoon and one would be at night in one of the bandstands in the street [Sturt], there's two outdoor bandstands, the Alexandra Bandstand opposite the Golden City Hotel and the other one in the end the Titanic Bandstand. They'd play either of their two at night there, about half past seven at night. So they'd do two concerts on a Sunday. Cars used to go down there and they used to park backwards so they could sit facing the band (laughs).

And someone from the band would go round and they used to have this little money box and they'd go round and they'd go round to the cars and they'd have this collection box and people would put coins in the collection box. This was happening in the 40s, 50s and 60s, before television. Up at the Lake and the Gardens someone who was in the band committee but who wasn't playing would go round to the people on the chairs in their cars with the donation box. Someone said that when they were counting the money there would always be three or four buttons in the box because people would bring buttons along!

– Bob Pattie

Delayed kudos

Dennis Hawkes who was a young lad in the early 60s when he joined the band on the bandstands in Sturt Street remembers his first experiences of playing in the band:

It was twofold – as a kid going to school you were expected to play football, but I couldn't hit a barn door with a bucket of wheat, but I was learning this thing [cornet]. And that came from my grandparents and granddad he played in the Maryborough Band, seventy five years when he died. Dad came down here when he was eighteen or nineteen for work and he worked at the tyre service. So Dad was there and he was playing in the Soldiers' Band. I came along after that. His name was Allan Hawkes but everyone called him 'Digger'.

– Dennis Hawkes

Dennis played in a small group of students at high school:

We'd sit on the back of the school desk, with our feet down on the seat and you'd be playing away, some little march thing. They had no music ensembles for schools, it was the start of the school band if you like. So there was about six of us and we were in the music room and kids would run up and down and this is lunchtime and you're honking away and however good or bad it was and they'd be 'Ah look at him, look at him'. You'd wear the brunt of the gags.

Dennis remembers the sports culture and the expectations to be a 'gung ho footballer'. Instead he found solace in the cornet, even though he found it embarrassing. Especially wearing a uniform, 'a 14 stone man had used and it'd been made to fit you ... the crutch of my uniform was half way down to your knees and just looked a baggy sort of thing. That was a bit of an embarrassment because you didn't have a tailor made uniform'.

Young Dennis even took measures to disguise his musical endeavours on the tram on the way to North Tech:

I would never take the cornet in its case, I'd always put it in a Gladstone bag or portmanteau (or port). I used to put the cornet and the music at the bottom and all the other stuff on top, school books and maybe a coat or jumper, anything to conceal it.



Photo of three generations of brass band players, Dennis, his father and grandfather. Source: Dennis Hawkes Archive



But as he grew in skills and stature, his old classmates saw the musos in a different light:

We'd be playing balls at the Civic Hall and that type of thing and people would say 'Oh Jeez, you're still playing that bloody thing, Jeez I wish I had a learnt'.

– Dennis Hawkes

Giving back

Dennis went on to use his musical skills to play with the Ballarat cabaret outfit 'Brenda and Brett' as well as on BTV6 and with the dance band Chiodo. He still plays with Haddon Band, Ballarat Wind Orchestra and for Anzac Day every year.

I started doing the bugle call for Anzac Day 1975 in Clunes and have been doing it ever since. And I started in 1976 at Sebastopol and I still do both of those. I think I've missed two just by being away. I always feel it's good to give a bit back. Sometimes you're that bloody cold and they lay wreaths and you're thinking hurry up, hurry up and you start to shake, because it's cold and your mouthpiece sticks to your face. Music's been good to me, and if you could put all the stories together of the old Diggers who gave their lives what's to get down there in the cold, even if it's snowing to go play? How hard is that compared to what they did?

– Dennis Hawkes

Dennis' mum, Beatrice, was one of hundreds of women over the life of the band who gave generously of their time, energy, social and culinary skills to fundraise for and feed the band.

3BA at the time used to have the man of the day or lady of the day and mum got the life member of the women's auxiliary here. The women's auxiliary was fairly strong.

– Dennis Hawkes

Many of the players who took their playing seriously and who were prepared to put in the hours of practice every week, shared their love of music with different projects.

Norm Newey remembers years of playing in the theatre:

For about probably thirty years I played in the theatre here. Kevin Howell was part of the band. My kids used to love dancing in the theatre.

I LOVED it, next to early days in the brass band, I loved playing in the theatre.

I think because you played in something for about ten nights. It would start off and it would be OK and by the tenth night, you'd have been playing together so many nights and it got so tight and so good and I loved that. And I was always a bit shy playing and I loved being out of sight of the people. I think I performed better in the pit than I did anywhere else. Strange about that, I was always more comfortable there. I just loved it.

–Norm Newey



[View the 1964 Program for Festival of Bands.](#)

As well as the busy extra-curricula schedule that many of the players were juggling through the 60s, the Soldiers' Band had its own full schedule. There were plenty of community organisations, events and charities to support, like St John's Hospital and the Festival of Bands.



1962, Soldiers' Band, St John's hospital. Source: Geoff Smith Archive

At the AGM of May 1966 (the 45th AGM) held in the bandroom in Eastwood Street, these engagements were listed for the previous year:

Boy Scouts at Pax Hill, Anzac march Ballarat and Ballan, Eureka Commemoration Service, BTV6, Month Sunday Parade, Concert at Wendouree Mental Hospital, Begonia Festival Official Opening, Begonia Festival Lake Wendouree Spectacular, Begonia Festival Procession, VBL Contest held at Caulfield Town Hall ('A' Grade), South Street Competitions ('A' Grade).

At this meeting it was also noted:

To Our President Cr W Roff and his wife, we offer our sincerest congratulations on his second term of Office as Mayor of the City.

The Ladies Committee continues to do an excellent job on the social activities of the Band and very best thanks go to them.

Our thanks also to Frank Rollard for his activities with the juniors, the future membership of the Band.

Funding the necessities

As in every decade, the funding of instruments and uniforms was on the agenda. Band uniforms need to be kept clean and in good condition for a band to look their best at any turn-out or competition. As we hear from 60s junior player Dennis Hawkes, the uniform didn't always fit.

The following article outlines the struggles and triumphs of furnishing the band with the necessities.

Band plays its way to new instruments

Courier 8/July/1968

The Ballarat Soldiers' Memorial Band yesterday began a concert with a set of time-worn instruments, and ended it with a new set, bought for the band by the City Council at a cost of about \$7000.

The presentation of the new instruments was made by the Mayor, Sir Arthur Nicholson, during a band concert at the Civic Hall.

The Mayor was accompanied by the president of the band, Cr W. E. Roff, the band's official representative on the City Council, Cr K. C. Webb, and the town clerk, Mr H. R. Maddern.

The new instruments were displayed on stage during the first part of the concert, and were used by the band for the final items.

50th YEAR

Officially presenting them to Cr. Roff, the Mayor said the Soldiers' Band, now in its 50th year, had performed well in competitions, had played its part in the civic life of the city, and had helped tremendously in Ballarat's musical life.

He added that he was impressed with the band and with the number of young players associated with it.

It was appropriate, he said, that the presentation should be made at the Civic Hall, which was associated with band championships of Australia, and where the band recently distinguished itself by winning such a championship.

"I know the band will use the instruments not only for its own benefit, but for the benefit of the city as a whole," he added.

LIVING MEMORIAL

Cr. Roff said the band had been formed immediately after the First World War by a group of ex-servicemen, and was a living memorial to bandsmen who gave their lives for freedom.

Years of wear had made the existing instruments unfit for future use, and the time had come when the band must either fade out or get new instruments.

After considering the possibility of an appeal to the public, the band had decided to approach the City Council and ask for its help.

"We look forward to another 50 years as custodians of these instruments on behalf of the City Council and citizens of Ballarat," he said.

Cr Roff announced that the band was at present working to provide new uniforms for its members, and to date had raised \$1000 of the \$3000 needed for this project.

The musical director of the band, Mr Frank James, thanked the committee members and bandsmen for their support in the past 50 years, and said the band was fortunate in having its present lively committee.

Mr A. Wright, who represented the Victorian Band League at the presentation, said the occasion was one which happened only once in the lifetime of a band, and congratulated the City Council on its foresight in helping the band to acquire instruments and so enable young people to learn band music.

He said the Soldiers' Band was one of the youngest A grade bands in Australia.

The instruments, after being presented by Cr Roff to Mr James, were handed by him to the individual players, the first a trombone, going to Mr W. Wilkinson, who has played with the band since its inception.

A set of conductor's batons was presented to Mr James by the concert compere, Mr A. Leviston.

The afternoon's programme was a varied and popular one which was enjoyed by a considerable audience.

The programme ranged from Stephen Foster melodies to the Top 40, and included also several lively items by the Hi Tone Trio and songs by the Burnie Trio. Soloist with the band in two song medleys was Joyce Heys.

Members of the RSL Marching Girls, in uniform, served as ushers.

1968, 'Band plays its way to new instruments',
The Courier. Source:
E J (Mick) Smith Archive

As always, council stipends and grants were not enough to keep the band going:

In the 60s in the Soldiers' Band there were two sides. There were the teetotallers and tea drinkers and they'd have a little cup of tea and a scone and they'd make three and sixpence ha'penny. Then there was the ones that liked a beer and they'd have a night and they'd make in those days something like a \$100 for the band fund. They'd just have a party at somebody's place as a fund raiser.

- Dennis Hawkes

The Soldiers' Band in the lounge room



1960s, Performing on BTV6. Source: Dennis Hawkes Archive

Having played regularly on the radio airwaves in the 30s, the band once again had the opportunity to entertain through mass media – this time on Ballarat's own regional television station, BTV6. Television was still relatively new to people's homes and some of the technical aspects were still being ironed out. BTV6 presenter Fred Fargher remembers:

There used to be of a Sunday afternoon a thing we would do called HBA (sponsor) showcase, and it would be [for example] the Ballarat Soldiers' Sailors' Airmen's Brass Band. They would tune up and then the studio lights would come on. They're brass instruments and they would heat up in the bright lights ... and the bandmaster would go berserk – that's a terrible sound, 'What's happening here? Gotta retune!' And of course it would get hotter and hotter under the lights, so they'd have to keep on tuning.

That thing used to go to air live which made it worse, because they'd rehearse and in that half hour from the beginning of it [the show] and to the end of it they'd be thinking, 'Something's dodgy here'. Poor devils!

– Fred Fargher



Soloists in the 60s

Soloists played a significant part in the competitive life of the band. They practised diligently for a couple of hours a day for months in the lead-up to competitions.

Here are some results of this labour of love from the 1960s as listed in the front cover of the scrapbook:

1960

N Newey - Soprano Solo VBL
N Newey - Soprano Solo South Street

1961

N Newey - Soprano Solo VBL
N Newey - 2nd South Street
J Allen - Bass 2nd VBL
J Allen - Bb Bass 1st South Street
G Smith - 1st in VBL Junior cornet, 2nd champ of champs
G Smith - Cornet 2nd South Street
K Howell - Flugal Horn 2nd South Street

1962

J Allen - Bb Bass 1st South Street
K Howell - 4th South Street

1963

J Allen - 3rd South Street
K Howell - 3rd South Street
F Rollard - Trombone 2nd South Street
F Rollard - Sacred Solo 3rd South Street

Duet:

1962
F Rollard and K Howell - 2nd South Street
1963
F Rollard and K Howell - 3rd South Street

Here is the full band after their placings in the 'A' Grade South Street Contests 1966:



1966, Soldiers' Band 'A' Grade Championships, South Street. Source: BMCB Archive



Junior players from the 50s and their professional careers

One of the junior players from the 1950s who went on into the senior band and later developed his career as top trumpet player was Bob Venier (see 1959 band picture). He built a professional career playing in pit orchestras in Melbourne as well as contemporary jazz and rock outfits.

Bob Venier has become quite a famous trumpeter around jazz circles these days but he used to be the principal trumpet player in the days of Graeme Kennedy and Don Lane. He used to be with Channel Nine. He played on a few of the Little River Band's albums. He played in Pyramid with David Hirschfelder who used to be John Farnham's keyboard player. David and Bob both came from Ballarat, you're talking very high level musicianship.

–Kevin Howell

Yes, indeed. In fact, through the 1970s to the early 2000s Bob Venier played on records for Brian May, The Little River Band, Stylus, Pseudo Echo, Pyramid, Graeme Lyall, Australian Crawl, Mondo Rock, The Black Sorrows and Marcia Hines, just to name a few.

Kevin Howell is another player from the 50s junior and eventually the senior band whose Soldiers' Band experience stood him in good stead in the musical world in Ballarat and beyond:

Some members of the band went on to play professionally. Bob Venier went on to play professionally, Norm Newey played professionally. Like we all did play quite a few jobs and get paid for them. When I was in the pit I was paid. In London I probably got more money in the pit than I was getting during the day [technical draftsmen for engineering works in London].

– Kevin Howell

Kevin was also able to play with the Guardsmen and Skelmersdale Band in the late 60s and early 70s:

I was freelancing with the Guardsmen then, doing pit orchestra stuff. That was a good start for me, I got to know the bands. I was on the biggest learning curve.

At Lord Hesketh's they used to have the famous maypole dance. It's very much a thing of the weekend and the kids would do the big maypole dance and the band just played continuously. I was quite useful because I could play and read the music, I could sit in and I soon got to know the music. They divided the cornets up into groups of three and you could sit out for half an hour while the others played and that was all just to keep the music going. That was interesting and I enjoyed that – playing with the English band. They were probably the finest brass players in the world.

– Kevin Howell



DISCOVER MORE

Take a peak at the AGM programs from the 1960s. [1964 AGM](#) [1965 AGM](#) [1967 AGM](#)

And here's an excerpt from the [1967 RSS Brass Band Program](#) notes.

Read [Ballarat television turns 50](#) about the 1962 birth of BTV-6 on Television.au.



Listen to the Ballarat Trumpet Trio (Geoff Smith, Kevin Howell and Dennis Hawkes) performing in the 'Dollars for Diggers' Vietnam Concert, 1966 [here](#).

Hear more of the 60s Soldiers' Band South Street performances:

[Barber of Seville](#) and [It Is Well \(Hymn\)](#)

High school music education reform brings unexpected changes

The late 60s saw a change in state education department policy, which set the scene for a profound change to the future of the Soldiers' Band. This would not become fully apparent until nearly a decade and a half later.

From the beginning of the brass band movement, children who wanted to play an instrument joined a band at their orphanage, primary school, community or private band, and supplemented their learning from keen bandsmen who gave of their time to teach up and coming lads to play. For those children with an aptitude like Frank Wright and a desire to become a professional musician, their parents may have sought prize-winning players like Percy Code for individual tutelage.

This is how humans have learned music for centuries, a passing down of skills, no red tape. The folk tradition.

Towards the end of the 1960s, The Victorian State Department of Education decided to formalise instrumental learning and to bring instrumental education to the masses at secondary school level. This brought some unexpected changes.

The first three high school instrumental specialist teachers were hired in 1967, in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne. Based on scientific thinking of the time about brain function and the value of music for the development of children – intellectually, emotionally and socially – the government decided to expand the program. Five years later, the director of music at Melbourne High, a man with extensive brass band experience, was hired by the State Department of Education as music inspector for high schools. His name was Bruce Worland.

Bruce performed this role from 1972 to 1984, when the system changed. According to Bruce, previous to this period, instrumental learning in schools was largely overseen by history and English teachers. It was interesting to hear Bruce's perspective on the rationale and inner workings of the program.



America had oodles of publications to show how it works when kids are taught to play in an ensemble from day one. It was about teaching kids to play in bands, not to be famous soloists, that was an offshoot. By year nine you would talk to the parents if the student was showing particular promise and recommend that they get private lessons by a teacher in the community to progress further.

– Bruce Worland

Bruce explained that, at first, the only university graduates trained in music were coming from Melbourne University with just a few from Monash University. To qualify, prospective instrumental and band teachers required registration, which involved fulfilling certain criteria including an interview with a music inspector such as Bruce Worland – not necessarily a teaching degree.



c.1970, Norm Newey's first school band under the reform. Future brass player, teacher and conductor, Ian Govan, is fourth from the left back row. Source: Norm Newey Archive

Norm Newey from the Soldiers' Band was one such teacher who worked within this instrumental music education reform.

Norm was an electrician who had played in the band from around 1950. He happened to work in the same trade as fellow bandsman Lyndsay George.

We worked at separate places then came together. I left and joined the State Education Department as an instrumental teacher, back in the 70s when they started putting bands in schools. I was one of the originals doing that.

– Norm Newey



I did a trade course and taught electrical trade for a while and the job came up at [Ballarat] Grammar school as an instrumental teacher and I got that and I stayed there until I retired.

The move from the State Education Department started the move from brass bands to concert bands. I think the original plan was that by putting a brass band person like me in to get brass bands going in schools. But I think it backfired a little because everybody went concert bands with the reeds and so on.

– Norm Newey

Lyndsay George also ended up working at Ballarat Grammar with Norm.

Andrew Dale, Head of Music at Ballarat Grammar, reflects on the growth of specialist instrumental training in two of the private secondary schools in Ballarat:

At Ballarat Grammar and Clarendon instrumental teaching really took off in the mid 1970s. Norm Newey and Lindsay were very important people involved in the growth of instrumental music at Ballarat Grammar.

– Andrew Dale

Geoff Smith was another Soldiers' Band member who joined the ranks of music educators, and became influential in developing music in Ballarat when he became head of music at Ballarat and Clarendon College.

So, initially, a number of teachers were drawn from community brass bands because the best players from these bands had a good grounding in reading and playing. Their musical experience was often broad, as it was common for brass band members to play in pit orchestras for musical theatres and also in dance bands. Frank Rollard, Norm Newey, Kevin Howell, Dennis Hawkes and Lyndsay George were all such players.



1971, Geoff Smith teaching College Students, Ballarat College Quintet, W Chaplin, G Smith, N Whitla, P Chaplin, P Giddy, C Hitchcock. Source: Geoff Smith Archive



Geoff Smith's Hi-Tone Trio provided top entertainment for dinner and dances. Source: Geoff Smith Archive

By 1973 the Victorian College of the Arts opened, providing a larger graduate pool from which to draw. However, many of these graduates were more interested in teaching one-on-one lessons rather than larger groups. In this state education program, students were taught in large groups of around twenty as 'no government could afford individual lessons'.

We can see in the articles below what sort of support Jim Allen and the Soldiers' Band were giving to this new league of up-and-coming players within the first year of the program's introduction:



PLANNING FOR BAND CONTEST

Music teachers at Ballarat schools met with the secretary of the Ballarat Soldiers' Memorial Band, Mr Jim Allan, left, yesterday to discuss final arrangements for the band contest for local schools which will be held over a two-day period next month. The band is promoting the contest, which it hopes will become an annual event, to encourage young musicians to join local bands. With Mr Allan are, from left, Brother Ring, Messrs Norm Newey, Geoff Smith and Frank Rollard.

25 July 1970, 'Planning for Band Contest', *The Courier*, Jim Allen, Brother Ring, Norm Newey, Geoff Smith, Frank Rollard. Source: Norm Newey Archive

Brass band contest For Ballarat schools

9 July 1970, 'Brass band contest for Ballarat schools', *The Courier*.

Source: E J (Mick) Smith Archive

A contest for the six Ballarat school brass bands will be held on Friday, September 25.

It will be the first contest for the school bands, which have been formed for just under 12 months.

The decision to hold the contest annually was made by the committee of the Ballarat Soldiers' Memorial Band this week.

The bands involved are Ballarat North and Sebastopol Technical Schools, Ballarat and Ballarat East High Schools, St. Patrick's College and Ballarat College.

The school bands were introduced by the Education Department about 12 months ago following pressure from the Victorian Bands League, the controlling authority of brass bands.

Hymns only

The contest will be only for local schools this year but it is hoped to include other schools next year.

The Soldiers' Band will ask the Band League for an adjudicator for the contest.

The contest will be for solo instruments a number of their own choice and for quartettes, septettes and the whole band.

Because of the relative inexperience of the players, only hymns will be played in the contest, band secretary Mr J. N. Allen said yesterday.

"It is the intention of the band committee to award trophies and a perpetual shield as an incentive to the young players. We feel the young musicians will benefit greatly from this contest," Mr Allen said.

Next year it is hoped to include a set test selection number in the contest.



BAND CONTEST FOR BALLARAT SCHOOLS

A contest for Ballarat school bands will now be held over two days to allow for the large number competing. *Courier 17 September 1970*

The competition will be held next Thursday and Friday to allow for the 200 entrants.

The competition is being promoted by the Ballarat Soldiers' Memorial Band under the patronage of the Victorian Band League.

Mr Alan Trayes, of Melbourne, will be the adjudicator. Mr Trayes is an outstanding soprano cornet player who has had many wins at the Royal South Street Competitions.

He has been a very successful conductor and has conducted the Kew and Mordialloc Bands in recent times.

The competition, which will be held in the Ballarat East High School Assembly Hall, will be divided into solo, duet, quartet, septet and ensemble sections.

It will be the first competition for the members of the school bands since their formation 12 months ago.

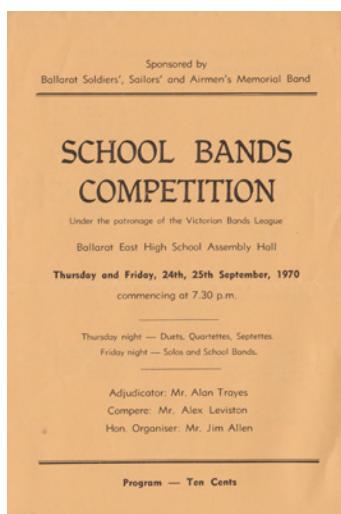
The school bands were formed last year by the Education Department as a result of pressure from the Victorian Bands League.

A wide range of trophies have been donated for the competition by local and district people.

It is hoped by members of the Soldiers' Memorial Band that the trophies will act as an incentive for the young players.

"We feel that the young musicians will benefit greatly from this contest," said band secretary, Mr J. N. Allen.

17 September 1970, 'Band Contest for Ballarat Schools', *The Courier*, (L to R) Jim Allen, Frank James, Mick Smith, Bill Wilkinson. Source: E J (Mick) Smith Archive



Leaf through the program from the School Band Competition. Spot the first of the Ballarat woodwind players entering into band competitions.

24–25 September 1970, School Bands Competition program. Source: BCMB Archive





The 1970s

At a glance

A departure from the desire for regimental discipline and structure. Disco, *Star Wars*, the Sydney Opera House, Gay Mardi Gras and significant shifts in rights for women and minority groups follow the awakening of the 60s. At the beginning of the 70s, the last of the baby boom generation are now in high school with their long hair and sideburns and anti-Vietnam war protests.

Daddy Cool, Captain Matchbox and Black Feather play Ballarat. Sovereign Hill opens (1970), Ballarat Tramways closes (1971) and South Street, now *Royal*, celebrates its first centenary (1979). BTV-6 is hugely popular with one of its most successful programs being the *Six Tonight* variety show hosted by Fred Fargher (son of Bill Fargher from the Soldiers' Band), which runs for thirteen years from 1972.

This decade also sees the last quickstep competition in 1978 held at Royal South Street, due to lack of interest by spectators, the same year the first Gay Mardi Gras is held in Sydney. The quickstep is to be replaced briefly by street marches and parades.

While girls who graduate in the early 70s could expect to have a career, choices are limited. Joanne Elliot (now Valentine) 1972 School Captain, Ballarat High School, remembers, 'We had no fear and a lot of hope'. (Class of '72: 'Living in the 1970s revisited', *The Courier*, 2003).

The Whitlam Government works hard on social reform and rights and protection for minority and underprivileged groups, the abolition of university fees, and cessation of compulsory national service. Utzon's iconic Sydney Opera House is opened by Queen Elizabeth II. The first Vietnamese asylum seekers arrive by boat off Darwin. Greer's *The Female Eunuch* hits bookshops and bedside tables. The Aboriginal flag is designed.

Australia experiences a recession and heavy industry is hit in Ballarat, which has a knock-on effect on population over the next twenty years. From a population of just under 40,000 in 1971, by 1976 Ballarat loses 5000 people. Population does not pick up again until the 90s.

In Ballarat, the first female mayor is elected, former Lady Mayoress Jessie Scott, in 1976. (Since then mayors have included Wanda Chapman, Vashti Lloyd, Judy Verlin and Samantha McIntosh.)

The people of Australia make an important musical decision in 1977. The results of a national poll determine which of these songs should be the national anthem and places them in order: *Advance Australia Fair*, *Waltzing Matilda*, *God Save the Queen*, *Song of Australia*.

The band in the 1970s



1970, Soldiers' Band, South Street. Source: BMCB Archive

After the band's successes of the previous two decades, big shifts were about to occur. These were largely influenced by lack and loss of options combined with new opportunities. The following factors played significant roles in the irreversible changes that occurred in the Soldiers' Band over the next two decades: music education policy reform in secondary schools, new roles and opportunities for women, losses to regional heavy industry, economic downturn and transfer of labour, mass media bringing entertainment home and lack of local tertiary options. We will hear about how each of these influences played out in the band, almost crippling it in the 70s and reviving it in the 80s – leading it to be the thriving band it is today.

But first, the last words from the letter containing the handwritten history from Bill Wilkinson:

In September of 1970 the Band suffered a big loss in the death of their President Councillor W.E. Roff C.B.E. He had served the City of Ballarat as their Mayor twice; he was a man of exceptional



ability as a leader and kept the Band together in harmony by his tact and on the move forward by his drive; he was responsible for the purchase of the site for the Bandroom, and the erection of the present building. He was president of the Band for 27 years.

Cr Bill Roff's contribution cannot be underestimated. Combined with the cultural shifts that worked against the band in the 70s, Bill Roff's death was a significant blow which contributed to the band's loss in momentum. With his dual roles of president of the band for almost thirty years, and Ballarat City Councillor, he provided tireless support.

It is only with the support of people like Bill Roff that the band had survived (and thrived) up until now.

In his passing, Bill Roff missed: early 70s successes followed by mid-70s dwindling of numbers, the advent of brass banding women in Ballarat, the first non-brass instruments in the history of the band and the last strides of the quickstep.



Cr Bill Roff. Source: BMCB Archive

Early 70s successes



31 November 1971, 'Trophies presented to band' article, *The Courier*. Source: BMCB Archive



Under the continued leadership of Frank James, the band won the following:

1971 South Street 'B' Grade championship.



1971, Winners Victorian 'B' Grade Championships. Source: BMCB Archive

1972 Traralgon 'B' Grade Championship.



1972, Rehearsal time. Source: Geoff Smith Archive



1972, 3rd Place at the VBL Contest in Coburg.



1972, 'Just a Warm Up', 3rd Place VBL Contest Coburg. Source: Geoff Smith Archive

They went on to win the 1972 South Street 'B' Grade Australian Championships.



1972, South Street 'B' Grade Champions. Source: BMCB Archive



1972, 2nd Place 'B' Grade Quickstep South Street. Source: Geoff Smith Archive

Of course, there was much reason for celebration:



28 October 1972, 'Band trophy', *The Courier*. Source: Geoff Smith Archive



1972 saw Victoria hosting the National Titles Championships. At that time five states took it in turn to host and, when it was Victoria's turn, they were held in conjunction with the South Street Competitions.

Geoff Smith came first in the sacred solo competitions (Open) with *How great Thou Art*: 94 out of 100 points and in the Australasian Championship. The Judge's Award Sheet read:

This number is beautifully played, very good control. I am unable to fault the phrasing. Good cornet tone in evidence too. A beautiful rendition.

The dream of sons following their fathers into the band was still well and truly alive. Michael is wearing a tiny perfect replica version of the band uniform, handmade by his mother.



1973, Michael, Geoff Smith's son, at the quickstep competitions.
Source: Geoff Smith Archive

1972, Michael Smith, the band mascot with his mum, Vivienne. Source: Geoff Smith Archive

1970s playouts

The band was busy lending gravitas and celebration to many civic events.

The Begonia Festival was still a regular feature of the band's annual street marches:

As a prelude to the Begonia Festival Eve Ball, the Ballarat Soldiers' Memorial Band marched from the Town Hall to the Civic Hall where they played while guests entered the hall.

— *The Courier*, 1 March 1974

People still enjoyed the bands down at the gardens, just like in the old days. Well ... almost.

**Applause for
bands**

SIR — Please allow me space to express my thanks and appreciation to all concerned for a most enjoyable afternoon of band and massed bands music at the gardens recently.

It is ages since I've heard the large crowd that was present applauding for more at the conclusion of the program, a sure indication of a well received program. If a suggestion could be made, I feel that a few popular old hymns could be included in the next concert.

— "OLD BANDSMAN."

March 1974, 'Applause for bands',
The Courier. Source: E J (Mick) Smith Archive



The following month, April 1974, the band was represented in the Australian Championships in Hobart, Tasmania. Not everyone wanted to go, so the full band did not compete. Instead, a handful of the members flew down together for the competitions.

We had two septets and three quartets and won everything we entered!

– Jim Allen, who competed in the septet and took some solos while on tour.



1974, Australian Championships, Hobart, Tasmania. Source: BMCB Archive

Because I was a carpenter at the time, my boss said he could get all the photos in one frame. He gave the carpenter his instructions and he created a multiple photo frame to commemorate the event.

– Jim Allen

Cathi Smith was a small child at the time and still remembers the constant rehearsals in the lead-up to competitions and special performances:

I grew up with brass quintets, quartets or sections from the Soldiers' band rehearsing in our lounge room when we were in a tiny house. So they were my lullabies.

– Cathi Smith



Cathi and her father Geoff Smith.
Source: Geoff Smith Archive



Ted Lewis would come over, Dennis Hawkes, John Russell, rehearsing for their trip to Tasmania, playing in the Nationals. A Eupho player, Russel Jenkins, played with them and he would sometimes be involved with rehearsals as well. If it was a cornet section rehearsal then they would be going from 7 to 10 pm.

– Cathi Smith

One of the Tassie tour players was John Russell who joined the band in 1972. John was a top horn player from England who emigrated to Ballarat to join his family. Read more in the next section about John's impressions of the band, the trip to Tasmania, and find out what they played.

John also remembers 'Smithy' (Geoff Smith), inviting him in to help Maryborough Band out a couple of times during 1972–74 – including once in Tanunda playing *Ship Builder*.

While the start of the 70s were still buoyant times for the band, it was not long before the tide turned. Not only had the band lost Bill Roff, they were just about to lose their longstanding MD, Frank James, who saw them through their 60s 'A' Grade years.

1974: Frank James retires

Frank James had been the bandmaster of the Soldiers' Band since 1960. In that time, the band had their greatest competition successes and were playing at the highest sustained standard in their history. This was due to Frank's musical abilities along with his unique methods for rallying the troops for band practice and keeping attendance and practice up. Frank's successes with the band were also built on the strong foundation of dedicated junior band players from the 50s.

Let's take a few moments to pay tribute to Frank James:

Frank's Farewell

Ballarat's brass bands will suffer a big loss in a few months when local shops and factories inspector, Frank James, retires and moves to sunny Queensland.

Frank James played a big part in Ballarat Soldiers Band winning the B grade Australasian championships at Royal South Street a few weeks ago.

He first joined the Soldiers band when he was only 13 and became a cornet player.

After leaving Ballarat in 1938, he thought he had left brass bands for all time.

He was too busy playing in dance bands to ever think about returning to competition band work.

But in 1946 he went to Sale and was soon in the local brass band. Two years later, he became bandmaster.

After another four years, the Maffra band was started, and he was asked to take a dual role as bandmaster of both bands.

Later he had to leave the Sale band to concentrate on his work at Maffra, and in 1960 he returned to Ballarat.

Although James likes and appreciates all kinds of music, brass bands seem to have a special importance to him.

It seemed natural that he would become a bandsman because his father played a trombone in the Ararat band.

Winning the B grade championship had a special importance to Frank James, because he was mainly responsible for the band filling its ranks with youngsters a couple of years

ago.

And it was he who moulded the young bandmen into a championship combination.

The win goes back to 1970 when the City Council supplied the band with new instruments valued around \$7000.

This gave the band the kick-on it needed, with plenty of old instruments for training the young bandmen.

As James willingly admits, no band would be able to raise \$7000 "in a million years".

James has left the band a great legacy, with 38 of the 42 members having an average age of about 20. He knows that his successor will be able to come into a well established band that could soon rise from B grade into the A grade ranks.

But there is little doubt that the band will continue improving for at least the next one to two years and eventually become an A grade band.

In his years as a bandsman, James has had many thrills, but none like the South Street win.

He knew before the contests that only a top class band would be able to beat his own.

People close to Frank James know his three great loves in life are his work, home and band.

So they are already betting that some band in Queensland is about to recruit a likely bandmaster.

Among the members of the band is Geoff Smith, who was successful in the Sacred Solo at South Street.

Geoff is the deputy bandmaster of the Soldiers Band.

Back Row: S. Donohue, C. Bodey, D. Smith, K. Barracough, D. Hawkes, B. C. Smith, C. Russell, R. May, R. Chalk, K. Newey, J. Wilson, J. Cannon, R. Oldman, C. Ross, W. Judge, R. Price, W. Webster, K. Bell, S. Maxwell, G. James, P. Brierley, E. Judge, C. Fibby, R. Gray, A. Fitzpatrick, C. Cockerell, A. Whiting. Front: J. Allan (Sec.), W. Locke, B. Gray, R. Secombe, P. Forrester, F. James (Bandmaster), A. McGregor (D.M.), W. Wilkinson (Pres.), P. Gray, K. Cannon, L. Garrett, A. Ross.




FRANK JAMES

1972, 'Frank's Farewell'.
Source: Geoff Smith Archive

MASSED BANDS
Sunday, Dec. 3rd.

CRESWICK

STREET MARCH
RECITAL
NOVELTY EVENTS
To Support
Creswick Band Uniform Fund
CONDUCTED BY CRESWICK APEX CLUB.



Frank James with Soldiers' Band highlights during his career as bandmaster, 1960 – 1974. Source: BMCB Archive

Although Frank was set to retire in 1973, he didn't leave until mid-1974, when he handed the baton to Norm Litt.

On 4 June 1974 it was written in the minutes:

F James reported on Band going quite well. Mr Litt should have quite a good Band when he takes over. Also that one or two players need a reminder regarding practice.

F James spoke of the wonderful time he has had over the past fourteen years with the Band and he thanked the Committee for giving him their full support over the years. He also thanked the Committee for the wealth of experience he had got Conducting the Band which in turn had led to him being a registered adjudicator with the V.B.L. He wished the Committee and the Band all the success in the future and he was sure the Band would go on to better things under Mr Litt.'

Norman Joseph Litt born in Stawell, 1910 was an ex-RAAF officer.

A couple of weeks later, Geoff Smith stood down as deputy bandmaster due to his appointment as manager of the Ballarat scrap metal company. As with many of the jobs in Ballarat at the time, this involved heavy physical labour. His daughter Cathi still remembers accompanying her dad while he 'broke batteries with an axe or mattock on cold Saturday mornings'.



Dwindling numbers

Norm Litt took over, but not for long. On 14 August 1975 it is noted in the minutes:

Norm Litt reported on happenings of Band leading up to V.B.L. Contest, very poor rehearsals.
The final practice was the only full practice before Contest.

Apparently the band played well, considering, but Norm stated that 'attendance will have to improve 100% if Band is to come up to the standard for South Street. Otherwise he will have to look at his commitments closely'.

It seems that attendance did not pick up. Only eight people at rehearsal on Sunday 8 September and by 10 September Norm Litt had handed in his resignation.

It appears that Geoff Smith stepped in for the rest of 1974 until the new year when the bandmaster's position was advertised.

Bob Pattie remembers Norm Litt:

He was a professional trumpet player, a very good one, he played in the big dance orchestras. He ended up playing in Sydney and he played in the big bands in Melbourne as well. Big Band Jazz. He played with Jim Davidson and his ABC Dance Orchestra in the 30s. He was very well connected with musicians in Melbourne too.

Norm Litt appears on record, playing the *Dipsy Doodle* in June 1938 with Jim Davidson and His Dance Orchestra.

In his later years he drifted up here. He was living in a flat in Wendouree. He wasn't in the best of health when he was here. He was taking the Soldiers' Memorial band but he didn't take them for very long. His requirements were pretty strict, whenever the band were to play out I heard him actually say it, 'If I've got twenty players, I'll do it, if I haven't we won't be doing it.' He was conductor when they were struggling a bit for numbers I think. Then he was bandmaster at Ararat.

– Bob Pattie

What could have led to such a decline in numbers in the 70s?

Economic factors may have played a part in the declining numbers in the 70s. The Australian Government lifted import tariffs in 1973, so Australia was no longer protected from a globally competitive market. Ballarat heavy industrials including Bendex Mintex, Villiers, Rolson and Tippet, Myers, Ballarat Woolen Mills, M B Johns, Timkins, Morleys and Lucas, which had formed much of Ballarat's workforce were closing their industrial sites, and closing fast.

Labour transferred over time to the health, service and convenience food industries. McCain and Mars built factories, Sovereign Hill historical theme park opened its doors and mass aged care like Queen Elizabeth and the orphanages Nazareth Children's Home and Ballarat Children's home were de-institutionalised and care was dispersed into smaller facilities.

With no university for Ballarat yet, the high school graduates of the 70s and 80s were forced to seek tertiary education in Melbourne or Geelong. (Deakin opened 1974.) Naturally, with more work prospects in a bigger metropolis, they often settled in Melbourne or further afield.



Band members who had been well-employed in manual labour had to find alternate employment. Some moved over to music education and the entertainment sector with pit orchestra and television performances. Others left town.

These changes affected a downturn in band numbers with current and potential members seeking to further their careers outside Ballarat throughout the 70s and 80s.

Key players get busy

We already know that Geoff Smith took over the management of the scrap metal yard at this time, but he was still playing with the band until the mid-70s and helping them out for South Street when needed, which he did in 1976.

Geoff also started teaching brass part time at Clarendon College and conducted the Soldiers' Band in between MDs. He was able to transfer his conducting skills, honed at the Soldiers' Band, to his new role as Director of Music at Ballarat College.

Some of the other key players from the previous decades including Norm Newey, Kevin Howell and Dennis Hawkes became otherwise engaged early on in the decade. Norm had a burgeoning professional career that took him to television broadcasts on top of his teaching.

I became very heavily involved with a local show band (Vibratones) and we performed on IMT (In Melbourne Tonight with Graham Kennedy and Bert Newton) and Ballarat TV during the 70s and that's when I gave this band away to play the trumpet with the Vibratones. We performed all over Victoria and we did twenty performances on IMT nationally.

– Norm Newey

Dennis Hawkes was drafted into the army during the Vietnam war. He wasn't the only one.

All the birth dates went into a barrel and as the dates dropped out you had to go in. And in those days it was two years but they brought it back to eighteen months.

You got asked what your skills were and I said, 'Bloody band, band, band!!' 'Coz I didn't want to do anything else. David Smith [Geoff Smith's brother, former Soldiers' band member], he'd been in and somebody else as well and they said, 'Just tell them you're in the band'.

Once you were in the band, it was just like a day job. You'd rehearse new numbers, somebody would have a garden party, you'd play at the races, you'd play at the matron's garden party. You had a March Out Parade every Monday morning, so Friday was taken up with rehearsal with troops marching up and down on the parade ground with the band. Monday, you'd have a rehearsal with the troops and then they'd go and put all their spit and polish gear on and the mums and dads would come and watch them march around the square.

– Dennis Hawkes

Dennis' role at No. 1 Recruit Training Battalion until 1973 was getting troops ready to go across to Vietnam as well as different stations all around Australia.



When I found out that I had to go into the army and I found out that I could play music there, it was brilliant! To get into the band you had to be able to play four major and minor scales. Well I could do that. In the old hall I could do that and I could read music, just the same as everybody can now. That was an absolute bonus, an absolute bonus.

– Dennis Hawkes

Kevin Howell had been working in the UK for some time, but when he got back the numbers and energy were already low.

I went and joined the City Band after the demise due to lack of numbers here of the Soldiers' band. Bands go through this all the time.

– Kevin Howell

John Russell was offered a job through Wilf Dyason, teaching maths and music in Melbourne, so he too left the band.

Slowly though, new members who never before would have joined the band were doing so, and changing history.



Read about [John Russell's experience](#).

Women enter the bandroom to play (not to deliver sandwiches)

As part of the statewide policy for secondary school students to learn instruments, more girls had access to more instruments. Their teachers were, as we heard in the previous chapter, often drawn from brass bands. So band members Norm Newey and Frank Rollard invited their students to come along to band practice. For the first time, women entered a brass bandroom in Ballarat, not carrying sandwiches, but instrument cases. Their own. And that wasn't all. When numbers were low, in the mid-70s, drummer Lindsay George suggested that his two young daughters play too. Only they didn't play brass.

With female players also came a wider range of instruments. After decades of missed opportunities for young players, the 70s brought new opportunities and irreversible change.

In 1971, Pam Forrester became the first girl in the history of the band (see previous 1971 band photo).

I just loved brass. I loved it because I was a marching girl as well. I marched with the highlanders and Lew Zilles was the drum major of the Highland Band ... he was a character!

Before I was allowed to join, a special meeting was held. I was the first female.

When asked what it was like in those initial years, Pam answered with one word: 'Scary'.

I remember when we were getting our uniforms, we were meant to be measured and they all wanted to measure my inside leg. When I first came, I was the only female, because my music teacher was Norm Newey, and that's how I came down here. Anyway, we had to have uniforms and we had to be measured and they all wanted to line up to measure me inside leg. And they had a Ladies Committee then and I wasn't allowed pants.



Being the only girl, Pam was a target for larrikinism:

There was that many second and third cornets and the boys, they were real awful to me ... if you got lost they'd point to where you were but, it wasn't where you were. They'd give you the wrong music.

– Pam Forrester

She remembers it being unnerving, 'Especially when they forgot I was in the room. And they'd tell dirty jokes and that'.

Pam was allowed on the Hobart trip in 1974, but only with her uncle's wife as chaperone.

We can get a sense of how intimidating it must have been and how determined young Pam was to persist within this male-centric culture. We know that there must have been a great level of support from early teachers such as Norm Newey and Frank Rollard who were comfortable with supporting the introduction of their young female students into the band.

By the mid-70s, Pam was joined by players Amanda Bentley and Leanne Pattie.

It was quite taboo for women to play brass instruments in many places and Victoria was certainly one of the last states where women joined brass bands. Cathi Smith remembers that when she was growing up 'girls didn't play brass instruments'. Her father, brass player and teacher, Geoff Smith, encouraged her to choose a woodwind instrument. When Cathi started playing she played flute, her sister played clarinet, but both her brothers were allowed to play brass instruments. All Cathi wanted to do, however, was to play brass.

This is of course, an uncomfortable history because as Jeanette Pattie, committee member from City Band, says about the era, 'women were nothings'. Ouch. She is not referring to women in banding, she is referring to women in society even as late as the 1970s.

In the City Band women entered in the latter part of the 70s and, unlike the Soldiers' Band, they were actually directed to wear pants. Jeanette remembers comments from some of the men, 'I don't mind, as long as I get to walk behind her'.

While it was not easy and sometimes scary for women to enter the bandroom for the first time as young players, it was also very exciting. These brass students didn't even think of the impact they were making, they were just playing their horns. And yes, they were the pioneers for modern banding in Ballarat.



1975, Soldiers' Band, South Street, Frank Rollard conducting. Source: BMCB Archive

Frank Rollard, a short stint

In the early months of 1975, Frank Rollard, once again took on the bandmastership.

1976, New world: (L to R) Dennis Hawkes, Ted Lewis, Roy Pike, Frank Rollard. Source: BMCB Archive

● BELOW: Members of the Ballarat Soldiers' Memorial Band had good reason to look pleased with themselves at the Civic Hall on Saturday. They were placed second in the hymn section of the B grade 'bands' competitions. Pictured from left, Dennis Hawk, Ted Lewis, Roy Pike and Frank Rollard.





Frank Rollard's commitment to banding was strong and he had been with the Soldiers' Band over many decades, playing, leading the junior band or conducting in the 50s. You will remember that Frank had been voluntarily training young musicians and encouraging them to come down to band practice since the 50s. Neil Glover was one such musician who happened to live next door to the Rollards in Ballarat North in the early 70s. Neil started playing at North Tech with Frank as his tutor:

There was a band at school, there were only about eight people in the band. Frank used to teach a lot of the school kids everywhere. It was hard for me because I couldn't wag me lesson, because I was right next door. I couldn't say I'm sick, coz he could look over the fence and say 'Oh there you are!' (lol).

– Neil Glover

Amanda Bentley, joined the band in 1976 because Frank Rollard was her trumpet teacher and band conductor at Ballarat East High. She reflects on how Frank Rollard impacted her as a musician:

Frank Rollard was very gregarious, musically brilliant, and was responsible for starting hundreds of young students on a lifetime of music. He served in WWII as an entertainer...he was a very good singer, too, and there are a lot of newspaper reports describing his voice. He was one of the best euphonium players in the country...I loved listening to him play. He'd often be practicing on the stage in the assembly hall at school and I'd just sit on the edge of the stage and take it all in... one of his favourites was *Che Gelida Manina* from *La Bohème*, which he always called *Your Tiny Mitt is Frozzed*. He smoked a pipe and the smell of pipe smoke is still a favourite of mine.

As a conductor he was very similar to Leonard Bernstein – very physical, not just hands. His whole body would transmit the energy of the music. I've worked with some of the finest conductors in the world, and I still see him as the first in a distinguished lineup. He was that good.

I know it broke his heart when I gave up the trumpet to concentrate on my singing. But he'd already given me a love and respect of music, a professional attitude that I still carry with me, and a belief in myself as a woman in a male-dominated arena.

– Amanda Bentley

Frank took over the band the same year his wife died and sadly his tenure was not a smooth one.

By mid-1976, tensions had arisen and in September Frank resigned as bandmaster, but continued as a playing member of the band.

And so ended the era of the three Franks: Frank Wright, Frank Rollard and Frank James.

Jim Allen stood in, then out



1975, Victorian Champion Brass Quartette, Royal South Street competitions. Source: Geoff Smith Archive

As was the case several times over the years when there was an abrupt resignation from an MD, one of the experienced players generously took up the baton to keep the band going. A matter of necessity rather than choice perhaps; Jim Allen, a much-respected long-standing fellow bandsman, had no particular aspiration to be the band leader.

Jim had played with the band since the 40s and in September 1976 Jim was acting head covering for the loss of Frank as bandmaster. By the start of the following year Jim took on the bandmaster's role. By November 1978 Jim resigned but held over resignation 'til Christmas to help the band out. He carried on, however until mid-1979.

During his last duties as bandmaster, he lead the band in the annual playout for the Eureka Stockade and at the opening of the Gold Museum, Sovereign Hill.

The minutes of 5 Dec 1978 report:

Bandmaster congratulated on choice of music and control of the Band in General.

Band member Hugh Craddock took over from mid-1979 until late 1980.

This transition occurred during the time when many of the more experienced brass players were thin on the ground and young players were learning more than just brass band instruments. Many stalwarts of the band continued on though, including Bill Wilkinson, Stef Mitaxa and Mick Smith. But this wasn't enough to keep the band going to the degree it needed to thrive, or even survive. The band was becoming endangered for lack of brass players.



Woodwinds walk in

As we heard, Lyndsay George who had been playing drums with the band since the 1930s, had two daughters who were keen to play. There was, of course, that one tiny hitch ...

Heather played clarinet and Karen played flute. They had been part of the band as family members, doing trips, seeing the band play and compete, waiting around in the bandroom for their dad to finish teaching the junior percussion and drum players. It was a small step then to take their instruments down and join in. Although, it wasn't easy being the only woodwind players in a brass band.

Heather remembers that she did not enjoy being there in the transition. 'You can't hear the clarinet, you can only hear the trumpets!' was a common complaint she had after band practice.

At this stage it was still a brass band playing brass band repertoire, and players like Heather and Karen were additional, playing trumpet parts. Heather was the first musician ever to play this role in the band: 'I was playing in it while it was a brass band'.

Karen, who joined after her sister, remembers: 'I was playing transposed trumpet parts on flute'.

That's when Karen decided to play percussion instead of flute in the band because she was too young to enjoy transposing the parts herself, which was what was required.

The very first public appearance of woodwind in the band is recorded in the minutes of 1 May 1979:

Bandmaster's report, a very good Band on Anzac Day 27 players. Miss George having her first play out with the Band.

This implies that they were stretching it to have under thirty players. And we know from the minutes that a special meeting was to be called to discuss the future of the band.

1 May 1979

Moved S Mitaxa Seconded W Wilkinson that the band add as from now on any other Instruments as required, the first instance woodwind then when composition of the Band attains that required, a Concert Band be formed. Carried.

By this time, the quickstep competition, which had long been an iconic South Street event, had been axed.



The final strides

The last quickstep competition at South Street was held in 1978, but the band had not placed in it since 1974.

I remember in the 60s and 70s TV took over as entertainment and bands were no longer very popular. I am sure that this would have affected the competitions.

– David Callinan, Royal South Street (2019)

People weren't turning up to it so it got the chop and they replaced it with the street march. That was still a comp.

– Bob Pattie, Ballarat City Municipal Brass Band

What was it like going from the quickstep to a street march only?

It was a bit better. I think the days when people would go and watch bands march were well and truly over! People have other things they do, go to the football and play sport, cars had a lot to do with it. In the early days of bands there was no other competing interest. All music was live, no recordings, no record players – there was radio, no this, no that. All the things that they didn't have in those days so the local band, the banjo player, or piano player or anybody who could play music live was in big demand.

But as time went on, you get movies and people have cars and they go away for holidays and they have sporting interests. At one stage the South Street Marching competition was attracting in Ballarat as many people as the football grand final. In the early days of the band competitions, I think around about 1912, the workers of Ballarat had the day off to go to the band competition.

But things change.

– Bob Pattie

The 70s turned out to be tumultuous years of transition for the band with the loss of many key long-serving members, Bandmaster Frank James, President Cr Bill Roff and key soloists. It was also a decade of irreversible change with a whole new gender of players joining and the opening of a new palette of sound with woodwinds entering what had been – for over fifty years – an all-brass domain. It is sobering to think that the band survived only by a reed's breadth to face the challenges and uplift of the 1980s.

With the passing of time and the conclusion of the all-brass, all-male era, it was time to honour past members of the Soldiers' Band:

Life members as listed in the notes for the AGM 30 April 1975:

A Rutherford	F Galvin
W Wilkinson	R Secombe
W Fargher	W Cockerill Jr
G Pearson	P James
S Wilson	S Mitaxa
A Wilson	J Allen
H Howell	F James



Members of the Ballarat Soldiers' Memorial Band, who won the septette section in the bands section of the Royal South Street competitions, took time out from playing on Saturday to visit the band's former secretary, Mr Harry Howell. Mr Howell was secretary from 1958 until 1969 before ill health forced him to retire. Pictured with him are, from left, John Russell, Warren Roberts, Jim Allen, Frank James, Adrian Fitzpatrick, Chris Philby, Kevin Dodson and Geoff Smith.

1973, Band members visit their much-respected former secretary Harry Howell, father of the eight Howell boys who formed the 1954 nucleus of the junior band. Source: Geoff Smith Archive

'Trombone Bill' gets a surprise

It's hard to know what gave 80-year-old bandsman Mr Bill Wilkinson a bigger thrill — receiving the British Empire Medal in the New Year Honors or last night's surprise given him by his fellow bandsmen.

Although Mr Wilkinson knew he was going to be awarded a BEM for his services to brass bands in Ballarat five weeks before the awards were announced, last night's party was a complete surprise.

His fellow bandsmen at the Ballarat Soldiers' Memorial Band, in conjunction with their first practice night for 1976, gave their only surviving foundation member a "congratulations" party which literally took the "wind from his sails."

So much so he was unable to blow his trombone which he has played in the band since 1917.

Spry and alert, Mr Wilkinson described his BEM as "a great surprise, but the hardest thing for me was to keep it under my hat."

"Even my daughter and son didn't know about it."

Past, present and future bandsmen attended the function.

Mr Wilkinson actually began playing in 1916 with Prouts Band when he was 20.

He transferred to the Ballarat City Band in 1918 but was back with the Soldiers' Band in 1919.

"I've been competing since 1921," he said.

"Bands were very big in the 1920s when he would

least three times a week.

"And if you didn't come to practice, competition to get into the band was so fierce, your place would soon be filled."

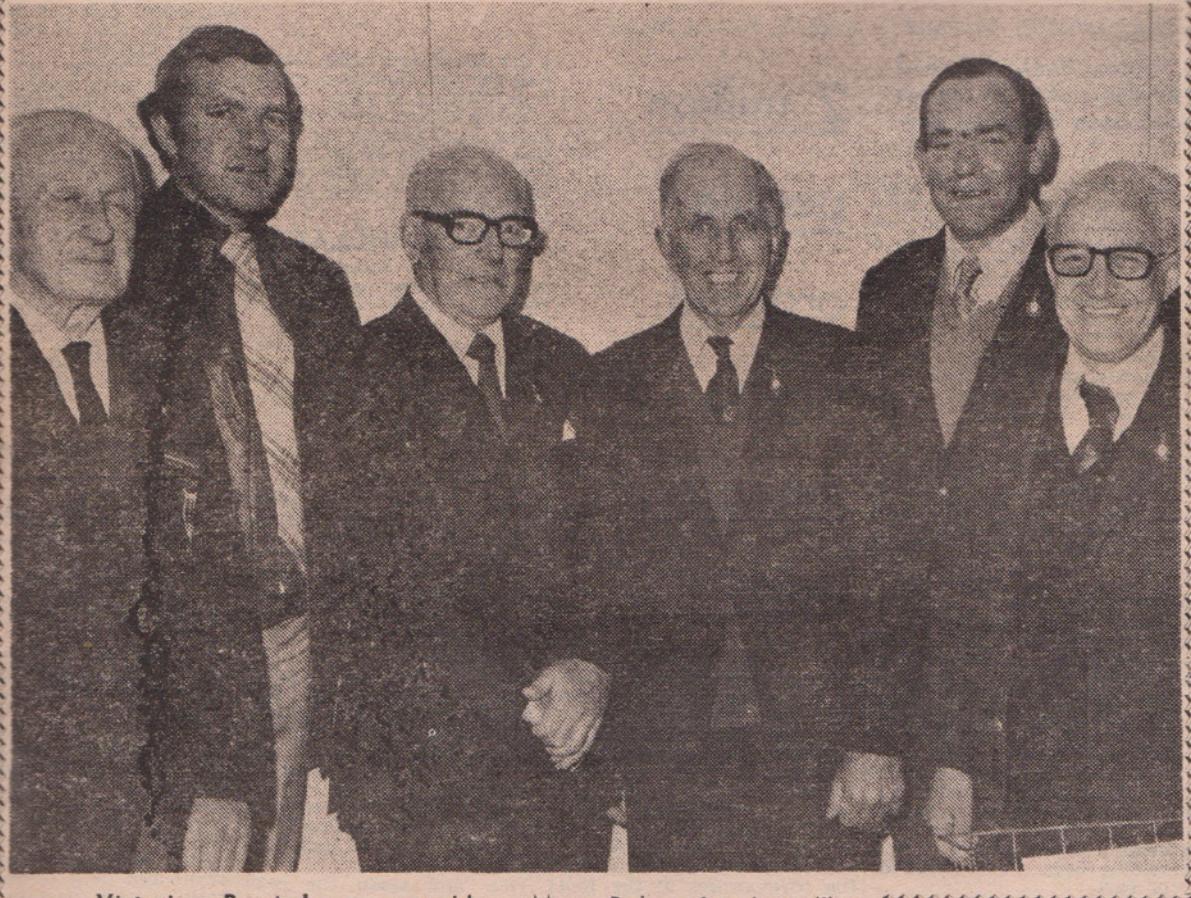
Mr Wilkinson has marched in every Begonia Festival procession since 1956 and says he will be there this year.

Any thoughts of retiring?

"Definitely not, I'd be lost without it," he says with a broad smile.

1976, "Trombone Bill" gets a surprise, *The Courier*.
Geoff Smith Archive

SEVEN BANDSMEN WITH 309 YEARS OF SERVICE



Victorian Band League president Mr A. Foley has presented seven badges of merit for service to the band movement to members of the Soldier's Memorial Band.

The merit badges were introduced by the VBL in the last few years.

One member, Mr W. Wilkinson, has worked for bands for 59 years, possibly a record time.

He has been a president of the Soldiers' Memorial Band and plays trombone.

Other merit badges presented went to Mr S. Mitaxa (49 years); bandmaster, Mr F. Rollard (47 years); Mr J. Allen (39 years); Mr E. Smith (55 years); Mr G. Smith (22 years); and Mr A. Mitchell (38 years).

Mr E. Smith also received a life membership, presented by the president, Mr S. Mitaxa.

A former member, now bandmaster at Beaufort,

Mr C. Filby, was also remembered with a presentation.

Mr Mitaxa was elected president of the band for the third term but leaves today for a six-month trip to Canada where he will attend the International world contest of bands at Toronto.

Other office-bearers elected were: Vice-president, W. Wilkinson, K. Bell, W. George, E. Lewis; secretary, J. Allen; assistant, R. Pike; treasurer, E. Smith; librarians, W. Lock, K. Bell; assistant, S. Mitaxa; auditor, W. Wilkinson; bandmaster, F. Rollard; assistants, J. Allen, J. Lowther; and drum major, G. Horwood.

Badges of merit, totalling service for 309 years, have been awarded to seven members of the Soldiers' Memorial Band. Band members to receive the badges were, from left, W. Wilkinson, G. Smith, E. Smith, S. Mitaxa, J. Allen and F. Rollard. The seventh member, A. Mitchell was absent.

9 May 1975, 'Seven Bands with 309 Years of Service', *The Courier*, Source: E J (Mick) Smith Archive



Stefano Mitaxa

(b. 1907 and d. 1986)

On 1st May 1962 Bill Fargher motioned that Stefano Mitaxa be made a life member for services rendered to the band for the past 30 years.

Stef joined the band in 1929 and served on the committee for many, many years.

He was second-generation Australian and his Greek grandfather had ventured to Ballarat during the Goldrush in 1851 to seek a better life.

– Noel Mitaxa

Stef was a hardworking man who survived the Depression collecting bits of rags and bottles and selling them.

He was twenty one or twenty two with all the hopes ahead of him and suddenly he couldn't get work as a builder. Then World War II rolled round. As a carpenter he was reserved occupation so he couldn't enlist. So he was building munitions factories.

– Noel Mitaxa

His son Noel remembers his dad's work ethic. He says that he sometimes worked so hard in the winter that his hands would split, but he kept on working. He was 'a bit of an improviser'. In one instance, when one of his braces buttons was lost, he used a nail instead so as not to be late for a medical appointment (to the great horror of his wife).

Stef's youngest son Noel remembers joining his family at many Soldiers' Band events in the 40s and 50s.

I remember Sundays in the Gardens, hearing the band play, the sense of peace and security. A touch of old England with Brass bands and people just relaxing under the trees.

I remember going out to Clunes to some sort of community event. The bands were invited to all sorts of places just to add a sense of community and history and enjoyment. South Street was a big feature each year with crowds at the Civic Hall and the City Oval. Tanunda in South Australia. Coburg. Launceston on the old ferry.



Early 1930s, photo of Soldiers' Band member Stef Mitaxa who continued on in the band into the 1970s. Source: BMCB Archive



I remember him saying how back in 1971 the Greys, a Regiment in the British Army was being disbanded. They had a version of *Amazing Grace* which was popular on the hit parade at the time with bagpipes. So they decided they'd try to do the piece and they invited half a dozen bagpipers into the room to practise with them. They had to ask all but one to stop because they were drowning everybody out. That was a rare moment of cooperation between highland bands and brass bands!

– Noel Mitaxa



Hear the Royal Scot Greys' stirring rendition of *Amazing Grace*, recorded before they amalgamated in 1971.

Noel went on to explain:

Brass bands march at 95 paces to the minute, highland bands are 88, and that's why they always separate them at any big procession. From a highland band player's perspective brass bands are marching too fast!

On hearing his dad play and band humour:

He was just one of the crew. And you'd hear them stirring each other about this note or that note or this bit of timing.

I do remember him telling me about the bus trips home from some band contests where they'd be liquifying their throats. Dad was a non-drinker and they'd trust him to lead them with the cornet for the songs. And just for fun, he'd lift it a semitone each verse and each new song. These guys were finding themselves as sopranos and wondering why – it was just his way of stirring!

Commenting on band humour, Noel aptly noted, 'it builds the team'.

In answer to the question of what he thought the band meant to his father, Noel replied:

It was the love of music, and teamwork, I never heard him say a bad word about any other band member. He just loved the music. He hated 'geetars', classical music was his strength.

Those times, there was much more of a community feel because nobody had radios, or very few people did. If you wanted music you had to go and make it, or listen to it live.

Winning the championships in the 60s was a very proud moment for Stef. In later years he moved to what he called the 'Frugal Horn' because he didn't have the lung control or the power that the cornet required.

He was on the committee during his time and he was very, very loyal to the band. I remember him saying when the stocks were a bit low on members he was going down to practise with the 'quartet'!

– Noel Mitaxa

December 1974.

To Victorian Bands League

as a bandleader of many years. I would like to apply for the long service medal.

My life with bands started in 1926, with the City of Ballarat Band under Percy Coard, the following year by Alf Revell, who took us, to 2 military camps as the band attached to the 8th Battalion Ballarat. We did a concert tour of Adelaide in 1928. In 1929 I transferred to the Ballarat, Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Band under Frank Wright. I have been with this band ever since - with the exception of a break during the war years.

I am at present serving a record term as President. and would be proud to wear the medal. yours forever a bandleader

Stefano. S. Mitaxa

1974, Stefano Mitaxa service medal letter. Source: BMCB Archive



DISCOVER MORE

Women in banding

Read about the fascinating counter culture of women in banding in *Early female brass bands in Australia: they were rare but they made their mark*, by writer and VBL archivist Jeremy de Korte.

Uncomfortable for whom?



7 March 1934, 'That Ladies' Band',
The Courier-Mail, Brisbane, QLD,
p 10. Source: Trove

Concert parties, 1970s style

At the end of this 1971 *Christmas messages from Vietnam* recording, we see the kind of concert parties that were being thrown in 1971 in Vietnam – a far cry from the concert parties of Alf Rowell, Bert Rasmussen or Frank Rollard's World War I or World War II army days.



The 1980s

At a glance

Bad hair, the AIDS epidemic, excessive overspending, more women in the workplace, environmental action, growing awareness for Indigenous rights and mixed feelings over the Bicentenary – 200 years of settlement or 200 years of oppression?

What starts out as a buoyant decade of hope, becomes entrepreneurship and ends in financial crisis.

Ballarat does not experience the same levels of economic lift. Instead, it is a time where many people leave the city to find work in Melbourne, and those who stay are provided with more music than ever with the State Department of Education instrumental and bands program in full swing.

The Australian population reaches to just under fifteen million, while Ballarat's population remains virtually static (since the 1850s gold rush).



The band in the 1980s

Without the further aid of Bill Wilkinson's history, which finished by 1970, this chapter opens with the 1981 annual report written by George Horwood, long-time drum major of the Soldiers' Band. Don't worry, we will be hearing a bit more about Bill Wilkinson – the man after whom the current bandroom is named – before we leave this decade.

Annual Report 5 April 1981

During the past year Band attendances has slowly built up to the stage where we now have 14 or 15 Regulars at practice. Whilst this is a big improvement on last year we still have a long way to go to attain the Bandmaster's delight of 30 plus.

Despite efforts by Stef Mitaxa and Bill Locke to gain new recruits, it seems that in these modern Times, the past of attracting new members to a Brass Band is a difficult and time consuming exercise.

With a wealth of Brass Instrumentalists in our Secondary Schools I again pose the Question where do these people go? Surely there must be some who want to further their musical talents, why not the Soldiers' Band?

Our small band of dedicated players with the assistance of players from Daylesford, Creswick, Beaufort and City Bands, have successfully fulfilled all commitments over the last 12 months and we look forward to bigger and better playouts in the future.

[In 1980 the band played at the 10th Anniversary celebrations of Sovereign Hill and joined in the Midlands Band Group massed bands display at Sovereign Hill.]

Towards the end of the year, on the resignation of Bandmaster Hugh Craddock, present Bandmaster Ted Lewis stepped into the breach and to you Ted we say a sincere thank you for the efficient and tactful manner you have carried out your duties since that time.

A word of thanks to all members of the Committee who have shouldered the wheel during the year particularly early in the year when we were in some financial trouble up to this time when as evidenced by the financial report the band is in a reasonably healthy situation.

Early in June 1980 negotiations were initiated by Mr R Cartledge Secretary for Covecrest Development Company for the sale of present Bandroom and Land in return for a new Band Room, on a site of our choice. After many meetings with Councilors Development etc agreement has been reached whereby the Band will receive a new Bandroom on the Mission Reserve site in Barkly St. If the final cost of this building is less than \$75 000 the amount remaining will be credited to our account. If however the cost exceeds this figure the excess amount will be borne by the Developer. The Contract for this transaction is held by Heinz & Gordon Honorary Solicitors for the Band.

On Feb 27th 1981 Bill Wilkinson MBE our oldest and an original member of the Band "Turned the First Sod" and on the 6th April 1981 construction has finally begun with a completion date for the 31st May.



The present Bandroom was purchased from The Commonwealth of Australia on the 9th November 1945 for the princely sum of £192 and was moved from Victoria Park to the present location at 1 Eastwood Street where it has been our home for 35 years.

In 1965 a small strip of land, to enable Anderson St to be constructed, was sold to the City Council for the sum of £150. I offer these figures as a comparison to what we are being offered today.

Finally thank you one and all for your support during the year.

G W Horwood (Pres.)

Where did the original bandroom end up? Some say in Humffray Street South; others say that it is where the pipe band currently rehearse in Brown Hill. Find out later in this chapter what happened to the bandroom when it left its home of 1 Eastwood Street, Ballarat East, in 1981.

Bill Wilkinson would have known the answer to where the bandroom ended up. As you will read from the news clippings about Bill Wilkinson, he was the only original member still playing in the band in the 80s.



[Read news clippings about Bill Wilkinson and the new band hall.](#)



The Mayor, Cr Roff, was acting in a dual role on Saturday when he congratulated bandsman Bill Wilkinson who has completed 50 years as a member of the Ballarat Soldiers' Memorial Band.

Cr Roff is also president of the band. At left is drum major, Mr A. McGregor.

25 October 1965, '50 Years a Bandsman', *The Courier*. Source: E J (Mick) Smith Archive

It was not just Bill Wilkinson who was recognised for great contributions to banding during this decade.

Gee. Herweed

W.A. Lecke

Ass/Sect. Mrs. D. Brittain,
2 Harbour Drive,
Sebastopol. 3356

16th February, 1980

Mr. A. Bowden,
Secretary, V.B.L;
P.O. Box 77
North Brighton 3186

Dear Mr. Bowden,

Re Badge of Merit.

We submit for your approval, Mr. Bill Lecke and Mrs. Beatrice Hawkes as worthy recipients for the 1980 Badge of Merit.

In requesting this award for Mr. Bill Lecke we ask that it be granted under rule 23 (g). Set out below is a short summary of the background of each of these members.

Application for Mrs. Beatrice Hawkes.

Mrs. Hawkes has been a non-playing member of the Ladies Committee for 18 years, giving her support and help continuously.

Application under Rule 23 (g) for Mr. Bill Lecke.

Bill commenced under Bert Rasmussen at Kyneton around 1928.

Joined A.I.F. 1939 to 1945. Army Band 2½ years.

Late 1946 returned to Kyneton Band then transferred to Creswick under Harry Felstead, 1952.

Joined Soldiers Band around 1974 under Frank James.

Please find enclosed cheque for \$6.00 to cover the cost of these two badges. Hoping this meets with your approval.

Yours faithfully,

.....
Assistant Secretary

16 February 1980, VBL Badge of Merit request letter, Hawkes and Locke. Source: BMCB Archive



See a photo of Hawkes and Locke receiving their medals.



Tragedy hits the band hard

Pam Clark remembers:

Creswick Band used to practise on a Tuesday night and Soldiers' was the Wednesday. I walked into the bandroom on the Wednesday and it was just different.

– Pam Clark

Bill Locke, central personality in both bands, had left band practice on Tuesday night in Creswick and was killed when a horse jumped out at Woodmans Hill onto the car in which Bill and his fellow bandsman Norm Brown were driving.

Bill was an Englishman who had moved to Australia in his younger years and had made banding a big part of his life. He was sixty five years old when he died suddenly in November 1983. According to Soldiers' Band council member Bryan Crebbin, he had been a livewire in the band:

He took everything quite seriously but he was larger than life, you never knew what Bill would come out with. He'd come out with some outrageous stuff. People would have a laugh. He loved his music. It was a great outlet for him: two bands, Memorial and Creswick.

– Bryan Crebbin

Norm Brown who was driving the car when Bill Locke died was also a character. He was the entertainer at Sovereign Hill for many years and his entertaining skills were not spared in the bandroom:

He was good with the money tricks: it'd be behind your ear, and then it'd be there ... and he used to bring a dog, he had dogs he trained. Play dead, roll over.

– Pam Clark

It took everyone a long time to get over the emotional impact of the accident, and Norm Brown struggled.

With the tragedy of this loss, and others leaving to work and study in Melbourne, the numbers dropped off significantly. The band was not looking, sounding or feeling very strong.

With brand new facilities and a whole lot of excitement, it was time to rebuild. But how? Brass banding was in decline while school kids sported flutes, clarinets and saxophones.

Concert bands were already becoming the rage

Since the first three instrumental teachers were introduced in 1967, instrumental teaching in Victoria was taking root. Bruce Worland, Victorian State Education Music Inspector 1972 to 1984, said that 'by 1985/86 there were just over 150 instrumental staff across the high schools and technical colleges in Victoria'.



The 1980s was when Bruce Worland noticed a shift from the brass bands of the English military, mining and factory tradition, turning into the concert bands more influenced by American community music culture. This was the case not just for school bands, but for some community bands as well as military service bands.

Bruce describes concert bands:

When you add woodwind to a brass band you get a different tone colour, increased repertoire and more opportunities for more instrumentalists.

– Bruce Worland

Max Beeson, brass and concert band player with over eighty years' experience, describes a concert band as an 'orchestra without strings'. As a player who experienced the transition, he says, 'I didn't know any different. It's only the sound. Bass parts are all in bass clef and bass clef readers are pretty hard to find.' Which is why he was approached to play with the Ballarat Memorial Concert Band (BMCB) in the 1990s, as his navy training had put him in good stead for reading bass clef.

Ted Lewis' turnaround

Ted Lewis, long-time band member was Head of Music at Sebastopol Technical College (now Phoenix College) and Mount Clear Secondary College. Ted had played in bands for most of his life, having come up through the Salvation Army Band where it was free to learn. He set up Sebaclear in 1979: a concert band to cater for the two colleges and to give the students an opportunity to play their instruments and to compete.

He was in a perfect position to feed the Soldiers' Band with new members when he took over the directorship in 1980. Just as Alf Rowell had supplied the Ballarat City Band with his Orphanage Band and Pleasant Street Primary School Band players all those years ago. In order for Ted to do this though, the band would need to complete the fundamental shift that had been initiated by the introduction of woodwind by Lyndsay George's daughters Heather and Karen in the late 1970s.

Bryan Crebbin was the councilor assigned to the Soldiers' Band Committee who through his role as president, assisted the band from 1980 to around 1987/88. He remembers the dilemma of poor membership facing the band in the early 80s: 'The way it was there was no future, it would have folded.'

Bryan recalls of changing to concert band that 'the transition was very positive'. Ted was able to retain most of the brass players during the changeover, and simultaneously introduce a whole new set of young members to the band in order to rebuild it. Bryan remembers: 'They were quite pragmatic in that they probably saw they had no choice really. Great hall, no members!'

Unfortunately, Ted was not able to be interviewed for this history, because at the age of ninety years (2019) he experienced rapidly fading memory for everyday things and people due to serious illness. But even with this great difficulty in memory, he still remembered his days with the band. When asked by step daughter Cathi Smith if he was the first conductor



of the Memorial Concert Band he responded, 'Yes' and smiled. His wife, Vivienne, then added, 'I think that you could really say that he started it' to which Ted responded 'Well, it seemed like a good idea at the time!'.

Cathi then asked if he did it so that Soldiers' Band would continue and he said, 'Yes, concert bands were all the go and more instruments can play'.

Cathi wanted to know if it was any different from conducting a brass band and he shook his head and said that it was the 'same conducting any band, even the stage band [Sebaclear, now called Seb Big Band]'.

Those who wanted to play brass had the opportunity to go to Creswick, Beaufort or Ballarat City Band, so it was still an option to find a local brass band. Pam Clark who had played with the Soldiers' Band since the early 70s, found herself transferring skills:

I used to play the Eb tenor horn but you can't play that instrument in a concert band. Creswick band bought my instrument so I had to join Creswick Band to keep playing it, and change over to French Horn to continue with the Memorial band.

– Pam Clark



1983, Band photo. Source: BMCB Archive

Back Row: L Govan, ?, N Duke, J Lowther, ?, L George

3rd Row: John Walker?, C Johnson, N Glover, W Kneeshaw, Ian Bell, N Newey, L Adams,

2nd Row: P Clark, K Bell, S Walker, L Govan, M Lawson, D Moore, Z Beck, ? Butler

1st Row: ?, B Beck, T Lewis (MD), G Horwood (Drum Major), S Duke, W Locke, ? Butler



The concert band: it's a name changer

In 2005 the band wrote in its yearbook history:

The name was changed to the Ballarat Memorial Concert Band – firstly to honour the heritage of the band and secondly to show the band's commitment to keeping up with the times.

We know that the Ballarat Soldiers' Memorial Band didn't officially change names until 1987, but it was operating as a concert band for years prior to this registration. For instance, in the first page of the minutes book for 1985 it states:

... write a letter to council informing of the new name of the band called the *Ballarat Municipal Concert Band* and letter to V.B.L. seeking clarification in affiliation now that it is a concert band.

The 1983 band photo (shown previously), according to former band member Chris Johnson, is:

... perhaps one of the last times the band played as a brass band. It was some time in the mid 80s that the band transformed to Concert Band owing to a lack of membership. Ted came to the committee at the time and suggested that the band become a concert band and he would be able to fill the band room with students from Sebas Tech. The committee agreed and the next week thirty kids showed up. The rest was history.

– Chris Johnson

Kylie Turville who played clarinet and bass clarinet with the band from about 1983 to about 1987 was one of those Sebas. Tech students:

Ted Lewis, he just invited us along. He didn't invite everybody, he would pick people who were continuing on from year eight and doing AMEB. And then you'd go along Wednesday night. Dim Sims during break from the Chinese shop, that was great! I loved it, absolutely loved it.

Why? I think because you'd go along and you'd have your friends there but it was outside of school and you had friends that you wouldn't have met otherwise because they were from different schools. Also because it was away from school there was a little bit more freedom. And the music, there was nothing that was difficult and it was more about the enjoyment and the fun. Going to things like South Street was good because there was something to aim for.

And then things like playing in the mall at Christmas, I really enjoyed it. And Sebaclear almost went hand in hand with it.

– Kylie Turville

Kylie remembers that Sebas. Tech did not provide the students with a high school musical or school production so having this sort of musical outlet was very exciting.

What was Ted like as a bandmaster?

I remember Ted was pretty easy going. He never made a big issue of something going wrong. I think he created a bit of a fun.

– Bryan Crebbin

He was good, strict if you mucked around too much. I remember him as being a gentle man. He hardly yelled. Trips with him were really good. He was really quite approachable, quite chatty.

– Kylie Turville



He was always good, with the young people he was very good. He was into a bit more of the modern music too. A lot of the younger ones did [like that] because we didn't want to play all the old stuff and he would play a bit more of the modern stuff. More concert band-y and that was more in the transition from the old traditional brass marching band to the concert band. So that's when it started to change.'

– Neil Glover, who played through the change in band, having joined in 1970 and continued on into the mid-1990s

Neil mentioned that he did not mind transferring from cornet to trumpet; in the 80s, 'trumpets were cooler'.

This really opened up the repertoire beyond the brass band idiom and was not limited to brass band arrangements or particularly tied to the military tradition, but had a more contemporary focus that could draw more on the music of popular culture. Reflecting on the slump of the late 70s Neil Glover said:

There was a drop in public interest. It was just the music they were playing, even when I joined (1970) they were playing things from 1918 and 1920 and so on and then when Ted came in you were playing current things from musicals. Neil Diamond and music of the time as opposed to all these old hymns.

– Neil Glover

Ted, with his combination of approachability, achievable repertoire for young players and sense of fun and enjoyment in music built the band up into a fully fledged concert band.



1987, Ballarat Memorial Concert Band photo. Source: BMCB Archive



The Soldiers' Memorial Band music lives on

Did you know that the original repertoire is still being performed regularly?

This strange twist of fate occurred because of a gentleman by the name of Russ Clogan. Russ was a student of Alf Rowell's and early member of Ballarat Soldiers' Memorial Band. He left the band when he joined the forces in World War II (Pte Henry Russell Clogan 2/24 Infantry, Australian Army VX45638, 1939–44). In 1968–1973 he was MD of the Ballarat City Band, still playing with the Soldiers' Band occasionally.

In his later years, like Frank Rollard, Russ retired to Queensland. There he joined with seven other retired gentlemen to start Ye Olde Brass Band.

Ye Olde Brass Band was forming at the same time the Soldiers' Band was folding (as an all brass band). Not only instruments but also music was being sold. Russ came down to Ballarat and bought up the majority of the Soldiers' Band music, taking it back to his band to form part of their repertoire.

The band currently performs over 100 times a year at nursing homes, rehearsing on Wednesday afternoon forty eight weeks of the year.

Publicity officer and librarian, Ros Smalley, spent hours sifting through six filing cabinets of music to trace former Soldiers' Band repertoire. Among hundreds of pieces, she selected some Soldiers' Band favourites: *The Black and White Minstrels 1 & 2* (1963 & 1965 Arr: Edrich Siebert), *Rigaudon* (Joachim Raff), *Swedish Polka* (1956 Hugo Alfven) and *Pretty Little Busy Body* (1941 Al Lewis, Larry Stock & Vincent Rose Arr. Frank Denham).

Some of the music that was bought is charred and still smells of smoke from the Soldiers' Bandroom fire of 1939.

It's incredible to think that hundreds of people are still receiving so much enjoyment from the repertoire that the Soldiers' Band used to perform.

The aim of Ye Olde Brass is to bring a little enjoyment into the lives of the aged and infirm residents of nursing homes, retirement villages and Senior Citizen venues.

This is achieved through their music with mid-week daytime concerts. Initially the area was confined to the Redcliffe Peninsula but has now expanded to Beewah, Bribie Island, Caboolture and numerous northern Brisbane suburbs.

– Ye Olde Brass Band

The life of the brass band music continues through the incredible passion and skill of this Redcliffe band.

Some of the original Soldiers' Band music also ended up in Creswick Band and Ballarat City Band libraries and is still played locally.

LIVERPOOL BRASS BAND (& MILITARY) JOURNAL.

PUBLISHED BY WRIGHT & ROUND, 34, ERSKINE STREET, LIVERPOOL.

SOPRANO *Brass Band*

ANDANTE. "ROMANCE" ANTON RUBINSTEIN.

Andante.

1920

LIVERPOOL BRASS BAND (& MILITARY) JOURNAL.

PUBLISHED BY WRIGHT & ROUND, 34, ERSKINE STREET, LIVERPOOL.

SOLO CORNET Bb. BALLARAT SOLDIERS' BAND

ANDANTE. "ROMANCE" ANTON RUBINSTEIN.

Andante. $J = 66$

1920

1928-1933, original Soldiers' Band parts from Anton Rubinstein's Romance.

Source: Ros Smalley, Ye Olde Brass Band

LIVERPOOL BRASS BAND (& MILITARY) JOURNAL

PUBLISHED BY WRIGHT & ROUND, 34, ERSKINE STREET, LIVERPOOL.

SIDE DRUM.

ANDANTE.

“ROMANCE”

ANTON RUBINSTEIN.

Andante.

5 A 7 1 B 7

poco rall. a tempo

2 1 D 4

rall. a tempo rall. a tempo mf

2 1 2 2

poco rit. a tempo rit. ff a tempo ff p cresc.

1 2 2

f molto rit. a tempo rit. ff a tempo

1 4 2

rall. a tempo mf poco rit. p rit. ff a tempo

4 E 5

ff p cresc. f ff molto rit. a tempo

1920

Frank Wright

LIVERPOOL BRASS BAND (& MILITARY) JOURNAL.

PUBLISHED BY WRIGHT & ROUND, 34, ERSKINE STREET, LIVERPOOL.

BASS DRUM.

ANDANTE.

“ROMANCE”

ANTON RUBINSTEIN.

Andante.

5 A 7 1 B 7

poco a tempo rall.

2 1 D 4

rall. a tempo rall. a tempo mf

2

poco rit. a tempo rit. ff a tempo ff p cresc.

1 2 2

f molto rit. a tempo rit. ff a tempo

1 4 2

rall. mf poco rit. a tempo p rit. ff a tempo

4 E 4

ff p cresc. f ff molto rit. a tempo pp

1928–1933, original Soldiers' Band parts from Anton Rubinstein's *Romance*.

Source: Ros Smalley, Ye Olde Brass Band



DISCOVER MORE

Instrumental Links to the past

Sandra Pope discusses instrumentation used in Victorian Bands in the pre-1890 era in her thesis on the early years of the history of brass bands in Victoria 1890–1914. Interestingly, it wasn't all brass back in the day!

The period from 1890 to 1914 was particularly important in the development of the movement. Prior to this, band instrumentation varied considerably according to the availability of particular instruments. In addition to the usual brass band instruments, flutes, clarinets and piccolos were often included as well as other non-traditional brass band instruments, such as French horns, ophicleides, trumpets, bugles, and various types of basses or tubas. During the late 1890s the instrumentation became more standardized due to the influence of British immigrants who brought the prevailing trends to Australia. By 1900, with the establishment of the South Street Band Contest in Ballarat, the movement in Victoria was at its peak with almost every town boasting a band of some description. Melbourne and the larger regional towns had numerous bands.

– SANDRA POPE (M.Mus. Student) The University of Melbourne, October 2007, *Review – the Centre for Studies in Australian Music* ISSN 1443-9018 (https://finearts-music.unimelb.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/2331295/review-22.pdf)



Unknown vintage band photo found in BMCB archive box. Source: BMCB Archive



Band instrumentation: brass vs concert

Brass bands in Australia that follow the British band model exclude trumpets and French horns.

Standard instrumentation, brass

1 soprano cornet (E♭)	2 tenor trombones (B♭) – 1st, 2nd
9 cornets (B♭) –	1 bass trombone (B♭)
· front row: one principal cornet, three solo cornets	2 euphoniums (B♭)
· back row: one repiano cornet, two 2nd cornets, two 3rd cornets	2 E♭ basses, also known as E♭ tubas
1 flugelhorn (B♭)	2 BB♭ basses, also known as B♭ tubas
3 tenor horns (E♭) – solo, 1st, 2nd	2–4 percussion
2 baritone horns (B♭) – 1st, 2nd	

This represents 27–29 players; however, a band often has fewer members at any given time. Parts may be filled for concerts and contests by players brought in from other bands, commonly known as *deputising players* or *deps*. In competitions there are rules regarding number of deps, for example often limited to three.

Concert band instrumentation

Concert band instrumentation has changed over the last century and varies even today between pieces. Community bands often are not able to cover all parts, and this sometimes dictates which pieces they play. A concert band can function with as few as 20 players and can be as large as 80 or more players. A typical concert band is composed of the following instrumentation.

Woodwind

1 piccolo	Percussion 1–8 players
4–6 flutes – 1st 2nd	
1–2 oboes – 1st, 2nd	Non-pitched
1–2 bassoons – 1st, 2nd	bass drum, snare, cymbals, whole
4–12 clarinets in B♭ – 1st, 2nd, 3rd	drum kit, triangle, tambourine,
1–2 bass clarinets	congas, bongos, claves, sleigh bells,
2–4 alto saxophones – 1st, 2nd	slide whistle, vibraphone, maracas etc.
2 tenor saxophones	
1 baritone saxophone	

Brass

3–9 trumpets/cornets in B♭ – 1st,	Pitched
2nd, 3rd	vibraphone, marimba, xylophone,
2 tenor horns in E♭	glockenspiel, timpani
2–4 horns in F – 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th	
2–4 tenor trombones – 1st, 2nd	Other occasional instruments
1 bass trombone	synthesisers, piano, organ, string
1–2 euphoniums/baritone horns	bass, electric bass guitar, guitar
1–4 tubas	(electric, acoustic)



The mystery of the missing bandroom

By the end of the 1970s, the bandroom was in bad-enough shape and the membership, though small, was staunch enough to warrant a change of premises by the early 1980s when the demolition team were contracted to prepare the Eastwood site for a new shopping centre.



2019, Possum Pet Supplies situated on the Eastwood Street bandroom site. Source: Georgina Williams

For over thirty years the bandroom had been situated on the Yarrawee Creek on the Eastwood Street and Grenville Street block. By the 1970s it was nestled in among some houses, an expanse of grass, bordered by two roads and a single gas holder which was part of the gasworks across the creek (where the law courts currently stand). The bandroom was originally an army hut. But where did it go?

Some say it became the VCCC Clubhouse on Humffray Street South. Others say it was relocated for the use of the Highland Pipe Band, up behind the Brown Hill swimming pool. Even past members could not say for sure. Folklore, but no conclusive evidence, was pointing in the direction of the car club.

The mystery of where the bandroom ended up was solved on speaking to a gentleman by the name of Kevin Holloway who happens to be a car enthusiast. He witnessed the bandroom being cut in half, put on the back of a truck and delivered to its new home.

Kevin remembers when the band building came up for sale at the time the Eastwood Shopping Centre was being built. The car club put in a tender to buy the building and won it. These were very exciting times for the seventy-strong membership of the VCCC. Just like a band, they needed a regular place in which to meet, and the old bandroom was to become their new home. Since then, membership has grown considerably.



There was only one problem, according to Kevin: the bandroom was too long for their crown land site. So they cut six metres off the end and replaced it with a brick facade, 'to make it look more respectable', which also appeased the local residents.

Once in situ, Kevin remembers the car club enthusiasts and their friends digging the peers in and laying the foundations (in some cases on hands and knees) for the hut that first housed military personnel, then players and friends of the Soldiers' Band throughout the 50s, 60s and 70s.

Kevin also remembers something else about the building. It had what the Soldiers' Band referred to as 'the strong room'. This was a one-foot-thick solid brick and cement room, fully self-enclosed including ceiling and floor, installed by the band when they first took ownership of the building in the late 1940s. Why such a solid structure? Following the 1939 fire, band members wanted to ensure that they would never again lose their precious instruments or music. And strong it was; it took jack hammers, picks, shovels and brute force to remove it.

A headache for the jackhammers

A jackhammer rarely shows mercy.

However, two jackhammers and a compressor are facing strong resistance from the Soldiers Memorial Bandroom in Eastwood street.

As though it had a character, the bandroom seems determined to stay intact where it is, despite efforts by members of the Ballarat Vintage Car Club to break it down so

it can be moved.

When the bandsmen moved to the Len T. Fraser Reserve in Barkly street last month, the building was taken over by the Vintage Car Club.

Spokesman Mr Bill Pfeiffer said the club had been seeking clubrooms for some time but had been hindered by a lack of money.

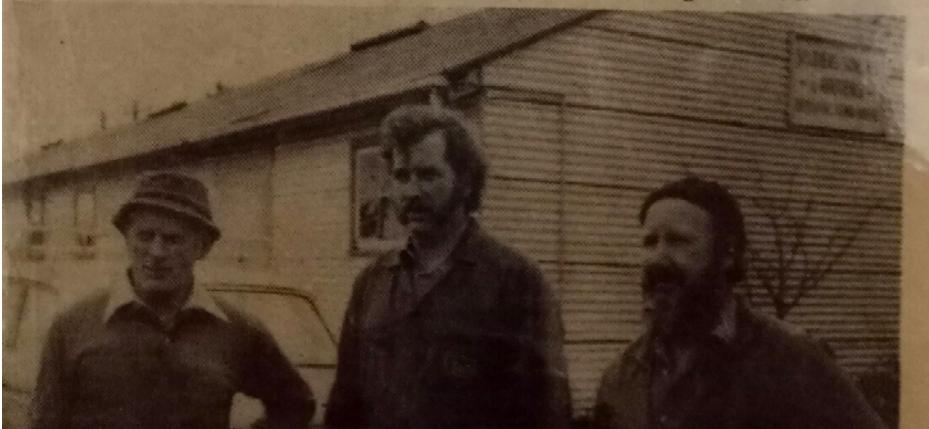
The club arranged several working bees to prepare the building to be

moved to a site in Humffray street south.

However, a strongroom used for storing instruments caused trouble for the workers.

The room had 30cm thick reinforced concrete walls which required two jackhammers and a compressor to move.

The bandsmen had the room made thick to protect against fire.



18 September 1981, *The Courier*, Ballarat. Source: Ballarat VCCC Club Library



Past member Dennis Hawkes recollects the Eastwood Street bandroom

The road is on roughly the same angle and position as it was then, the car park has been built and there have been big beams put across the creek to support the car park – that was still the open drain [Yarrowee Creek], right up to underneath the senior citizens, the grey building. There was a grassy area from the road up to the building. A footpath in front and there was the entry on Eastwood Street, through a gateway in the front fence. Other buildings on the Eastwood shopping centre site were houses. The end of the bandroom [now a brick wall on the car club building] was parallel to the street (Eastwood) not on an angle. The building was sited approximately five metres in from the fence.

Across the road used to be the old gasworks, where the law courts are now. The gas cylinders were over on the corner where the police building is.

They always rehearsed on Wednesday nights 8–10 pm and Sunday mornings too.

– Dennis Hawkes

For a young lad, carrying his musical instrument in his small hands and walking home with his parents from band practice, visceral memories of the amble home past the gasworks are equally strong:

I'd be carrying a cornet case and we'd walk home, mum and dad lived down in Skipton Street so we didn't have far to walk. Walking down there you'd look in the grates and see the blokes shovelling coal into the big burners in the gasworks there. And the smell, that bloody terrible gas smell, and they were in their blue singlets and all sweaty and you'd think, 'How the hell do you do it?... I don't want a job like that!' And you could look in the vents and see all the blokes working.

– Dennis Hawkes

Because of its location within the gasworks precinct, the bandroom looked out eastward onto an enormous gas cylinder pad, from which a gasometer telescopied in sections up to thirty feet in the air.

Band night was often a very social affair and in the 60s and 70s. A barrel of beer was brought in for Wednesday night and finished up after Sunday morning's practice. Let's just say that the tree directly outside the back door did not go for want of hydration of a Wednesday night.



Read Neil Glover's [funny story](#) from the old bandroom days.



1967, Ballarat Gasometers. Source: Federation University Object 09150 Vic Coll item #4 1967, Geoff Biddington



Mystery of the bandroom ... solved



1981, Bandroom prior to relocation. Source: VCCC library #0599 Donated by Graham Allun



Leaf through this pictorial history of the bandroom's November 1981 move with kind permission from the VCCC.



1981, Bandroom move. Source: VCCC library #0599 Donated by Graham Allun

And this is what the bandroom looks like almost 40 years on:



2019, VCCC Club (old bandroom), Humffray Street South, Ballarat. Source: Georgina Williams



And so the gathering of community continues:



Vintage and Car Club Ballarat members celebrating their first twenty-one years as a club and first six years in their new clubhouse. Source: *A History of the Vintage Classic Car Club Ballarat*, Editor: Norm Darwin, VCCC library



DISCOVER MORE

What was the hut used for before it was a bandroom?

During World War II the military had huts stationed across Ballarat. One location was Ballarat Airport (Aerodrome) for the Empire Air Training Scheme No 1 Wireless Air Gunners School, the other was Victoria Park for convalescing servicemen during the war. (Read Jim Allen's account of band duties in the 1940s chapter.)

Neil Leckie, manager of the Ballarat Ranger Military Museum at the Barracks said that the museum itself is in one such military hut.

There is another in North Ballarat near the Golf House Hotel and one in South Ballarat on Learmonth Street. St James Catholic School in Sebas. has a bigger one, probably had been a soldiers 'Mess' or eating room!

–Neil Leckie

Jim Dennis from Ballarat City Band also remembers the diaspora of huts:

If you look around the country you will see a lot of RAAF huts. They sold them all off to different communities, Haddon got one, I remember as a kid in the cricket club, we got one, a lot of farmers bought them.

– Jim Dennis

Read this 1946 article [Convalescent Depot At Ballarat Closing](#) about what the Soldiers' bandroom was used for during war time.



Peg Glover never blew her horn

For a community band to survive and thrive, not only does it take a tremendous effort and commitment from all the players, the musical directors – and in the case of a brass band, drum majors – but there are also so many other roles that people play.

Think of all the committee members, secretaries, treasurers, presidents, librarians, fundraisers and publicity officers over the past 100 years. There are those who set up and packed up the bandroom for rehearsals and concerts, those who baked for the suppers (and still do!), those who set up the formal AGM dinners, arranged the flowers and washed the uniforms. Think about all the councillors who sat on the committee and members of the Ladies' Auxiliary who worked tirelessly in days gone by to ensure that the band functioned well. Each role as important as the next for a band to survive the year – let alone 100.

We understand from Bill Wilkinson's history how important a driving force President Cr Roff was – how deeply felt was his loss in 1970.

Peg Glover was a member of the band community who never picked up an instrument, yet her support of the band was loyal, consistent and incredibly generous for thirty five years or more. What did Peg do?

Peg started with the band at the end of the 1960s with her husband Les. Les attended to the needs of the hall, fixing things whenever needed, ensuring the hall was locked and secure after band practice. Although Les never played in the band, he took on this role because he enjoyed the social aspect of being part of the band community.

At the time, both their daughters were marching girls. Peg performed voluntary support for the marching troupe – making sure all the dresses were clean and ironed, all the boots perfectly polished. With both the troupes including the seniors and the juniors there were about sixty members. That's a lot of boots!

But marching girl troupes fell out of popularity. According to Les it was when 'all the new regulations came in, lengths of skirts and so on, it wasn't popular with the younger ones'.



Photo of Les and Peg Glover on their wedding day.

Source: Les Glover



So Peg, who had more than enough energy to put into a community group was looking for a new way to contribute. Neil Glover: 'When it all fizzed, the band then became Mum's focus.'

Let's take a moment to appreciate the energy of this dynamic woman:

She was a cleaning freak. She just loved cleaning. She worked at North Tech as a cleaner in the home economics wing. They were the days you had to fight the buffer to operate it, that's what did her hips in. She'd clean all day at work and then go and clean the bandroom.

– Neil Glover

She knew she was making a difference. Peg was permanent hall manager as well as secretary of the band from time to time. Together she and Les took care of the buildings.

Les recalled for us a couple of entertaining stories about the old tin hut bandroom in Eastwood Street:

The Buffalo Lodge used to use it for their meetings and we couldn't work out how the floor was starting to go like that [hand motions undulation]. We found out that they had a 'barrel on' at the meeting and how they cleaned the hall up was that one board would lift up and they'd get the fire hose in and hose the floor!

– Les Glover

Neil added: 'And that's why it was so cold because under the boards was so wet all the time.'

Les: 'It was all rotten. They used to use it once a month.'

In the 1970s minutes it is noted that it was costing too much to have the Lodge in because the hirers regularly left the blowers on to dry the floor.

Les remembers a story about Bill Wilkinson and the old hall, too. Bill, who had lived through the Great Depression and was by then in his senior years, told Les:

I was going past the Bandroom one day and I saw the light on over the main door outside.
I thought, that's using a lot of power. So I got a stick and broke the globe!

– Bill Wilkinson

That wasn't the only thing that was broken; when the band got their brand new bandroom on Len T Fraser Reserve, Peg raised funds for the band by hiring it out for parties, 21sts and wedding receptions. Peg always cleaned it before and afterwards, and Les repaired any damage. None of this was paid work. It was through this facility hire that the band derived most of its income for buying necessities such as chairs, music stands, music and specialist instruments.

Buying sets of music was a big expense of the band. That came from hiring the hall. Especially when Ted came along and he wanted the newer tunes, then we'd be buying the scores for this song and that song, so that cost a bit. Then a new drum set.

– Neil Glover



It was Peg and Les's commitment that kept the band going financially for many, many years.

Peg looked after the hall here. Kept us all on our tails, she knew a lot, she didn't play anything but her son played. She was the Hall Manager we called her. She'd come down Wednesdays and when we'd have meetings, anything that needed fixing, we'd get fixed and we were on top of it all the time. Not so much today. For years she did that.

She would keep it all clean, the toilets and buy stuff. We used to have working bees back then, I remember climbing up on the beams, cleaning them. Painting them.

—Pam Clark (nee Forrester)

Even after her son Neil left the band in the 1990s due to work commitments, Peg continued on attending to the needs of the band.

Here is a note from Brenda in the Newsletter 3 December 1997, Issue 5, which attests to just some of the labour Peg undertook:

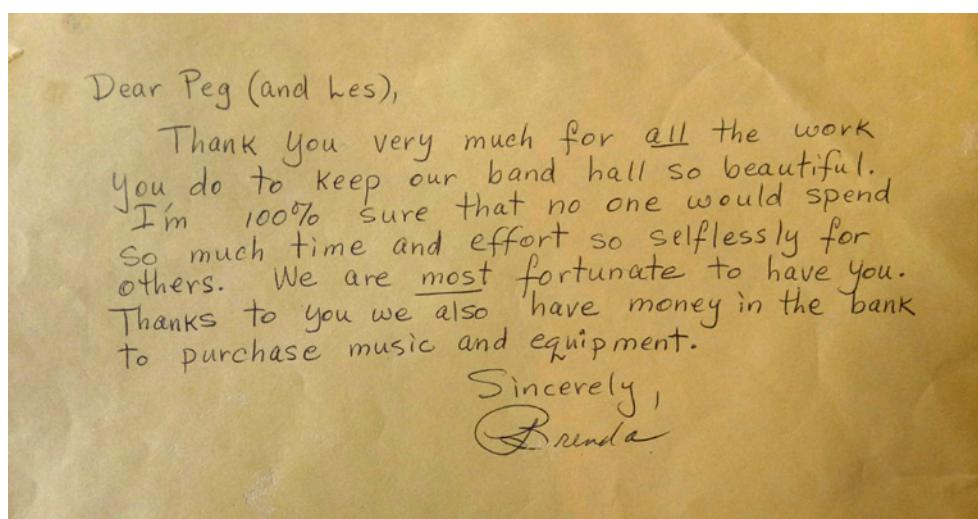
Players of instruments with water keys - especially lower brass! Please bring a towel along to rehearsal to save staining the floor. The hall manager spends many hours polishing out the water stains which you leave after every rehearsal.

Neil remembers:

Mum stayed there, cleaning, doing the teas even when I wasn't there anymore. She used to go by herself. It was a night out, she'd have a yak to people. It was something to do of a Wednesday night. She used to look after the hiring of the hall on the weekends, clean it before they'd hire it and clean it after they hired it. Waxed the floor until she couldn't do it anymore because her hip was playing up.

— Neil Glover

Bryan Crebbin, councillor and band president during the 1980s said, 'She did so much unsung work down there, through the good times, the bad times and the good times again', adding, 'That family's input into the band is significant'.



Letter from Brenda Beck (MD) to Peg and Les Glover. Source: Les Glover Archive



The 1990s

At a glance

The early 90s recession hangover, resulting from excessive 80s spending, slowly wears off by the mid-90s. After the sudden fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, rights and freedom pull focus for this decade.

Nelson Mandela is released and apartheid ends in South Africa. *The Native Title Act* for Aboriginal land rights is established. The *Good Friday Agreement* in Belfast is reached. These are all watershed moments for humanity.

Australia experiences its first national Sorry Day for the stolen generations, *Treaty* by Indigenous band Yothu Yindi makes the charts and Cathy Freeman wins gold in the Olympics in Canada carrying both the Australian and Aboriginal flag for her victory lap, televised worldwide.

Paul Keating becomes Prime Minister continuing on over a decade of Labor government and makes his mark with a push for a republic (and touching the Queen). A referendum is held but the status quo wins by 5% and the royals are retained for head of state.

In 1996 Liberals end a Labor run with John Howard the new Prime Minister who is to stay in power until the mid-2000s.

Australia joins the British and American forces in the Gulf War and later counters pro-Indonesian militia violence by leading intervention to help stabilise a newly independent East Timor.

Women enter military combat, become ordained and take on more leadership

positions. Joan Kirner is Australia's second and Victoria's first female premier and Dame Roma Mitchell becomes governor of South Australia, the first woman to hold a vice-regal office in Australia.

The ABC launches its twenty-four hour news radio service, and Australia is in the spotlight when Sydney wins the bid for the 2000 Olympics. *Babe*, *Strictly Ballroom*, *Muriel's Wedding* and *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* are international sensations.

We say goodbye to one and two cent coins and hello to the new face of telecommunications: mobile phones and the world wide web. This international e-comms connection is fast growing and the new millennium is celebrated with cautiousness due to widespread fears about a millennium Y2K bug jeopardising the internet's stability. By January 2000, these fears prove unfounded.

The University of Ballarat (UB) is created under a five-year sponsorship from Melbourne University, and Ballarat experiences a 90s multi-genre bands explosion at venues including The Camp, Grainery Lane and the Bridge Hotel, as one of the knock-ons from the extensive music for schools program through the 70s and 80s.

The population of Australia climbs from 17 million to over 19 million by 2000.

In Ballarat we see the most dramatic population change since the 1850s with 34,501 people in 1991, over doubling to 76,336 in a five-year period by 1996.

The band in the 1990s



1997, Begonia Parade, BMCB are winners for Best Community Entry. Source: BMCB Archive

Ted Lewis continued on in his role as MD of the band until 1995.

Ted hands over the baton

After 15 years as conductor of the Ballarat Memorial Concert Band, Ted Lewis has handed over his baton to Ballarat musician Brenda Beck.

Mr Lewis has been a member of the band since 1967 and although he is retiring as conductor, he said he would remain as a playing member — mostly trombone — and as secretary/treasurer.

He said the band had been a concert band for about 13 years and before that it was a brass band, starting as the Ballarat Soldiers Memorial Band in 1919.

Mr Lewis said he recently retired from teaching at Sebastopol, Mt Clear and Ballarat Secondary Colleges and with that change of lifestyle he decided it was time to step down and give someone else a go.

He is also the founder and conductor of the 15-year-old Sebacular Band.

Ms Beck is a music major from Northern Michigan University in the USA and her principal instrument is the trumpet although she also plays bassoon and cello.

She has set up bands and was musical director in California, Michigan; Chiangmai, Thailand; Blackburn High School; Loreto College and Ballarat High School.



Musician Ted Lewis, left, hands over the conductorship of the Ballarat Memorial Concert Band to Brenda Beck and her assistant, year 12 student Martin Hemingway. Picture: LACHLAN BENCE

Ms Beck said Ballarat Memorial Concert Band provided a place for woodwind, brass, and percussion musicians to play, especially when they finished school.

"This is really a community organisation which fills a big niche for playing opportunity," Ms Beck said.

"We look at ourselves as a service to the community

because we will play for community functions as well as in competitions."

Ms Beck will be assisted by year 12 Ballarat High School student Martin Hemingway who successfully completed his Licentiate on alto saxophone, recently recorded the Glazounov Saxophone Concerto with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and is currently studying his Licentiate on trombone.

Ms Beck said Martin would work with the band mainly as a student conductor to add to his achievements as he would like to go into conducting.

Ms Beck said the band held rehearsals each Wednesday at Wilkinson Hall in Barkly St from 7.30 pm and people wanting more information about the band could contact her on 346549.

2 May 1995, 'Ted hands over the baton', *The Courier*. Source: Brenda Beck Archive



After he finished as bandmaster, Ted stayed on playing with the band for many years, took on responsibility of band president and filled in for Brenda on occasion when she was away.

Being the initiator and MD of Sebaclear Band since 1979 (which started with students from Sebastopol Tech and Mount Clear College), by 1995 Ted had already contributed a great deal to Ballarat's musical life.

Stepping down from his role as MD coincided with Ted's retirement from teaching at Mt Clear, Ballarat Secondary College and Sebastopol Tech. It seems that he was ready to pass the baton on to the next generation of musical leaders.

Brenda takes the baton

Brenda, who had been playing in Ballarat for some time in both the Soldiers' Band (in the 70s and early 80s) and the City Band with her daughters (assistant MD from 1989, MD from 92–93) had also been part of a critical influence on Australian banding.

But first a bit of background on this influential band leader.



Brenda Beck. Source: Brenda Beck Archive

Brenda hales from Michigan where temperatures can dip to twenty-five degrees Fahrenheit below zero. She grew up in a family that was no stranger to cutting holes through metre-thick ice to spear hunt fish and annual deer hunting trips.

Having played trumpet since she was eleven years old, Brenda went on to gain six years' high school band experience, became the Michigan State trumpet champion three times over and studied music theory and composition. She played solo trumpet in the University Band and Orchestra for three years and graduated with a Bachelor of Music Education from Northern Michigan University in 1961 – majoring in trumpet, minoring in bassoon and cello. Brenda also played trumpet and tenor saxophone in a dance band.



After teaching and conducting in America, Brenda's adventurous spirit and desire to escape the colds of Michigan motivated a move to Chiang Mai, Thailand. There she landed a job at Regina Coeli College which included leading a marching band.

Then she did something very unusual. She was asked to take an old elephant war song from the Thai Burma battle days, traditionally played on an oboe-like instrument (sounds like a bagpipe chanter) and arrange it for band. The war song sounded when the elephants charged in battle. Imagine the impact when Brenda's band marched in to the stadium at the Asian University Games, playing their national fight song. The arrangement was subsequently taken into Thai military and school bands.

After a few years working in Asia, Brenda moved back home to the USA only to find diminished job opportunities due to a glut of teachers at the close of the Vietnam war. Australia, on the other hand, was advertising for educators. Brenda took the challenge and moved to Melbourne in 1972, teaching music and forming the band at Blackburn High School.

This is where Brenda's influence on Australian banding began.

When I arrived in Australia I was qualified in both science and music and they said, you'll be doing music. So I said 'Okay'.

I got a job at Blackburn High and there was no band there at all. I said 'We're going to have a band.' And they said, 'Salvation Army here we come'. So I really introduced the concert band to Australia.

– Brenda Beck

At the time, as we know, secondary school students were being taught woodwind as well as brass instruments. North American music teachers, with their concert band knowhow, who joined the Australian education forces during that time, affected what happened next.

As we have noted earlier in this history, woodwind combined with brass was traditional military band instrumentation. The brass band came out of the British formalisation of banding by the upper middle to upper classes who wanted to manufacture intentional recreation for the lower classes in the 1800s. This sprouted workers' bands at factories, collieries, mills and foundries. Banding competitions brought with them formal rules homogenising both instrumentation and number of instruments in each section. The same uniformity occurred when South Street started banding competitions in Australia in 1901.

Jeremy de Korte, VBL archivist and band history blogger explains the history of concert bands in this way:

The instrumentation is based upon military bands of which the British military had lots of bands around the turn of last century that included woodwinds. If there was one composer to bring the concert/wind band out of the military it would have to be Gustav Holst when he wrote his First Suite in Eb. His music was not based on the style of marches and other music that was currently played by military bands, but was completely original. It took a while for this to catch on in Australia as we were still heavily biased to brass bands. ABC Military Band was one of the first true military concert bands in Australia.



The concert band is not really that distinct from early military bands in terms of instrumentation, only in name. In the late 1960s and early 1970s there was this push to introduce school music programs into state schools on a wide scale and an amount of American music educators were recruited. Blackburn High was one of the first to introduce a concert band to the music program, alongside McKinnon High School and several others – they were known as music specialist high schools. So in a sense what was introduced was a band of British origins that was adapted by America and again adapted for Australia.

The first community concert bands started appearing in Victoria around this time as well. Southern Area Concert Band [Melbourne] celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2021 having started in 1971 – there are a few community concert bands older than this.

The reason the community bands became large very quickly is because it was recognised that school instrumental music students would need an extension activity so the first community concert bands started out as extensions of clusters of schools. Then the students got older so the bands transformed into community bands.

– Jeremy de Korte, VBL

When former Soldiers' Band member John Russell joined Wilf Dyason at Melbourne Boys High School in 1975 to lead the Military Cadet Band, they already had an eighty-member-strong concert band up and running. Bruce Worland, who became the Victorian schools music inspector was teaching music at Melbourne High at the time and ran an inter-school concert band. This was hosted at Melbourne Boys High School, just as Ted had started the inter-school stage band, Sebacular, in 1979.

After introducing concert banding – American style – to Victoria through Blackburn High, Brenda moved to the central goldfields in 1974, having fallen in love with Ballarat on a weekend driving trip.

Brenda taught music and science at Loreto College and formed the Loreto College all-girls band in 1975. In 1978 Brenda conducted the Ladies State Band at the Sidney Myer Music Bowl. And in 1982–1984 she taught at Ballarat High School, reforming the High School Band, which won the State VBL Championships in 1984.

Brenda's influence was deepened when she revised the secondary instrumentation learning system at Ballarat High. Her program affected the strengthening and broadening of music development in young people in the 80s in Ballarat and beyond. All year seven students were engaged in trying all the instruments during their music lessons. Each student then elected their top three instruments, from which the teachers chose, based on each child's aptitude, the best one for them to learn. The method was so successful that it has been running ever since with only a few modifications and has been adopted by numerous other schools in Ballarat and Melbourne.

Heather George, former Soldiers' band member and first woodwind player in the band, took on part of Brenda's role at Ballarat High School after Brenda left due to ill health. Heather gives us an insight into how the program works:

This has been going for thirty five years, modified to run at night. You get the parents in and about eighty kids start up on individual instruments and three bands are formed. They play their instruments for a year and then they can choose to continue on if they wish. They get a feel for the



instrument. If they're good at something which is not their first choice, they have a shot with one of the teachers. They may be encouraged to try the instrument for which they showed the most aptitude. Most of the kids will learn something new. If they have been playing for a while, they may continue the instrument and be a mentor, if the teachers think they will benefit from helping others. So that program is still going which Brenda set.

– Heather George

Understanding how Brenda helped set up American-style concert bands in Australia, and how much she contributed to the development of brass and woodwind instrumental education in Ballarat, we can start to appreciate how much Brenda influenced the history of the Soldiers' Band and its transformation to the Ballarat Memorial Concert Band (BMCB) – long before she ever took on the role as MD.

During her musical directorship of the BMCB, Brenda's educational connections allowed her to draw former students and private students to the band giving it renewed energy and membership. This was important to the survival of the band at this time, because band numbers had once again become critically low by the time Brenda took it on. So just as Ted Lewis had built the concert band in the 80s from his pool of Sebastopol College and Mt Clear students, Brenda revitalised the band.

From a late 90s perspective, Brenda explains the value of the 80s change from brass to concert band for BMCB. She stated that it offers:

- more community members the opportunity to play in a community band and it coincided with the emergence of excellent school concert bands
- Ballarat woodwind musicians as well as brass and percussionists the opportunity to play in a musical setting
- many senior school students the chance to play in a quality group either not offered in their school or supplementing the school music program
- post secondary school musicians, including University of Ballarat and Aquinas students a high standard band to participate in

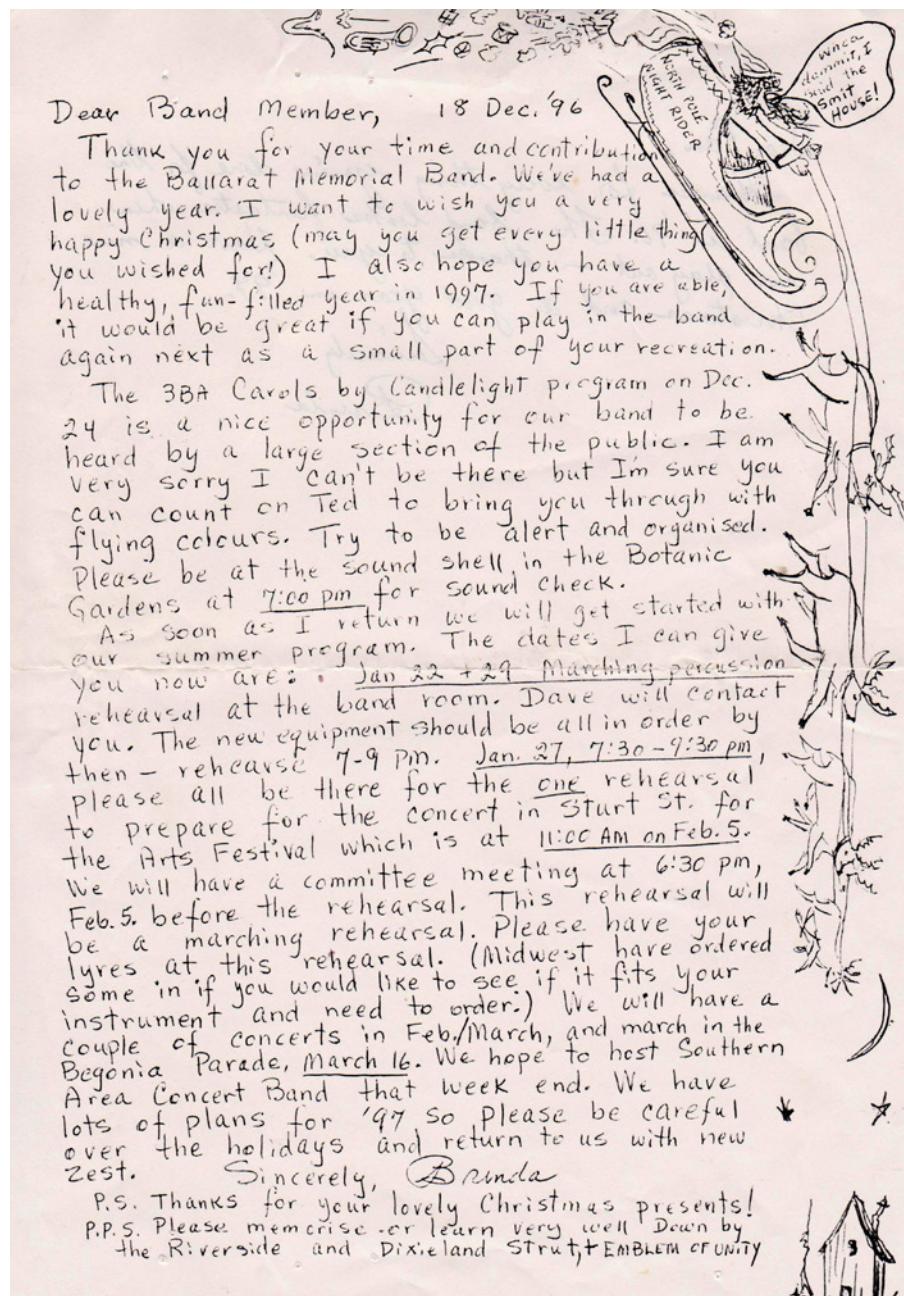
If you ask any early member of the Soldiers' Band, 'What is the biggest change that they have observed in the history of the Soldiers' Band?', the answer is unanimous: 'the change to concert band'.

Not many escaped Brenda's infectious concert band fervour, least of all her two daughters Zoom and Boon:

When I was teaching at Ballarat High School and Zoom and Boon came in, I said 'I need bass players, and you're it!!'. And so they both became bass players. That was around 1983/4.

– Brenda Beck

Brenda connected with and personally encouraged band members. She often did this through group letters to which she would add a personal note.



Dear Pam,

Dear Pam,
Thanks for everything you've done for the band in '96. The band looks fantastic when we play out - thanks to you. Have a nice Christmas and a good year in '97.

Sincerely

Brinda

1996, Letter from Brenda to the band with personal note. Source: Pam Clark



By 1997 the band was going strong with people from their early teens to early seventies, including twenty-two senior school students, several VCE students (using the band for their ensemble requirement for assessment), twelve university students and twenty-three employed or retired adults.

Bands exchange

Band exchanges can be very rewarding for all involved, bringing inspiration, social connection, new skills and helps bands to reach different audiences. When Southern Area Concert Band Melbourne member Cheryl Russell joined the BMCB in 1994, based on her connections, the BMCB was in for a treat:

In 1997 we hosted Southern Area and we played the next day in the Botanical Gardens on the Sunday at the Begonia Festival with the two bands combined.

– Cheryl Russell



1997, Southern Area Band at the Begonia Festival during band exchange hosted by BMCB. (L to R) Neil Govan, Lindsay George, Geoff Field (Southern Area Concert Band). Source: Cheryl Russell

Cheryl: 'In October 1999 we all went down to Southern Area and they hosted us and we played for the Kingston Council, Concert for the People.'

Combined Bands Finale

Folk Song Suite
Third movement, "Folk Songs from Somerset"
by Vaughn Williams
Conducted by Tracy Videon

A Disney Spectacular
A medley of Disney movie themes arranged by John Moss
Conducted by Brenda Beck

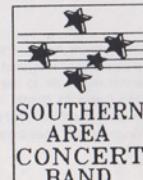
Crime Busters
A medley of some of your favourite "spy" music
Arranged by Paul Jennings
Conducted by Craig Seymour

We trust that you have enjoyed this afternoon's concert and look forward to seeing you again at our 'Concert for the People' around the same time next year.



If you would like further information on either of the bands, please feel free to call Darryn Wright on 9561 9275.

The Southern Area Concert Band
With our special guests



The Ballarat Memorial Concert Band
present our second annual

'Concert For The People'

*Sunday October 17, 1999.
Moorabbin Town Hall, 2:00PM*

Proudly Sponsored by

The City of Kingston



Welcome

to Southern Area Concert Band's second annual concert for the people of the City of Kingston. I would like to take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to our special guests from Ballarat Memorial Concert Band and to thank all of those concerned for helping to bring this concert together. But most of all I would like to thank you, the people of Kingston, for your support.

Darryn Wright, President.

PROGRAM

The Southern Area Concert Band

Eminence
A fanfare by Ralph Hultgren.
Conducted by Craig Seymour.

Irish Tune from County Derry
A traditional Irish tune,
arranged by Percy Aldridge Grainger.
Conducted by Craig Seymour.

Cole Porter in Concert
A medley of Cole Porter favourites
Conducted by Craig Seymour.

Rhapsody On The Minstrel Boy
A rhapsody on a traditional tune,
arranged by Robert Farnon
Conducted by Craig Seymour

Images
Based on the Welsh lullaby "Suo Gan",
arranged by Robert Sheldon
Conducted by Craig Seymour

INTERVAL
There will be a 20 minute interval.

The Ballarat Memorial Concert Band

Summon the Heroes
Written by John Williams for the 1996 Olympic Games
Conducted by Brenda Beck

Concerto d'Amore
Written by Jacob de Haan in 1995
Conducted by Brenda Beck

The Hobbits
The last of five movements in the Symphony No. 1 for concert band by Johan de Meij
Conducted by Zoom Beck

Fortress
Written by Frank Ticheli
Conducted by Glenn Colville

Firebrand
A stately concert overture by David Gorham
Conducted by Brenda Beck

The Thunderer
Written for Military Band and Drum and Bugle Corps
by John Phillip Sousa
Conducted by Brenda Beck

1999, October program for concert in Kingston. Source: Pam Clark



Marching with Brenda



26 October 1997, The BMCB marching at the Olympic Journey Parade to celebrate the 2000 Olympics in Sydney. Source: Brenda Beck Archive

One of the biggest highlights of this decade occurred in 1997 when Brenda introduced marching back into the band. Here is the rationale that Brenda made for the move:

'There are several reasons for moving into marching as well as concert playing:

- 1) marching is fun
- 2) there is a great demand by festival organisers for marching bands
- 3) our marching band will represent Ballarat around the state to thousands of people in festival parades
- 4) festivals have funds to pay marching bands and we like to raise our money doing what we love doing best ... playing music for the enjoyment of the public.



Begonia Parade with banner made by Brent Rogers. Source: Pam Clark Archive

Neil Glover, band member since the 1970s, was still in the band when Brenda reintroduced marching in the 90s. He recalls:

Brenda got the band marching again, made it more showy all to get more public interest. A lot of the MDs miss that, you've got to have people interested.

– Neil Glover



1997, Anzac Day March. Source: Cheryl Russell Archive



■ DRUMMING UP TWICE A STORM: Cassandra Brown and grandfather George Horwood will lead the Ballarat Memorial marching band in a rare double event for Sunday's Begonia Festival Parade. We found them at practice beside Lake Wendouree with tri-tom player Dave Frith.

Parade leadership a family affair

Cassandra Brown and George Horwood are turning the Ballarat Memorial Concert band around — literally.

As drum majors at Sunday's Begonia Festival parade, the granddaughter-granddad duo will tell the band when to start, stop, turn corners and more.

"I'll be the proudest grandfather in Ballarat," Mr Horwood said.

"I've done the Begonia Festival parade about 10 times now, but this will be Cassie's first as a drum major," he said.

He will use the same mace — a long piece of wood topped with a brass ornament — he used when he was sole drum major after 1974.

He has not held that role since 1983, when the band moved towards static concert-style performances and woodwind instruments. That was until Brenda Beck was appointed musical director. She aimed for a slower

Californian style tempo and got the band on its feet again.

"We decided to have a marching concert band, which is common (back home) in the USA," she said.

"It's unique to have two drum majors in a band — a lot of Australian bands are lucky to get one."

Cassandra's mace also has a story to tell.

Mr Horwood said the cedar used to make it was probably about 140 years old, as it had been salvaged from the mantelpiece of a Buninyong home in the 1940s. It was topped off with a bedhead and made into a mace only recently. About 45 band members will be Sunday's Wendouree Pde event, which begins at 12.30 pm and disperses an hour later.

If you want to know more about Ballarat Memorial Marching Band, contact Ms Beck on 5334 6549.

Neil makes a good point, and it's timely to remember that social media was not a publicity arm the band could swing yet. It was not until 1999 that the first static webpage for the band was under construction. So, swinging actual arms became an effective way of gaining new members, attracting fans and spreading musical enjoyment.

Not only did introducing marching into the concert band give young band members new experiences, but Drum Major George Horwood who had been band president until 1983 when the brass band ceased marching, was able to rejoin the band and pass on his drum major knowledge.

'Parade Leadership a Family Affair', *The Courier*.
Source: Pam Clark



Pam Clark clearly remembers the extended, American style cadences that Brenda wrote for the band for their marches in the 90s.



BMCB marching at the Begonia Parade. Source: Pam Clark Archive

Marching was made accessible with finances from Ballarat City Council. This funded the instruments required for a marching concert band with American-style percussion. Band member Neil Govan looked after this and kept it in good order for many years.

Elemental danger

If you are taking the band to the people, whether it be street marching or a seated outdoor concert, you take your chances with the natural elements. Playing outdoors necessitates precautions, but also provides opportunities to play in different settings and be part of large-scale community events.

In the following images, we see the band playing at the Begonia Festival. Two of the high school members of the band were practising for their debutant ball and apparently needed little encouragement from the band to practise their steps to the Irish Medley being played.



Botanical Gardens with Brenda. Source: Pam Clark Archive



Begonia Festival performance, student impromptu dancing. Source: Pam Clark Archive.

But the weather in Ballarat isn't always perfect for al fresco dancing.

The perils of playing outdoors

Nerida Greenbank played with the band from Dec 1994 to c. May 2010, during which she was band librarian for about five years. Nerida tells the story of the day when nature called on her to go over and above her normal duties:

The band has played many times outdoors and it's great when the weather is nice – not too hot, not too cold and not too windy – but it's not much fun when the weather turns and it starts to rain! Now we know that rain and musical instruments are not a good combination but what about rain and sheet music? As the picture below shows, wet sheet music needs a lot of room to get dry!

– Nerida Greenbank



1998, Drying music at Nerida's house, after Botanic Gardens performance.
Source: Nerida Greenbank



It took about four days to dry all the music in time for the next rehearsal.

You may have noticed by now that the band is sporting a flash new waistcoat at their layouts. The evolution of the uniform will be told in an upcoming chapter. The 90s uniform innovations occurred through the enormous contribution from Pam Clark who hand-made and supplied new waistcoats, tailor-made to order for each and every band member. Pam also made the music stand banners.



1996, Photo of band performing at South Street. Source: BMCB Archive



1996, Band portrait. Source: BMCB Archive



1997, University of Ballarat Graduation. The BMCB played at five ceremonies. Source: Cheryl Russell Archive

So, once again, thousands of man, woman and child hours went into making another decade of community banding – by and for the community. In 1999 the BMCB was awarded the Mars/3BA Community Award for their civic contribution.

Of course, this was another decade of fundraising activities to keep the band viable and mobile. Throughout the 80s, the hall itself was a big drawcard for creating extra funds by hiring it for special events. By the late 90s, it was no longer as new nor as popular. There was still a weekly rental of the hall to both the Ys Men and Sebacular Band. Peg and Les continued to look after the hall on almost a daily basis. To augment the downturn in hall hire, band fundraising efforts in the 90s included: trivia night, lolly sales, sock sale, raffles, garage sale, Sunday market stalls and Trash and Trivia market stalls.

Along with marching, new percussion equipment, new uniform, university graduations, Arts in the Park performances and band exchanges with Southern Area Concert Band, what were the other banding performance highlights and unique activities of the late 90s? Brenda has summed them up for us in her musical director's report of 1999.



BMCB Musical Director's Report

By Brenda Beck

I have conducted the Ballarat Memorial Concert Band for nearly five years. We have done some great performances over the years and I hope we can make the band even more attractive in the near future, with the help of our dedicated committee and band members.

Three things that make our band unique;

- 1) Our band can march, which is uncommon for concert bands in Australia but usual in Europe and in the U.S.
- 2) We represent ages 14 to 74 yrs., from all walks of life. Our ages and positions in society have no meaning when we sit down to make music together. About 40 members of our band make a strong nucleus to which others can join, for the time they have in the Ballarat area or are available to be active members.
- 3) Our active and dedicated committee.



In the years that I have been Musical Director, I have truly enjoyed working with all the individual members. I respect every member for his/her contribution to the band, our committee is second to none, and I often feel humbled by the loyalty that some people have to the band. Together we have played in a wide variety of performances ranging from outdoor concerts including public appealing gigs of light music, to more competition oriented music, such as when we played in the "B Grade" section of the VBL Contests where we gained a second place. Since then, we have won the march section of the Royal South Street Competitions, but unfortunately this section has now been cancelled. Six bands from Melbourne's Western suburbs, Melton, and Geelong, together with us have formed a Concert Band Group, which now hosts our own Annual Music Festivals and Honours Band/Conducting Clinic. These festivals have been delightful, bringing the six bands together with constructive adjudication without competition.

Since forming our Marching Band three years ago, we have participated in a number of parades such as the Begonia Festival, RSL Anzac Day March, and the Australian Olympic Spirit Parade. As well as hosting the Bandarama Concerts, we have also continued to play for Ballarat's 3BA Carols by Candlelight (promoted by/broadcast on 3BA) held in the Botanic Gardens Sound Shell every Christmas eve.

In addition to these events, the band has tentatively agreed to perform on five different occasions in 2000, and a Summer Band Camp early in the year is planned. Clearly, all members enjoy playing our varied music styles and it is my hope that they resolve to continue making each playout special. Most of all I appreciate the loyalty of our members and committee, and look forward to an even more active year in 2000 and beyond.

1999, BMCB Musical Director's Report. Source: Brenda Beck Archive



1999, Photo collage from 1999 Yearbook. Source: Brenda Beck Archive



The BMCB played backing and performed for the Ballarat 3BA Carols year on year during this period.

4000 at Carols by Candlelight

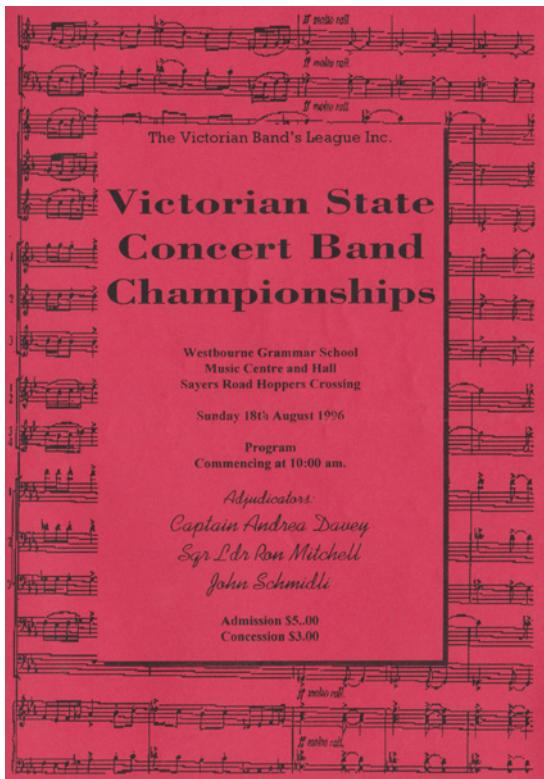
26 December 1998, '4000 at Carols by Candlelight', *The Courier*. Source: Brenda Beck Archive



1999, Carols by Candlelight band photo. Source: BMCB Archive



Take a peek at performance programs for the Victorian State Championships, Arts in the Park, Bandarama, Bandfest, and '95 leavers party, which was organised in honour of the band members who were leaving for university after having finished VCE during their band membership.



Take a look at the performance programs from the 1990s. Note the brief history of banding in Ballarat in the 1996 Bandarama program.

Source: Pam Clark Archive

Although Brenda continued on as MD only until the beginning of the new millennium, with her daughters still actively in the band, Brenda played with the band for special events and helped out when conductors were away.

Bec Paton's more recent experiences of Brenda's conductorship are testament to the skill and musical intelligence of this dynamic leader:

I've probably only had Brenda conduct me a couple of times and it was a long time ago and she scared me so much. Brenda's ear is amazing. It was when I had only just joined the band and she was up the front, she was a fill in conductor because the normal conductor wasn't there and we'd be playing and she would hear a wrong note a mile away and she'd say 'Second clarinets, this bar, wrong.' I thought, 'Oh my God, she knows everything.' It was like she had this little radar going on while she's up there listening to the whole band, watching the whole score. She would know every wrong note and she would pick you on it! (lol).

– Bec Paton, member since 2009



Read about the very first Bandarama in Combined Music Delights, The Courier, 1996.



DISCOVER MORE

The Ballarat music community was deeply saddened by the loss of their 'music elder' Ted Lewis, when he died in 2019.

Read about Ted's life in this 2019 tribute by *The Courier*, [Ballarat's musical world pays tribute to one of its elders, Ted Lewis](#).

Read an interview with Ted in [Ted's career of note has inspired many](#), *The Courier*, July 1999.



Hear Ted play in [Ted Lewis All-Stars – Dr Jazz](#), 2014 (Bob Franklin – keys, Lindsay George – drums, Alan Williamson – bass, Bob Pattie – trumpet, Ted Lewis – trombone and Barry Currie – reeds).



The 2000s

At a glance

The new millennium starts out on a positive note, buoyed by the economic and social uplift of the late 90s. Nova Peris-Kneebone, first Australian Indigenous Olympic gold medal winner, is the first Australian to carry the Olympic torch for the Sydney 2000 Olympics in Uluru. Unemployment rates drop and breakthroughs in science occur with the cloning of animals.

A new era of fear and control dawns. The 2001 attack on the World Trade Centre in New York creates shockwaves throughout the world. Australia joins the US and England in the War on Terror with Australian troops leaving for Afghanistan and then Iraq. Terrorist attacks occur in multiple locations including Kuta, Bali, in which car bomb explosions which kills eighty five Australians.

The 00s is also a decade when drought is declared and the southeast of Australia suffers with little rain for the whole decade, dubbed the 'millennium drought'. Bushfires abound – some of the worst in Australia's history.

John Howard introduces the GST (Goods and Services Tax), refuses to acknowledge the suffering of the Stolen Generations, and Norwegian boat Tampa rescues asylum seekers but is denied entry into Australian waters.

Tasmanian girl Mary marries Frederick, the Prince of Denmark. Reality TV shows become the rage and we experience unprecedented social communication change through platforms such as YouTube and Facebook.

Ballarat city population grows at over 1000 citizens per year, the Begonia Festival celebrates its fiftieth anniversary, and Ballarat City Council and Ballarat Grammar School cooperate to build the Wendouree Centre for Performing Arts, which creatively bridges private school and civic use.

Ballarat quickly becomes one of the fastest-growing regional towns in Australia.

2001	79,794
2006	85,196
2011	93,501



The band in the 2000s



2005, Band photo. Source: BMCB Archive

The memorial brass banding days of the twentieth century provided the band's rich heritage. Brenda Beck, who reintroduced the band to marching and built the concert band up in strength and ability, saw the band into the new millennium.

But what would characterise the new century? It is too soon to say; however, there are some clues.

Instrumentation broadened from brass to concert band, which began with the education reform of the 60s and 70s. Technological change started to impact the band by the 2010s (which will be explored in the next chapter).

Important new policies and awareness for social acceptance and inclusivity stemming from 60s and 70s social activism, including: gender balance, LGBTQIA acceptance and celebration, all abilities access and inclusion.

Being LGBTQI or A and playing in a brass band (or even just living your life) was not always easy. In 1995 the Rainbow Band was formed in Melbourne so that players could feel comfortable to be part of a concert band without fear of prejudice. The BMCB – having had Brenda at the helm for almost five years by 2000, supported by her partner Ann, with their two Thai daughters playing in the band – was in a strong position. Within the backdrop of a conservative town, BMCB was a community group well established for inclusivity thanks to the care and dedication of Brenda, Boon, Zoom and Ann. Just by being themselves, they were enacting cultural change within the band.



Boon's partial hearing and sight also contributed to how the band saw itself in terms of strengths and capabilities. Zoom and Boon inspired their bandmates with their humour, musical talents and incredible karate skills – both black belt fighters, no less.

At the end of 2000, Brenda decided to hand the baton over to spend more time with her family and her students but, as we have heard, continued as a fill-in player and occasional conductor for the BMCB.

Band President Steve Cunningham wrote about Brenda in the 2001 AGM:

Brenda is highly respected for her work and dedication to the band over the years and can be acknowledged as one of the principal builders of the band as we know it.

Before she left, Brenda and the band managed, through their fund-seeking efforts, to secure a dedicated band trailer for safe transport of their equipment for playouts. Funding was attained on the basis of the community engagement and contribution of the band. Steve Cunningham built the trailer. This was made possible by sponsorship from Ballarat City Council, Steego Pty Ltd, Techcast Australia, Robert Young Signs, Union Steel, Kilmartin Auto Sheet Material, and Go-Town Trailer Fittings.



Read the *Trailer Hits the Right Note* article, *The Courier*, 2000.

Playing for Her Majesty

The band did not miss out on playing for the Queen when she visited Ballarat in March 2000. This time it didn't rain, which was good because it was a very long wait!



Waiting for the Queen to arrive with Brenda (MD). Source: Pam Clark Archive

Before the change of MD, band members were honoured.



Concert band members honoured

The Ballarat Memorial Concert Band held its annual general meeting and award presentations recently.

These followed a concert which highlighted selections the band had performed at the recent ABODA Festival in Melbourne and some

new selections it had prepared for the Band Festival in Geelong.

The awards included life memberships to Ted Lewis and Pam Clark, plus certificates to long-term band members.

The Ballarat Memorial Concert

Band, under the directorship of Brenda Beck, rehearses every Wednesday (except during the school holidays) from 7.30pm - 9.30pm at Wilkinson Hall in Barkly St.

New members are always welcomed.

2000, 'Concert Band Members Honoured', September Ballarat News. Source: Pam Clark Archive

Gary White takes the lead

Gary White commenced as MD at the start of 2001.



2001, Band photo, with new MD Gary White. Source: BMCB Archive



Gary had a different, more technically focused style to Brenda, to which the band adjusted – over time. Here's Gary's background from the BMCB AGM Program 2001:

Brief History of the Band's Musical Director

Gary White comes to us as an experienced Musical Director, with expertise in establishing Music Programs in several schools over many years. After having spent four years as Brass Teacher and Musical Director of Horsham High School Concert Band, a further four years at Williamstown High School in a similar capacity. He then moved to Melton to fill a vacancy that existed in the Wilson Park Secondary College's Music Department in 1991, working with another Ballarat musician, Ray Craven. When Ray moved to Ballarat in 1992, Gary became coordinator of both the Classroom and Instrumental Music programs at Wilson Park Secondary College.

In conjunction with the Shire of Melton, Gary announced his intention to develop a Music Program which had as part of that program, Primary, Secondary, Tertiary and Community Concert Bands; with the community band now known as 'The Shire of Melton Wind Symphony' and the Tertiary Band called 'Victoria University Symphonic Band'.

In March of 1994 the Wilson Park Secondary College Concert Band was invited to perform at Mowbray College. It was on this evening that interest was stimulated amongst the parents and students for the formation of a Mowbray College Concert Band; Gary was subsequently appointed the first Musical Director of the Mowbray Concert Band. In October of 1994 Gary was eventually appointed to the position of Director of Music at Mowbray College.

It was always Gary's aim to return to the country and to work in Ballarat. An opportunity to do this came through Mount Clear College, when they advertised a position for Head of Music in 1998. With his family, working and going to school in Ballarat, this was an opportunity to join them and to establish himself in the music life of Ballarat.

While in Horsham, Gary received the City of Horsham 'Young Australian of the Year Award' for services to music, both as a Player and President with the Horsham City Brass Band and the establishment of a music program at Horsham High School. He also received an Australian Day Award for 'Services to the Community' in Music while working in Melton.

Early memories of the Gary White era

Tanya Hale, active playing and committee member of BMCB at date of publication of this book, remembers her first experience of joining the band with Gary as MD. Like Bill Wilkinson's history from 20s to the 60s, Tanya's account of the band gives us valuable insight beyond time and place into what it felt like to be a member of the band during the 90s and 00s. We will be hearing more recollections from Tanya in the next two chapters. Here is her first:

It was a Wednesday evening in mid-February 2003 when I nervously approached Gary White, the Musical Director at the time, and told him that I wanted to join the band. Gary put me at ease, saying to me, You are by all means welcome; before directing me to the back row of the clarinet section. From that moment on, I found myself relaxing in the company of my fellow musicians while attempting music that was more challenging than the music I remembered from my school band days.

There is one particular moment from that first rehearsal that still gives me the giggles today: the moment when we put up our parts for a clarinet feature piece called *Clarinet Candy* and I found myself wondering why we clarinetists had surprisingly easy parts for a piece where it was supposed to be our time to shine. The penny dropped when we launched into the piece and heard the trumpet section playing the melody, because as it transpired, some cheeky monkey had swapped the trumpet parts with the clarinets!



We all had a good laugh at that prank, before the trumpet and clarinet parts were given back to their rightful owners and we continued on with the rehearsal. In the end, I was left with no doubt that I was in the best band for continuing on with my musical exploits after secondary school.

While my former school band conductor had suggested that I join the Memorial Band in February 2003, this wasn't the first time that this conductor had mentioned the Memorial Band to me because my school band and I were fortunate to undertake a workshop with the Memorial Band in November 2000. The band was under the musical directorship of Brenda Beck at the time, and it was thanks to this workshop that I came to learn that community band music is more challenging than school band music.

– Tanya Hale

Due to academic pressures of VCE, Tanya waited just over two years to finally join the band in 2003.

I took those first nervous steps to join the Memorial Band and came face-to-face with a whole new set of challenges. There was the realisation of how different community banding is to playing in a school band, what with paying yearly fees, playing challenging music and dealing with a tough-as-nails musical director who didn't hold back on his comments on the band's efforts to rehearse music for performances. There was the prospect of playing in an ensemble with people of various ages, with many people who were older than me, but the fact that the members of the band were so welcoming, as well as the fact that I could see a few familiar faces I remembered from my school banding years, was of great benefit to me.

Plus another noticeable difference between Memorial Band and my old school band was the number of performances that were scheduled to take place throughout the course of the year, as there were many more performances on the Memorial Band's schedule than there were on my school band's schedule.

At the time when I joined the Memorial Band, the band's performance schedule included fortnightly performances at the Trash and Trivia Market, with one such performance taking place four days after my first rehearsal! Gary told me at the end of that rehearsal that I didn't have to take part in that performance if I didn't want to, especially because it was so soon after I'd joined the band, but I decided to be brave and take part in the performance anyway. This turned out to be a decision I was glad to have made because while I was daunted about making my debut with the band so soon after joining it, I ended up enjoying the performance and getting excited about the gigs that were set to take place in the weeks to come.

Learning the differences between school and community banding hasn't been the only challenge I've overcome throughout my (as I write this) fifteen years and eight months with the Memorial Band thus far. In my early years with the band, I lived with my family in Creswick and faced the challenge of getting myself from Creswick to Ballarat for rehearsals and performances, which was difficult as I didn't drive and came to realise how expensive taxi fares were when traveling such long distances. This challenge was easily overcome by moving to Ballarat in 2006.

– Tanya Hale

Tanya is not the only band member who has overcome traveling distances to participate. Remember Norm McWilliam, the founder of the band who used to ride his bike from Melbourne to play on the balcony at Lester's Boarding House on the weekends and Frank Wright who regularly cycled from Smeaton and back for band rehearsals nearly 100 years ago?



Yet again, a new uniform for the band

Even with Ted and Brenda's good work in building strong foundations for the BMCB, there was much to do when Gary arrived. Public liability for public events was bringing with it problems for community groups like the BMCB who relied on revenue from playouts to keep afloat. These new rules and regulations forced events organisers to pay for applications never before needed, which in turn reduced their capacity to pay bands.

At the same time, the bandroom (new in the 80s, not so new in the 90s, and definitely not new in the 00s) was no longer a popular drawcard for the community function bookings that Peg Glover had overseen for so many years.

The band decided to modernise their look to raise public image and perception to combat this dip in revenue. In order to lift their community profile, remain vital, relevant and firmly fixed in the public (and festival bookers') eyes, the band needed over \$11,000 for a uniform revamp. And the same amount again to keep their repertoire, percussion instruments, hall maintenance and refurbishment up-to-date.

To this end they sought high and low for funds to which the Rotary Club of Ballarat South Community Services responded with a generous \$11,500 toward their new uniform in May 2004.



Read the [Rotary club helps jazz up band's image](#) article, *The Courier*, May 2004.

Due to the very generous support of Rotary South we will never have to face another Ballarat Winter with little more than a shirt and vest to keep off the wind and rain. By the end of 2003 we will each be decked out in new jackets, ties and Akubra hats. Many thanks to Pam Clark for her tireless work in organising that.

– AGM 2003



2004, Band photo. Source: BMCB Archive

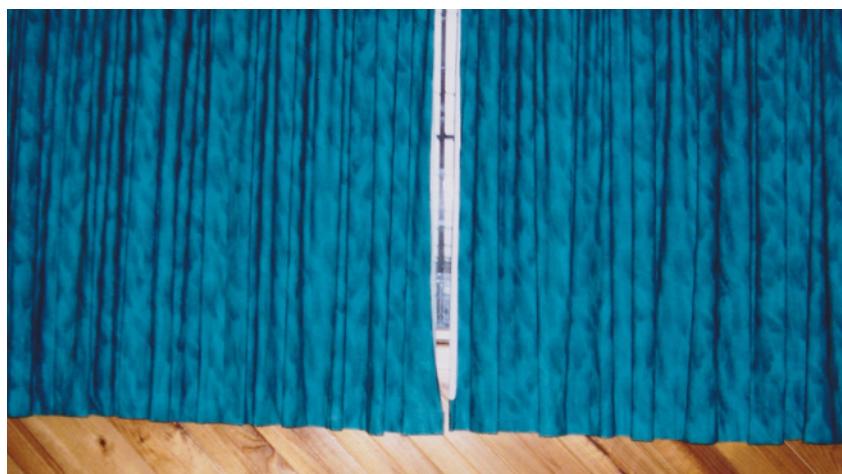


The bandroom was given a new lick of paint and refurbished with many hours of labour from band members including the MD. Even the damaged toilet walls were repaired.



Photos of bandroom being updated. L: Painting the Bandroom, Bec Moore and Gary White. R: The Cunninghams at a working bee (Steve Cunningham got the trailer done). Source: Pam Clark Archive

New curtains were made by Pam Clark with fabrics from Spotlight. The first curtains having been made by Ted Lewis' late first wife.



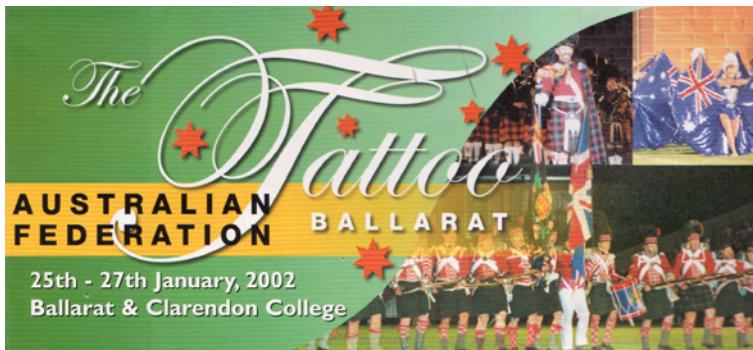
New curtains for the bandroom. Source: Pam Clark Archive



New opportunities and new repertoire

Along with all this activity, the band was very busy with new repertoire and new performance opportunities.

The band played the 2002 Federation Tattoo.



[View The Australian Federation Tattoo Ballarat program and certificate](#), held at Ballarat & Clarendon College, 25–27 January 2002.

Source: Pam Clark Archive

By the middle of the decade, these are the sorts of events the band was playing:

EVENTS AND CONCERTS 2005

DATE	EVENT/CONCERT
26 TH JAN, 2005	AUSTRALIA DAY CONCERT
12 TH FEB, 2005	TSUNAMI CONCERT AT FOUNDERS HALL
13 TH FEB, 2005	TRASH & TREASURE MARKET
20 TH FEB, 2005	GOLD KING FESTIVAL
27 TH FEB, 2005	TRASH & TREASURE MARKET
9 TH MAR, 2005	APEX ART SHOW
13 TH MAR, 2005	BEGONIA FESTIVAL 'CONCERT' IN THE PARK
20 TH MAR, 2005	TRASH & TREASURE MARKET
3 RD APR, 2005	TRASH & TREASURE MARKET
17 TH APR, 2005	TRASH & TREASURE MARKET
25 TH APR, 2005	ANZAC DAY MARCH
29 TH MAY, 2005	WORKSHOP & COMBINED CONCERT WITH TASMANIA
17 TH JUN, 2005	HAMILTON COMPETITION
21 ST AUG, 2005	ACU OPEN DAY
31 ST AUG, 2005	AGM & CONCERT
11 TH SEPT, 2005	FESTIVAL OF THE BANDS (GEELONG)
23 RD SEPT, 2005	FOOTY TRIVIA NIGHT
18 TH OCT, 2005	OPEN REHEARSAL & INFORMATION EVENING
20 TH OCT, 2005	WENDOURREE UNITING CHURCH FAIR
3 RD DEC, 2005	ARRIVAL OF SANTA IN THE BRIDGE MALL
3 RD DEC, 2005	EUREKA FESTIVAL
11 TH DEC, 2005	CONCERT & CAROLS 'MELLODIES AND CHRISTMAS MEMORIES'
18 TH DEC, 2005	TRASH & TREASURE MARKET
24 TH DEC, 2005	CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT

COMMITTEE MEMBERS 2005 - 2006

PRESIDENT	DENIS PROLLIUS
VICE PRESIDENT	LEN ROBINSON
SECRETARY	KAREN VAN OORSCHOT
TEA CHIEF	DAVID GRIGG
MUSICAL DIRECTOR	GARY WHITE
LIBRARIANS	JACQUELINE BRO
	JANINE ROTTER
UNIFORM OFFICER	PAM CLARK
TRANSPORT COORDINATOR	DENIS PROLLIUS
PROPERTY OFFICER	DENIS PROLLIUS
PR OFFICER	LAURA THOMPSON
HALL MANAGER	ELIZABETH GRIGG
GENERAL COMMITTEE	CHARLOTTE WITHERS
	NERIDA GREENBANK

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Take a closer look at the [2005 events and concerts list](#) in the 2005 Yearbook.

Source: Glover Archive

The band also played at many other events during this period including Arts in the Park and the reopening of the Ballarat to Ararat train line.



Tanya Hale recounts for us a stand-out moment in 2005:

There was a performance at the Hamilton Eisteddfod in 2005 that resulted in us winning our section, and I initially found the news hard to believe until I had a chance to hold the trophy we'd been given. Once I held the trophy, the news sunk in and I was over the moon about our achievement, winning our section with our first competitive performance in years!

– Tanya Hale



On the bus. Source: Pam Clark Archive

Another highlight of the decade was non-competitive performances. Tanya remembers several combined concerts leading up to 2005:

I remember concerts in 2003, 2004 and 2005 where we were fortunate to share the stage with other bands: the concerts in May 2003 and May 2004 with the Western Region Concert Band from Melbourne, the concert in September 2003 with the City of Ballarat Municipal Brass Band and the concert in May 2005 with a Tasmanian ensemble known as the Southern Districts Concert Band.



2005, Combined rehearsals with Western Region Concert Band,
photo collage, 2005 Yearbook. Source: Glover Archive

These concerts followed a program involving three brackets and two intervals, with the Memorial Band performing in the first bracket, the other band performing in the second bracket and both bands combining for a performance in the third bracket. While there was a whole lot of work that went into organising those concerts (I certainly can't imagine what it must have been like to sort out the parts for the pieces in the combined ensemble bracket of the Memorial Band –City Band concert!) I enjoyed those concerts and seeing other community bands take to the stage.

– Tanya Hale



Band President Steve Cunningham in his 2001 annual report wrote about the benefits of combined concerts and workshops:

The workshops throughout the year have given the participating bands the chance to explore different music and also the chance to share and compare with other bands so that new ideas and standards can be reviewed.

In the 2005 *Yearbook*, MD Gary White gives the musical director's report:

MUSICAL DIRECTOR'S REPORT - GARY WHITE -



In 2005 the band has been extremely busy, fulfilling a variety of performances commitments. As we have in the past we commenced the year in an extremely busy fashion completing performances at the usual festivals, markets and other community events. The winter months usually mean a slowing of our commitments and an opportunity to work on some new material before heading into the end of year flurry; this year has been no different.

The Band has been able to deliver some excellent performances, none more satisfying than on our journey to Hamilton for our highly successful but ever so short stage appearance and competition win. This only serves to prove that as a band we have a great deal of talent and if we make the most of these opportunities we can gain a great deal of personal satisfaction. I particularly liked our outstanding performance at the combined bands concert with the Tasmanian Band, again demonstrating what the possibilities are when we work together as a team. This year it has again been clearly proven that outdoor performances bring in much need cash however indoor performances allow our true skills to be shown and offer us the most personal satisfaction. One of my regrets is that we never made it to the National Championships at Easter and that we have not had more opportunities to play indoors, particularly at the refurbished mining exchange.

Our band Open Night and the re-launching of the Developmental Band proved to be a great success both socially and in attracting interested musicians from outside the band. The social activities like the pie nights, the trivia night and the bus trip to Hamilton have ensured that the year has not only been about musical performances but about enjoyment and connectedness. These types of activities can only aid the vital team aspect of our band and assist in our development as a successful group.

Many individuals have worked tirelessly to ensure that a wide variety of important functions have been successfully completed, thus ensuring that the band as a whole continues to be successful. My sincere thanks again go to Pam for undertaking to complete a whole range of odd jobs ranging from uniforms to fundraising, to Nerida for carrying out the other half of the odd jobs along with programs and flyer production, to Charlotte for the production of the Band's Newsletter and ensuring that everybody has remained informed about up-coming events and other important reminders. Finally to Karen (our secretary) who has demonstrated herself to be one of the most conscientious / team orientated band members we have. Without Karen's willingness to follow through on important tasks the band would not have enjoyed the same level of success it has this year. I would particularly like to acknowledge those band members who have consistently attended weekly rehearsals and our many performances this year and also to thank those who have taken the time to notify me when they are unable to attend rehearsals or performances.

As usual there are far too many people to mention individually but I would like to again thank, most whole-heartedly, those band members who have attended our performances and rehearsals on regular basis. I would also like to thank those players who have performed as soloists, those who have strived to increase their personal skill levels for the betterment of the band and those players who have listened carefully to my musical requests and then attempted to put them into practice, your support of the Band and me is greatly appreciated.

Thank You: Gary White, Musical Director

DEVELOPMENTAL BAND REPORT - LAURA THOMPSON -



The developmental band was formed at the end of 2002 and has been a part of the Ballarat Memorial Concert Band since that time, but due to unforeseen circumstances it was cancelled for some time at the beginning of 2005. The developmental band resumed on the 19th of October, 2005, under my direction. There are currently around 15 members who range from the ages of 8 upwards. As the newly appointed musical director for this band I am looking forward to developing the skills of the beginner musicians in a friendly and positive environment.

The band plays a range of music, from movie themes to marches, which both encourage and challenge the musicians in the group. It is my aim that in the next year the band will grow in size and will become an important part of the community, with members progressing to the senior band once they reach a suitable standard. I look forward to working with new and fresh talent and hope that I can be a positive attribute to this team of budding musicians.

2005, MD's report, Gary White, 2005 *Yearbook*. Source: Glover Archive



CENTRAL SQUARE 5TH DECEMBER 2002



AUSTRALIA DAY 26TH JANUARY 2003



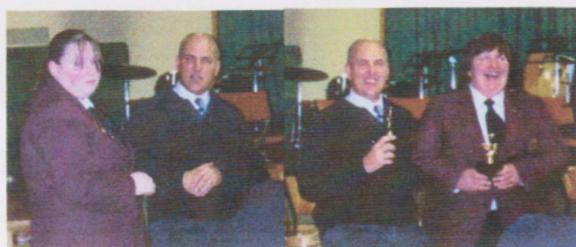
AGM 29TH AUGUST 2001



ANZAC DAY 25TH MARCH 2005



AGM 18TH AUGUST 2005



2001–2005, Events collage, 2005 Yearbook. Source: Glover Archive



Along with much hard work, the band had a lot of fun:



Trivia Night Collage, 2005 Yearbook. Source: Glover Archive

They even got up to a prank or two. This one was particularly memorable. One night when Gary was conducting, unbeknown to the other band members and the MD, James Robinson (possibly with the help of another band member or two) rigged a fishing line to one of the beams in the bandroom prior to rehearsal. James worked as cleaning assistant to Elizabeth Grigg on the hire and upkeep of the hall once Peg and Les retired in 2005. While James was sitting there playing in the trumpet section, with Gary in full swing conducting the band, he slowly lowered a lifelike hoax spider down towards the top of Gary's head.



Pam Clark remembers the moment she saw the arachnid about to crown their unknowing conductor: 'I started screaming because I could see this spider coming down! They just started laughing!!'



Band members at AGM dinner, James Robinson (far right), Bec Moore (centre), Melinda Robinson (right of centre). Source: Pam Clark Archive

Gary had planned to retire from his role as MD at the end of 2005 to spend more time with his family and concentrate on his new job. His retirement from music directorship was delayed for lack of a suitable replacement. The committee supported him by allowing him a reduced capacity workload during this period to enable him to attend to personal duties which sometimes fell on a Wednesday night.

The effect of Gary's change of job meant that he no longer had regular contact with young musicians, (senior school students at Mt Clear, and primary school students in the Mt Clear transition band). The once steady stream of potential new band members, no longer on tap.

Fundraising in the 2000s

As with any other decade, fundraising was paramount to the success of the band. Whether it be through council stipends and one-off grants, playouts, or inventive devices to raise funds while simultaneously lifting community spirits (or at least glucose levels). How did they fundraise oos style?

FUNDRAISING REPORT -NERIDA GREENBANK-



Trivia nights are a fun (and educational!) way of raising money and we held our 2nd annual AFL Grand Final Footy Theme Trivia Night on 23rd September. All attending were encouraged to wear their footy team colours (great to see all those Collingwood supporters!) and even the umpires were represented with one person, who confessed to not following a team, dressing as a Goal Umpire!

The lucky draw, silent auction (for footy team decorated pencil holders) and the toss a coin for the hamper were well supported as was the buy an answer – for those more trickier questions! Simon Marcollo was on the winning table but, unfortunately, Alice was relegated to another table. It's hoped that Simon shared some of his winnings with her! It was a rather profitable night for the band as we raised \$561.70. That will buy a few pieces of music.

Not only have the band members' brains been "stimulated" but those of us with a sweet tooth have also benefited. The selling of Cadbury chocolates was another good fundraising effort for the band with over \$900.00 raised. That's a lot of Freddo Frogs and Caramello Koalas!!!

We also did our bit for the community late last year with the "Bag It For The Salvos." The Salvation Army paid the band for each bag of pre-loved clothes that we donated which amounted to \$510.00

2005, Fundraising Report, Nerida Greenbank, 2005 Yearbook. Source: Glover Archive



In 2006, through tireless efforts, secretary Karen George secured an important \$3000 grant from the R.E. Ross Trust to fund the purchase of new music folders, music stands and percussion equipment.

My sincere congratulations go to Karen for her endless energy and love of the band and its members and for always going beyond the call of duty as Band Secretary.

– Gary White MD, 2006 AGM Program



Salvation Army Fundraiser with Pam Clark and Rebecca van Oorschot. Source: Pam Clark Archive

By 2007 the band had been awarded another grant of \$5000, this time from Telstra and The Ballarat Foundation, for the purchase of new music stands and trolley.

Without the enormous effort of members of the committee and families such as the Cunninghams, the Griggs and the Robinsons who did so much for the band and took on much of what the Grovers had done for so many years, the band would have struggled.

New venue for Ballarat

In 2007 Ballarat received a brand-new music venue in the Wendouree Centre for Performing Arts (WCPA). When it opened, Karen George organised a music extravaganza hosted by the BMCB. Among other tunes, they played the *Olympic Fanfare*.



View the 2007 WCPA program,
[A Showcase of Sound and Song.](#)

Source: Pam Clark Archive





2007, Band photo. Source: BMCB Archive

Tooters and squeakers

The Developmental Band started in 2002. Phil Henderson conducted to take the burden from Gary White. It lulled at the beginning of 2005 only to be restarted under the guidance of Laura Thompson late in 2005. As is the way with every community band that ever enjoyed longevity, the junior band once again played a vital role in the future success of the band.



2004, Developmental Band photo. Source: BMCB Archive



Kath Chapman remembers developmental band from those years:

We played in the 'baby band' for years. It was attached to the Memorial Band. I joined because my kids were learning instruments through the transition band at Mt Clear so they had a program where the feeder school, grade five and six went and joined in. So they let my son join when he was in grade four, because he was so keen.

Some time after that we joined the Memorial Band developmental band and I decided that I'd learn a band instrument so that I could play with them. So that we could be a little band and practice together.

But then of course they've moved on and left me behind and I'm still playing!

– Kath Chapman

Kath was a regular member from late 2005 to 2016, and now plays with Haddon Band. She also remembers an event with BMB, which takes us back 100 years at least – only this happened in 2006.

Silent movie

The developmental band did this piece called *Silent Movie* and they had these really fast bits that were really difficult for us. There's a bit in the middle where there's a 'hoo-hoo' for a steam train and we made up this little story that fitted the music and we had to tie that sound effect in with when the train appeared. We needed a steam train, so we went to Maldon.

Because they were playing a piece called *Silent Movie*, they decided to make a silent movie!

Everyone got dressed up in period costume. David was the villain, I was the damsel in distress who got tied to the railway tracks by David who was a nasty nasty and then got rescued by Lindsay George (in the video they both look the same so that was very confusing!).

And then my son Brian who was very young at the time was chasing David through the bush and he went past three women in their period costume (one of whom was Sonia – the social worker who played the saxophone) and then David would rush past being a 'baddy', and then Brian would run after him with his truncheon and his policeman's hat.

You usually do the music to go with the *Silent Movie*, so we did the movie to go with the music!

And then we played it at Charlotte's church and every time we played it along to the movie projected on the big screen, we had to get to that point with the steam train when it went 'hoo-hoo' and we were too slow with our 'doodle-doodle-oots'. And there was this big effort to get us to speed up, and we were going as fast as we could. It didn't work so well if the steam train appeared and then the sound effects came later!

– Kath Chapman, bandie, mother, movie star!

But what happened to the developmental band after Laura restarted it?

Laura Thompson was always there, the conductor, and then Simon Marollo took over. Then numbers got so low in the senior band that they joined the bands together. It was decided that the 'tooters and squeakers' (which was the dev band's name at the time) were doing so well that they could join the band together. This was around 2010.

– Bec Paton



Laura had been assistant musical director in 2006 and 2007, having attended a one-week ABODA (Australian Band and Orchestra Directors' Association) conducting course in Melbourne to add to her skill base. This was handy in assisting Gary and filling in for him when he reduced his hours.

Before the junior and senior bands merged, a change of MD for the Senior Band occurred when Gary White took the opportunity to step down.

Zoom took up the baton in 2008

Zoom Beck was no stranger to banding, being Brenda's daughter and having played with the Soldier's Band as early as 1983 (see photo in the 1980s chapter). By the time she officially took up the baton, Zoom was an accomplished euphonium and percussion player, had attended the ABODA conducting clinics, played in bands and ensembles in Thailand and North America as well as undertaking study at Northern Michigan University. Unofficially, Zoom had filled in for Brenda during Brenda's musical directorship almost ten years earlier.

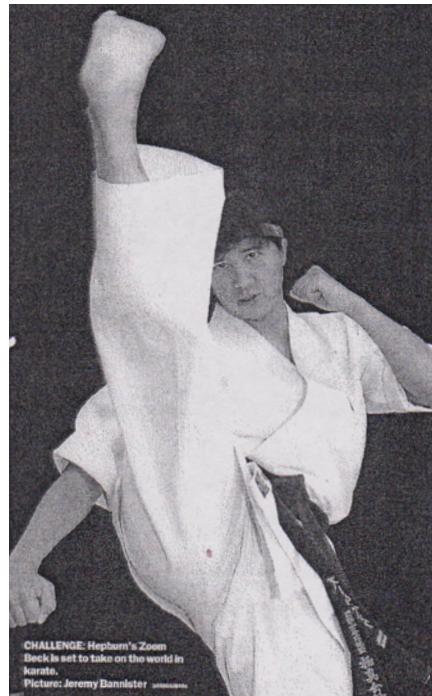
Not only was she accomplished in the bandroom, Zoom was working in her chosen profession as a primary school teacher and had already achieved high skill levels in the martial arts, Shinkyokushin Karate.

In 2003, Zoom and her sister Boon were two of only four competitors to have the honour of representing Australia in the Karate Expo at the International Women's Karate Tournament in Japan.

Kath Chapman remembers the performance at Relay for Life at Fed Uni 2008 when Zoom was Musical Director:

Zoom was conducting and it was one of those sultry days and we could see the storm coming across playing *Pirates of the Caribbean*. Just before that Zoom had said, 'I think we'll get one more in just before this hits' and we were watching. So we started playing and we got faster and faster and faster, and we did that finale so fast it went didlenden-didlenden-didlenden-bcshhhhhhhhhh and we didn't get to the end, everyone just ran!

– Kath Chapman



16 June 2005, Teacher will zoom to Japan, *The Courier*. Source: 2005 BMCB Yearbook



Read the [Teacher will zoom to Japan](#) article from *The Courier*, June 2005.



You can't have instruments in the rain, it was just this sudden downpour.

– Cheryl Russell

Imagine the sound of this scene as individuals 'peeled off' in a mad dash for cover, leaving the musical performance in a ragged exodus.

Part of the concert band's repertoire of performance skills is to be ready to quickly grab their music, music stands, instruments ... and run. Perhaps more so in Ballarat than most regional country towns in Australia.

We know from the previous chapter that it took four days for Nerida Greenbank to dry the band music after one inclement performance day, but you may not have heard Kevin Howell's electrifying story from the 1970s. It happened one sultry night, just on dusk at the annual Christmas Carols performance at the Ballarat Soundshell in North Gardens. Kevin was preparing to play *Mary's Boy Child* on the flugel horn.

I had just come back from the UK, I was in good form and this was lovely. I thought, ah, a guest artist at the carols and it was Ballarat Christmas Eve *and* ... the storm was coming. We knew it was coming and Helen, the accompanist, and I went down and the piano was at the front of the stage. It was always at the front of the stage because we had the choir behind us. So we went down there and I looked up and said, 'Alright let's get going because it's going to rain'. I had *just* started and there was this great big clap (it was being recorded on 3BA as well) this great clap of thunder and lightning and there was a bolt of lightning that went boosh down to [where I was playing] and I grabbed my music stand. we got to the end of it, we never repeated it, it was supposed to have a second verse, and we got to the end of it and that was it. It belted down.

So I never got to play the second verse! We had to get off the stage, we had to move!

– Kevin Howell



The rise and fall of marching

Marching continued to around 2007, but it was tricky without a leader with marching experience, like Brenda. Craig George led the band in preparing for the marches for a number of years after Brenda's departure, in the capacity of drum major. This, he said, was nerve-wracking for him at first, particularly preparing for the three performances at the 2002 Tattoo.

Eventually marching dropped off in about 2007 until well into the following decade. Just as in the 80s and early 90s, this precluded the band from contributing at their traditional events such as Anzac Day, the Begonia Festival, the Digger's March from Bakery Hill up to Eureka Stockade and Buninyong Gold King Festival.



February 18 2002, Photos of the band marching at the Buninyong Gold King Festival (top), *The Courier*. March 12 2002, The Begonia Festival Parade (bottom), *The Courier*, Begonia Festival. Source: Pam Clark Archive



We are fortunate to have an anecdotal history of marching with the Soldiers' Band from veteran band member Les Casey. This comes in the form of advice to the band, perhaps in the hopes that marching would not become a lost art:

MARCHING IS AN ART. BY LES CASEY

Marching in a Brass Band can be very hard work or very casual. If you cannot set your mind into neutral while marching, then marching and playing a instrument can be the hardest pleasure that you can have. In all Australian Bands each step is 30 inches (762 mm) long and each person is 2 steps in front of you and 2 steps beside you. A quick glance to the front corners of the band will keep you in line and if you have goose-stepped, a quick skip to get back into step. That's how it was when I first started marching back in the thirties.

I can remember when I was still at school; I took part in my first street march with the Soldiers Band. On Saint Patrick's Day the local Catholic schools held a procession in Sturt Street. I cannot remember why I got paid five shillings for my first march, but it was the first and the last time I ever received payment for playing in a band.

St. Patrick's Day was a special day at the old Miners racecourse. The St. Patrick's Day Cup attracted horses from Melbourne and so a special train was organised to transport the horses. The horses were then walked to and from the Railway Station and the racecourse.

Gala Day was another yearly event when the Band played. The Band marched down Curtis Street (I could never understand why most marches started at the Coliseum building in Curtis St.) and along Peel Street to Bridge Street. In Bridge Street we always played flat out because it was like a tunnel leading into Sturt Street. We then readied our selves for the march up the Sturt Street hill. It was hard work, especially on hot days, keeping in mind that it was full uniform, no shirtsleeves like today's bands. Most marches finished at the City Oval (corner of Sturt and Pleasant Street), uphill most of the way and past **nine pubs**. As if that wasn't hard enough, the Fire Brigade marched also, but at night.

When the war started everything was thrown into chaos. Most of the young able men in the Soldiers Band belonged to the 8th Battalion Band, so our numbers dropped over night. We were lucky enough to have enough members from the first war and our junior band to enable us to carry on. There was a group of dedicated civilians, who gathered at the drill hall to play soldiers once a week, in case of an invasion. I don't know what they called themselves, but they didn't have any equipment, so the only thing they could do was march. The Soldiers Band was called upon to lead them in their weekly march up the street. One of these marches was the longest that I have played in. It started at the drill hall in Curtis St., up Sturt St. to Doveton St.; out along Skipton St. to Drummond St., back along Drummond St. to Sturt St., then back to the drill hall. Luckily we had a line of good drummers.

The band also played on Sunday nights at the Regent Theatre to raise money for the "war effort". Around this time I fronted up for service in the RAAF. On returning to the Soldiers Band, we had many and varied Band Masters and Drum Majors. South Street started again, so the band practised marching on ovals and on the tarmac at the Airforce station. The Band played at Maryborough every new years day. One year we were out on the oval doing counter marching and left and right turns to whistle commands, while cycle races were being held around the oval. When a new race started with a whistle, the band performed the perfect right turn and marched on. It wasn't till the music disappeared in the distance that the Drum Major still marching in his straight line turned around to see what was going on.

At the annual Fire Brigades competition, the brigades took a brass band with them for their "Torch Light" procession. The Soldiers Band was connected to the Ballarat Brigade and the City Band travelled with the City Brigade. These events were very spectacular with the bands and the brigades in uniform marching with lamps.

And so the band played on.

2002, 'Marching is an Art', Les Casey, AGM Program. Source: Pam Clark Archive



This is not the end of the marching stories for this decade. On 17 May 2009, then developmental band member Bec Paton came back from seeing something very unusual down the main street. She made this Facebook post the same day:

Just saw marching band, a bunch of men in armour, the Australian cricket team and a naked bloke marching down Lydiard Street Ballarat.

– Bec Paton

They were filming a Victoria Bitter commercial, 'complete with crews on cherry pickers and low-flying helicopters'. Downtown Ballarat was closed to traffic for the whole weekend.

Yes indeed, the band was to be part of a nationally televised advertising campaign. Read about it in *Remember when Ballarat went into lockdown for a beer commercial?*, *The Courier*, July 2016.

Surely Victoria Bitter would not be pleased to hear band members recollecting the time they did the C.U.B. ad – especially after they had put in a massive budget to make the Ballarat ad to combat the success of the Carlton Draught 'Big Ad'. We can only assume that the band spend way more time making music than drinking beer these days.

View the ad, *VB New Beer Advert: Best beer advert ever.*

Read more in *'Bitter' day a great ad for Ballarat as VB films commercial*, *The Courier*, May 2009.

Lindsay George

In 2006, Lindsay George hit the incredible milestone of sixty years dedicated to playing with the band.



Read more about Lindsay George in *Drum Roll for 60 Years*, *The Courier*, November 2006.

Neil Govan

In 2007, the band lost loved member Neil Govan.

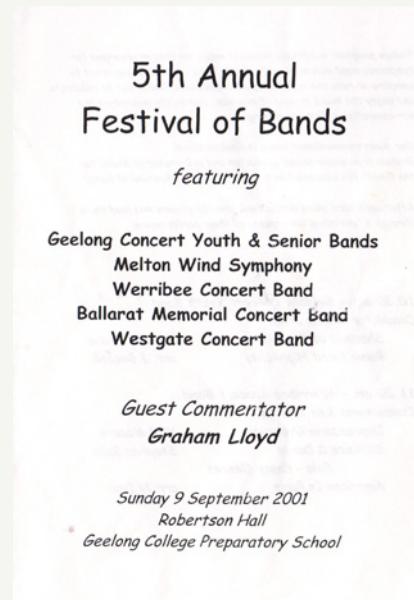


Read Neil Govan's obituary, *A life Filled with Music*, *The Courier*, 2007



DISCOVER MORE

See the archive concert programs from the mid-naughties. Find out what the Spices of the World concert entailed, why the Festival of Bands began in 1997 (and what it has and hasn't got to do with the VBL) and peruse the repertoire played at the collaborative concert band concerts with the Western Region Concert Band.



Take a closer look at
the [Concert programs](#)
[from the 2000s and](#)
[Anzac Day Certificate](#)
[of Appreciation.](#)

Source: Pam Clark Archive
and BMCB Archive



Hear the band performing at the [2007 Nationals](#) in Kew with commentary.



The 2010s

At a glance

3D printing, YouTube explosion, FaceTime, WhatsApp, more Facebook, Instagram and TikTok: these are just a few of the products and services that are changing the way we work, think and play. Netflix takes over and video stores are forced to close down, Google Translate replaces humorous attempts to communicate with real people in foreign countries, Siri answers questions on beat boxing, Google Maps replaces paper street directories, Uber is the new taxi, Airbnb takes a bite out of the hotel market and semi-driverless cars take to the streets. All this leaves us wondering, what's next for this century?

With technological change impacting social life, people find themselves more lonely than ever in industrialised, consumer-based societies. Children spend more time on their devices than with Auntie. But this is not the only thing worrying parents.

As well as the continuance of world-wide terrorism in this decade spearheaded dramatically by militant Islamic group Isis, closer to home, a Royal Commission into sexual abuse centring around Ballarat brings the regional town into national focus. The Loud Fence Campaign recognises past suffering through colourful displays of ribbons on the fences of churches and schools where suffering is found to have occurred. Cardinal George Pell is trialled and convicted for sexual abuse.

Julia Gillard becomes Australia's first female Prime Minister and Mary MacKillop, Australia's first saint. Refugees are high on the political agenda with riots, deaths and class action for reopened offshore Australian detention facility Manus Island. One detainee, Behrouz Boochani, writes *No Friend but the Mountains*. The award-winning book is published after having been sent one text at a time via messaging services such as WhatsApp over a period of almost five years.

Chinese community contributions to Ballarat are recognised in 'Open Monument', a joint venture between City of Ballarat, Sovereign Hill and the Chinese communities of Ballarat and Melbourne. The monument is on part of the land once home to Chinese miners during the gold rush, within 100 metres of the BMBB bandroom, both on the Len T Fraser Reserve. By 1858 there were 10,000 Chinese miners living in this area bordered by Main Road and stretching up to include the Llanberris Athletics Reserve.

Ballarat district girl, Michelle Payne, triumphs over personal and professional adversity when she becomes the first female jockey in over 150 years to win the Melbourne Cup. Australian actor Rachel Griffiths directs a film, *Ride Like a Girl*, to tell the story.



Gentrification occurs in Ballarat with house prices soaring. Ballarat University becomes Federation University with campuses in Ballarat, the Wimmera and Gippsland. Pinky's Pizza and chips, cheese and gravy make way for The Forge, Mitchell Harris Wine Bar, The Hop Temple and a plethora of other dining hot spots making Ballarat a go-to destination for tourists and home buyers seeking refuge from the heat of Melbourne house prices. Royal South Street celebrates its 125th anniversary, Her Maj gets a refurb and the long-term Ballarat Creative City Strategy is launched.

Look at Ballarat's growing population:

2011	84,935	
2012	86,000	1.25%
2013	88,400	2.79%
2014	93,320	5.56%
2015	99,841	7%
2016	104,355	4.52%
2017	106,762	2.31%
2018	110,030	3.06%

Extinction Rebellion, school strikes and climate change rallies occur across the globe after scientific publications on anthropogenic climate change and a right wing swing in politics in the US, England and Australia stimulate a cry for emergency action.

Meanwhile, entertainment is king, most of it on tap at the touch of a button. So how does a local community band like Ballarat Memorial Concert Band fare in the new climate of distraction and uncertainty?

The band in the 2010s



2017, Carols at the Barrels, Hop Temple. Source: Wade Carman Facebook posted by Bronwyn Hutton

We reach the last decade of the first 100 years of this community band. The 2010s, being the most recent history, are well and truly within living memory of band members. There is exponentially more data and more accessibility to data than in any other decade.

As well as the banding highlights, in this chapter we explore ways in which digital social media has impacted the band, how it represents itself, and how the history is documented.

At the end of the 90s the band entered into the www.world when it set up its first webpage. Since then, the band has updated its website several times, most recently in 2019 to host this ebook:

<https://ballaratconcertband.org.au/>

Ballarat Memorial Concert Band

New members welcome - all ages, all levels.

Rehearsal: Wednesdays 6.00pm - 8.00pm, Wilketton Hall, Len T Fraser Reserve, Barkly St, Ballarat (near the skate park) *no rehearsals during school holidays

For more information call 0422512514, find us on Facebook, or just come along! ballaratconcertband.org.au

2019, Screenshot of BMCB website. Source: BMCB



The life of the band is also being cumulatively documented on a number of Facebook pages:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/165996610085671/>



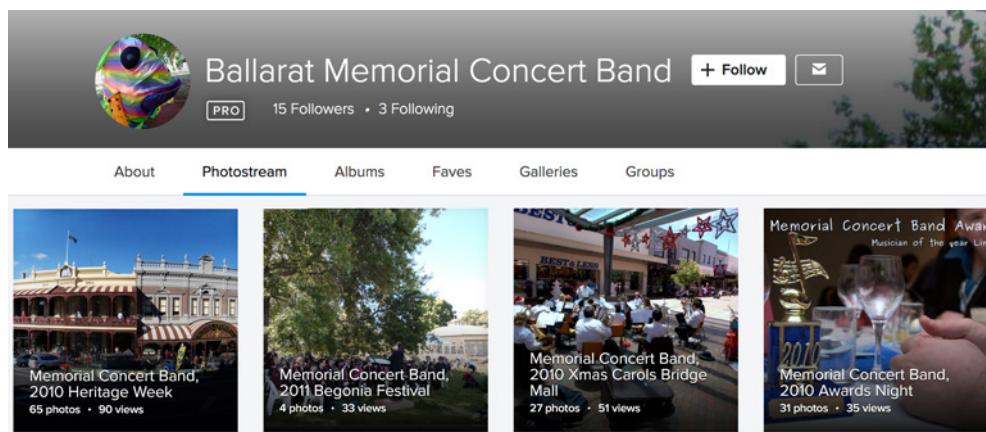
2020, Screenshot of Members of Ballarat Memorial Concert Band - Past and Present Facebook page. Source: Facebook

<https://facebook.com/Ballarat-Memorial-Concert-Band-149201555135856/>



2020, Screenshot of Ballarat Memorial Concert Band Facebook page. Source: Facebook

They also have a flickr feed set up by and with photos from Doug Irvin:
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/bmcb/>



Ballarat Memorial Concert Band flickr feed. Source: Doug Irvin/ flickr

By accessing these pages you will have more images at your fingertips than in any other decade in this history. You will also be able to follow what happens next. If you play with the band, or join the committee, you will be part of that ongoing history.

The 2010s are a decade of adventure, celebration and stepping out for the band. Across the following pages you will find out why.



Zoom and Simon combine forces (2010–2012)

Simon and Zoom share the role.

In early 2011 the committee met and discussed how to create a larger and more cohesive band. It was decided we would combine the Senior Band (Zoom Beck MD) and the Developmental Band (Simon Marcollo MD) which resulted in a bigger ensemble and new rehearsal format that continued to support the transition between easier to intermediate levels. The opening up of rehearsals to differing levels of music and incorporating a short tea break seemed to appeal to most of the band members and has been positively received.

– Zoom Beck, Musical Director's Report 2011–2012

In 2011 the Ballarat Wind Orchestra was formed and performed at the Mid Europe Windband Festival in Austria. Sixteen of the thirty two musicians were BMCB members past and present. BMCB musical directors Simon and Zoom were two of these members.



2010, Begonia Festival, Zoom Beck conducts selections from *Mamma Mia*.

Source: BMCB Archive



2010, Begonia Festival, Simon Marcollo MD 'Tooters and Squeakers'. Source: BMCB Archive

Each band leader has their own way of connecting with their members. Just as Brenda had been a conscientious communicator through monthly newsletters and personal notes, Zoom was very diligent about making and distributing multiple copies of photos for band members. Perhaps the Becks will be the last band leaders to create and sustain this form of physical communication.

'I used to get all my photographs printed and put them in albums, but these days it's all digital,' said former band and committee member Cheryl Russell.

Here are a couple of these last photos from Cheryl's album, printed a couple of years before Kodak went bankrupt due to continuing to focus their business on film rather than digital photography.

Zoom conducts under what appear to be some very precarious circumstances.



2010, Zoom conducting on the palettes while the band played on the back of a truck In Ballan. Source: Cheryl Russell Archive



2010, Ballan Festival Zoom Beck. Source: Cheryl Russell Archive

That was on the back of a truck. It was really long and skinny, and nobody could hear what anybody else was playing properly. Anyway, the crowd seemed to like it!

– Cheryl Russell

Christmas concerts and Heritage Week/end were also on the band's annual performance schedule. Zoom explains the history of the Heritage Weekend gigs in her 2011–12 reports and why some people weren't quite the same afterward:

Our Heritage Week performances were again a big success. What started three years ago as an all Saturday gig in the Titanic Bandstand had made a positive move to the George Hotel Balcony.



2010, Heritage Weekend in Titanic (Doug Irvin stood on rail to take photo). Source: BMCB Archive



2012, The Bagpipe Tunes with Brenda. Source: BMCB Archive



2012, David Paton, Heritage Weekend. Source: BMCB Archive

Last year we only agreed to four gigs on the Saturday and alternated with the Ballarat City Band over eight single hour brackets. David Paton added his excellent skills on bagpipes while Alan Williamson designed/donated our new banners which were displayed very effectively from the balcony. In 2012 the council asked again that we endeavour to play both Saturday and Sunday and this time after consulting the band we tentatively agreed. I was amazed and impressed how all the band members came together for both days and we managed to cover all parts with no problems. A special mention goes to Alan, Sarah-Joy Muirhead, Bronwyn Hutton, Wade Carman and Lindsay George who played most of (or all!) weekend in both bands. They were exhausted and a few didn't regain normal feeling in their lips until later in the week. Ouch!"

– Zoom Beck



It is good to see that the band were adventurous enough to brave another bagpipes and brass band performance collaboration after the 70s fiasco. But then again, we only see one piper this time, not the whole pipe band.

The band also played regularly on the stage at the Begonia Festival.



2010, Begonia Festival with Pat Russell, Linda Bolan, Paula Robinson.

Source: Cheryl Russell Archive



2010, Begonia Festival with Pat Russell

plus possibly Linda Bolan.

Source: Cheryl Russell Archive



2010, Begonia Festival with Brenda Beck, Vince McDonald and Simon Marollo.

Source: BMCB Archive

For a long time, Barry Wilkins directed the Begonia Festival which earned him the nickname 'Mr Begonia'. Unbeknown to the band when they played on the stage was that Mr Begonia himself was to lead the band in 2013.



Barry Wilkins at the helm (2013)

Barry Wilkins, who grew up in Ballarat, was no stranger to conducting nor large-scale community music events by the time the band was looking for a new MD. Barry had performed a role for many years, not dissimilar to Frank Wright in Greater London, organising outdoor music events for Ballarat. In 1969–1992 he was the director and chief executive officer of the Ballarat Begonia Festival Association. His contributions over many years included Begonia Festival director, Begonia Brass Ensemble director, putting on the annual carols at the North Gardens Soundshell broadcast live through 3BA, and many years of conducting for Ballarat Light Orchestra Company and Ballarat Lyric Theatre performances. These were the events and performances in which members from the Soldiers' Band had played too, helping out in pit orchestras for live shows or performing solos for the carols.

Barry dedicated decades to enriching the cultural life of Ballarat through live performance. In 1992 he was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for services to tourism, festivals, the arts and community.

In 2013 Barry took up the BMCB baton, which also coincided with a personal lifestyle move from Ballarat to Bacchus Marsh in March of that year. The committee had to twist Barry's arm to take the honorarium for leading the band (if only just to cover his travel costs).

While he was MD, he cooked up a plan for the band to play at Sovereign Hill:



July 2013, BMCB play at Sovereign Hill. Barry Wilkins seated front left with baton. Source: BMCB Archive

Note the period costume, garnered from Lyric theatre and not period-specific to the gold rush.



Many members remember it as a highlight gig: they dressed up and performed in the Sovereign Hill theatre.

And we got in trouble about that because we didn't clear the costumes with them or anything, we weren't very particular about that!

– Kath Chapman

We did it well and we played in the theatre. It was lots of fun. We went to the photo studio and had that photo taken.

– Bec Paton

One of the players went out to play a fanfare and announce that we were going to play in the theatre and scared the horses. There were a few things that didn't work well that day. We didn't get invited back, let's just say!

– Kath Chapman

Band members remember that it was 'lovely' to have Barry at the helm but, alas, as the junior and senior bands had only recently amalgamated, what was ultimately required was a bandmaster with a playing, not just conducting, background. If the band had been at a different period developmentally, Barry may well have been the perfect match for the band. But the developing players who may not have had the benefit of private lessons needed an instrumentalist as band leader.

The band was on a steep learning curve.

Matthew Angus' era (September 2013 – September 2015)



c.2014, Matt Angus and BMCB. Source: Charlotte Withers Facebook



In stepped keen cyclist, professional instrumentalist and teacher Matt Angus. Around the same time Barry moved to Bacchus Marsh for a lifestyle change, Matt moved to Ballarat. His professional music background involved: performing (MSO, Orchestra Victoria, Andrea Boccelli, Jane Rutter, Yvonne Kenny); film soundtracks (*Babe*, *Elizabeth*, *Two Hands*); teaching clarinet, saxophone, oboe and bassoon (Xavier College, Wesley College, Ballarat Christian College).

Memorable moments from Matt's time with the band included the beginning of a long and mchappy relationship – in 2014 the band was invited to play at Bakery Hill McDonalds for McHappy Day to raise funds in support of families with seriously ill children through the Ronald McDonald House Charities Australia.

We started playing at Mchappy day as I work at Bakery Hill Maccas and they knew I was in a band and were looking for a musical act to perform.

– Charlotte Withers, band member since 1995

It was such a success that the band has played annually every year since and in the last four years have added Christmas concerts there as well.

During Matt's directorship, the band started to compete in South Street again.

Flautist Cathi Smith remembers this as a highlight for her:

I started playing with them again just before they started competing at South Street so it was when Matt Angus was conducting. He tracked me down and asked me to play and I brought Riley [her son] with me, he was on trumpet.

– Cathi Smith

Tanya Hale remembers the circuitous journey back to South Street. Sometimes a win is all you need to boost confidence! But in the end, the winning is not the best part.

There was a performance at the Sunday Band Contest in Maryborough in 2014 where I was stricken with a facial affliction known as Bell's palsy and found it difficult to get a note out of my clarinet, but neither that nor the fact that we were the only band in our section mattered because we won our section unopposed and celebrated our success like a band that had triumphed over its competition.

This was a moment where I can truly say that I enjoyed the celebration more than the performance as far as my contribution was concerned because of my difficulty with playing a single note while afflicted with Bell's palsy. The Memorial Band's success at Maryborough was the catalyst for us to prepare for a performance at the Victorian Band Championships, which took place during the South Street competitions, in 2015.

This was the Memorial Band's first South Street performance in two decades, and the journey to that performance was one that took many twists and turns as we prepared three pieces that were, as I look back on them now, more complicated than the pieces we'd played in Maryborough. In the end, the fact that we'd made it to performance day was an achievement in itself, as we took to the South Street stage and gave it our all.



Never mind that we ended up coming second to the Geelong Concert Band, because I for one was proud of the Memorial Band and the fact that we'd done our best for our first South Street performance in more years than I'd been a member of the band.

– Tanya Hale



Hear the 2015 Royal South Street, Victorian State Band Championships, 'C' Grade, Matt Angus (conductor):

[Joyful Variations \(Brian Beck\)](#)

[Music for a Darkened Theatre \(Danny Elfman arranged by Michael Brown\)](#)

[Goddess of Fire \(Steven Reineke\)](#)

Cheryl Russell remembers other highlights: 'The little concerts here [Wilkinson Hall] and all the dressing up.'

These included Halloween and an 80s themed 30th birthday party for Tanya Hale in 2013. Yes there are photos, but we are pretty sure that no-one would give us permission to publish them here!

The cabaret night was also a big hit for the band. But first, a big band had to be formed. Tanya Hale remembers:

There was a step out of my musical comfort zone that I took during the last year of Matthew Angus' musical directorship when he and Joanne formed a big band that was primarily made up of the Memorial Band's saxophone, trumpet and trombone sections, with other local musicians forming the rhythm section. Matthew and Joanne formed the big band as a side project to raise money for the Memorial Band, and after having initial reservations about the project, I eventually decided to take up the saxophone so I could get involved with the project. Thus, I took up the tenor saxophone, teaching myself the fingerings of the notes of the saxophone's range on a borrowed instrument, before I felt confident enough to attend the big band's first rehearsal in March 2015. Ultimately, I enjoyed every minute of my time with the big band, rehearsing the tunes that we planned on incorporating into our repertoire and performing at a cabaret night that was hosted by the Sunshine Community Brass Band in July 2015.

– Tanya Hale

The band also presented a performance the same year at the Wendouree Centre for Performing Arts in conjunction with Ballarat Grammar Symphonic Band, Ballarat School's Symphony Orchestra and Ballarat Grammar Saxophone Ensemble.



Take a closer look at the [YAKINI program, 2015](#).

Source: Pam Clark Archive



These are among the highlights members recall from this time. There is perhaps no sweeter memory than when the band market tested reed flavours for Matt's business Sweet Reeds which he launched in 2015 with his partner and band member Jo.

Wade Carman takes the lead (end of 2015 – end of 2018)

Wade Carman was already a band member with a banding, conducting and mentoring background. Growing up in Stawell, he learned saxophone and then switched to trombone. By the time he was in year twelve, he was the only music student in the year, and so took on leadership roles within the school such as conducting and mentoring. Wade had also attended the Wimmera Bands Group Music School for theory and practical skills. As part of this training, he was fortunate to attend a conducting course with the late Wilf Dyason, 'legend in brass banding circles'.

These experiences gave Wade the background to take on the assistant MD role at BMCB while playing under the directorship of Matt Angus. When Matt left, Wade took on the role of interim MD for six months while the committee made preparations to appoint their new musical director. Having been assistant MD, Wade was in a good position to keep the band afloat during the transition and became a prime candidate for the new MD position.

Cheryl Russell who was on the committee at the time and was one of a group of members appointing the new MD explains: 'Wade did a lot for the band and worked really hard.'

It wasn't a smooth beginning, however.

As the interim MD, you don't want to rock the boat, just keep it going, keep it surviving. But the following year when I was actually appointed MD, that's when I was able to carry forward my vision of what an MD should do.

– Wade Carman

This, he remembers, was a shock to the system.

Wade recalls the initial period of musical directorship as a 'trial by fire' for both he and the band.



Wade Carman conducting on The George Balcony, Heritage Weekend. Source: BMCB Facebook



I may have upset committee and band members when I put a lot of extra work on them because I had a very clear idea of this is what I need to do – and this is what they need to do. I know in the past, sometimes the MDs did everything and sometimes the MDs did nothing, so the committee's job fluctuated quite a bit.

– Wade Carman

He changed things like the system by which music could be purchased so that as MD he no longer had to go through the committee, but rather work within a budget set by the committee. He also axed the band's favourite tune, *Pirates of the Caribbean*, which they had played every year straight since the movie band score had come out in the early 2000s.

Over a period of months, Wade, brought to life a whole new repertoire. He also brought a lot of fun to the band such as, 'getting the band to dress up for gigs starting with McHappy Day' (Charlotte Withers).

Dr Who at the Grampians Brass Festival. The whole competition was about entertainment so the band got a chance to focus on entertainment. We got to take it to the next level. We have been doing it for four years running: Mexican Theme, Dr Who, Halloween and then Duke Box in 2019. For the Dr Who year, we brought big props. We had a dalek, a tardis, a tyrannosaurus rex, a cyber man, actors – Dr Who and a companion. We had a Dr Who spectacular! We had a great time.

– Bec Paton



Catch a glimpse of the *Dr Who Through Space and Time* concert at the 2017 Grampians Brass Festival.

Every second year the band has held a trivia night fundraiser to coincide with the Grampians Brass Festival theme.



2016, Mexican theme trivia night. Source: BMCB Archive



Wade worked hard and built the band from roughly twenty five members, reaching twenty members at rehearsals to sixty members, averaging forty at rehearsals.

But Wade recalls that even though the member numbers increased, the reliability of the players did not. 'I wasn't strict on them, I allowed the people to enjoy their time. If they were playing with another band then, generally, we could afford to lose players when another band couldn't.'

This gave BMCB members broader experience and boosted support for regional bands and events. The downside was that the importance of turning up to every event and putting the Memorial Band first, of course began to erode. So, from this good will, the band sometimes suffered.

As a new MD, Wade said he struggled a lot at the start, and one of the problems he had was inspiring people to practise. Then one day, a friend of his said, 'it's not your job to get people to practise, it's your job to inspire people to *want* to practise'.

I can't make anybody do it, but I can make people want to do it. It's a very small thing, but it was a big revelation to me.

– Wade Carman

Wade's mentor Wilf Dyason also had a one liner that really impacted Wade which was, 'To be an MD, to be able to tell somebody else what to do, you need to be able to do it first'. Wade really took that to heart and set about putting in a minimum of four hours' preparation time for every rehearsal.



2017, Wade Carman and Libby Fawkes at Dr Who through Space and Time. Source: BMCB Facebook



2016, Combined Big 5 rehearsal with the Haddon Community Band and Ballarat government schools. 80+ participants. Source: BMCB Facebook



To get the best out of their players, an MD has to be across a lot of technical information for each instrument, especially if the players are not under the tuition of a private instrumental teacher.

You need to know the fingering, so if they are struggling with something, you could offer an alternate fingering for example. And with trumpet, not every trumpet has it but most of them do these days, if you're playing Ebs and Ds there's a little slide that you need to use to make it go into tune. A lot of the people in the band don't have proper teachers, so as the MD, I needed to know that sort of thing to be able to explain to them, when you play that note you're always going to be out of tune. You need to be able to do this to make it go into tune. Now that's something that if they had professional teachers, they would have learned, but most of them don't. It's a community band and they can't always afford teachers.

– Wade Carman

The importance of being funded

Wade is a strong advocate for all children having access to art, music being one of the arts. Sometimes art is expensive. So Wade got the developmental band going again during his tenure in July 2017.

We restarted the developmental band and we got up to about twenty four members at one stage, most of them primary school kids, a couple of parents in there as well. It was about giving kids the opportunity they may not have otherwise had.

– Wade Carman

During the setup of the developmental band they did an inventory of band instruments and discovered that they didn't have any easy entry-level instruments for beginners such as flutes or clarinets.

So the band has really good supply of instruments but they're all the really expensive ones that most people don't buy for themselves. So the smaller instruments that kids can start on just weren't there. So we did get a grant to go out and purchase instruments and purchase music and start the development program. And then we had to report back to the council on how that was all achieved. And we actually had a marketing push that was put in the newspaper and so some instruments were donated to the band as well. It's amazing how many people finish high school, they've been playing an instrument and it goes under the bed and is never seen for another ten years and then they pull it out and sell it. So we were calling out to those people, either pick it back up again or give it to somebody who's going to use it. We got two or three fully donated and we were able to purchase some really cheap secondhand, and then we bought, I think, four flutes, four clarinets, a saxophone and maybe a trumpet.

– Wade Carman

Saying 'Yes!'

Obviously community bands can't survive without money and if somebody comes in and says I want to pay you to do something, the answer should always first be 'yes' (laughing). Obviously it depends on what money they're offering and what the requirements are but that meant that we did things that the band may not have done in the past. So we did the cemetery gig.



Read about the
[Memorial Cairn](#)
[for Jesse Family](#),
[The Courier, 2016](#).



The family came to us and said this is the music we want you to play and we will sing and this is how much we want to pay and so we negotiated the fee. In the past the band would have said, 'We don't play that music, we don't have that music, so we'll not do the gig'.

– Wade Carman

Wade saw it as a challenge, said yes, and sourced the music. But playing in a cemetery was not something that many of the band members had done before.

In the past and for most of the history of this band, when a band member died the whole band would go to the cemetery to play at the graveside. This was also just a normal part of Wade's life growing up in Stawell. 'For me playing in a cemetery was commonplace, it wasn't strange – it was normal.' But for Memorial Band members in 2016 this was a curiously strange idea. Bec Paton's young daughter, Hannah, was one such member who joined them that unseasonably cold October day. When she entered the grounds she looked left and right and said to her mum, 'So this is what it looks like inside a cemetery.' She had never been to a cemetery before.



October 2016, BMCB play at the Cemetery. Source: BMCB Facebook

Wade felt that playing at a graveside was a good experience to offer a child and in this case to have as a positive experience and not a sad one. This is how it has been for banding communities since the 1800s but somewhere in the mid-twentieth century we lost this tradition in Ballarat. It must have been a very moving experience for all involved.

Saying yes brought new opportunities ... here's the band one year later and an anomalous number of gigs later:



October 2017, Playing the Rocky theme on a roundabout for Run Ballarat charity run. The mayor took time out of the race to conduct. Source: BMCB Facebook



There was sometimes unwanted red tape. OH&S inductions were new to the players, but something with which Wade, who had worked in the commercial sector before, was comfortably accustomed. The band found it cumbersome to do an obligatory OH&S induction before performing at corporate functions. Wade's 'yes' policy saw the band through a number of such performances and the members soon became familiar and accepting of the accompanying health and safety formalities. Another activity to occupy the band in this new era of insurance procedures.

Council insurance policies also now impact on when and where the band can march, which limits marching experiences.

Media control in a socio-digital world



2017, BMCB play at the train station for the first AFL match in Ballarat.

Source: Alice Marcollo posted to BMCB Facebook

Wade was one of the first MDs to be confronted with social media quality control:

One of the things I don't like is videos going online. It's mostly not that the band sounds bad, it's that video taken on the phone in a certain spot gives an unbalanced sound of the band. For example if you've got a French horn playing and the mum's standing behind the French horn filming their kid playing clarinet over there, you can't hear the clarinet at all. All you can hear is the French horn that sounds (really badly) louder than everything else. So when you watch something like that on Facebook it's not the sound that was actually heard on the day.

– Wade Carman

In this age of fast food for our ears, we accept a lot more in terms of low-quality sound and video grabs. But how does this affect our public image and the way in which we remember our performances? Compared with other eras in the band's history, the problem of PR quality control became suddenly very relevant.



It's a really poor way of expressing who you are. I actually upset a lot of people including parents when I called them and said, 'You need to go and delete that off Facebook'. I actually did it to my brother as well. We were playing at the train station, playing the Bulldogs theme song for the first AFL match in Ballarat and my brother was live streaming it and I turned around whilst conducting and saw that he was filming it and told him off while the band was still playing. I didn't realise he was live streaming it at the time so anyone watching would have heard him being told off by me and then he deleted it so it couldn't be seen again. But that's how passionate I was about it. You've got to only have the good things out there. It wasn't that I didn't allow any videos up, I said, send them to me and I'll let you know if they can be posted or not. I suppose then people were taking smaller videos from different places to try to find one that I'd say yes to. And so there were ones that I did say yes to because there were ones that looked and sounded good.

– Wade Carman

Raising the profile

One of the visions Wade had for the band as part of getting out into the community, getting known, and having beneficial experiences, was marching. (You can read about how the band was intentionally tricked into it, later in this chapter.)

Another way the band supported the fostering of community links in the mid-2010s was something called the Big 5 Concerts. The purpose of the concerts, which have been running for the past five years (at time of publication), is to let local secondary school students know that there is a pathway for continuing instrumental playing after they graduate from year twelve. They evolved from a sight reading day with a number of bands including Haddon, Melton Wind Symphony and then Ballarat High School. These were initiated by Zoom Beck a few years earlier.

They're run at the Ballarat High School. It's Ballarat Memorial, Haddon Concert Band, High School, Mount Clear and Ballarat Secondary. Each band submits a piece and all the bands go away and learn the pieces at their own rehearsals and we come together on the day. We get there at 5.30pm and we've got about half an hour on each piece with the conductor. There are about 100 players and everyone sits in together and mixes up, so you don't sit with your own band, you sit with everybody. After the rehearsal we all go out and eat pizza in the quadrangle at Ballarat High and afterward we do the performance which is the five pieces. So it's quite a brief performance but it's 100 people playing together and it's the high school kids getting to know, this is where you can go.

And so Tim Scott, he was a big driver for it, Tim up until about a month ago was MD at Haddon for a decade but he also plays tuba at Memorial. He would get up every year and do what I refer to as 'The Instrument Under the Bed' speech. He'd turn to the audience and say 'There are representatives from a number of bands here today including Ballarat, Haddon, Creswick and Beaufort. There's no reason for those instruments at the end of high school to go under the bed, never to be seen, these are all the opportunities. You've spent all this money getting your kids to the point where they can play, don't let them stop now'. And that's what Big 5 is all about. I don't think we've missed a year since we started. Heather George is the driving force for that, because she's teaching at Ballarat High.

– Bec Paton

The concerts, which convert a small number of school graduates to the local bands each year are run on the premise, 'They know we exist and they know that we're not scary!', said Bec.

Along with the usual raising of public profile and campaigning for new band members, gigs as well as fundraisers were key in keeping the band sizzling:



2017, Bunnings sausage sizzle fundraiser.
Source: Bec Paton posted to BMCB Facebook

Nothing like a crisis for bringing people together!



Possibly December 2016, BMCB Christmas with Wade. Source: Charlotte Withers Facebook

One of the band's annual performances is the Christmas performance in Bridge Mall on a Saturday morning. Because of OH&S requirements, the band were aiming to unload their gear for the performance and be out by 7am. To save time in the morning, the trailer was loaded on Friday night and stored outside Wade's house. Band President Bec Paton wasn't convinced it would be safe but Wade persuaded her: 'There'll be a padlock on the back, it's got a lockable coupling, we'll lock the trailer to my car so the trailer can't be stolen. There'll be no issue'.



These were famous last words because by the morning it was gone. Not only the trailer and all the band equipment, but Wade's car, his trombone ... and wallet. So after a call to the police, and a sheepish call to Bec, Wade put a call out to everybody to ask them what they would like to do. The band was not put off, they wanted to do the gig, they just had to work out how.

Everyone met at the bandroom and started photocopying a steady supply of Christmas Carols. Members of the band who were teachers borrowed music stands from their schools and even a drum kit was procured at the last minute.

We spoke to the Bridge Mall people and said, 'this is what's happened, we're still coming, we want to do this', and we ended up being about an hour late and they ended up doing quite a social media thank you, so that got publicity. When we posted that the trailer had been stolen that was probably 7am, by lunchtime it had already been seen by over 22,000 people. So it spread like wildfire and it was really good to see that the band pulled together and worked as a team and decided to do the gig.

– Wade Carman



2016, Christmas Bridge Mall Source: BMCB Facebook

In the end, Wade had to buy a new car, the trailer was recovered and the insurance paid for a new trombone for Wade. In the meantime, however, Wade was tipped off that someone had pawned a trombone in a Ballarat shop that sounded very much like his own. So through a circuitous route, Wade was finally reunited with his stolen trombone.



Back to South Street

Tanya Hale remembers:

2018 saw us take to the stage and see if we could go one better than 2015. Wade was overseas at that time, so we were under the baton of Mark Witham, our guest conductor who led us on our journey to South Street success. This was a journey that didn't have as many twists and turns as the lead-up to South Street 2015, because we played three tunes that weren't as challenging as the tunes we played three years before, and we spent a lot of time on those tunes, both in rehearsals and separate individual and sectional practice sessions. All this hard work, along with Mark's constructive criticism of our efforts and encouragement of consistent improvement, reaped its rewards in the end when the Memorial Band was crowned the 2018 Open 'C' Grade Concert Band champions.

This achievement was pulled off in the wake of a competition where we faced opposition in the form of the Shepparton Wind and Brass Band, and while the Shepparton ensemble gave this competition their best shot (especially with, by matter of coincidence, a tune from their program that was the same tune we'd chosen to finish our program), I was over the moon when we were crowned the 'C' Grade concert band champions. This was because this achievement came three long years after we were declared the runners-up in the very same section, and I felt that this victory was well worth the wait.

—Tanya Hale



Hear the 2018 Royal South Street, Open 'C' Grade Concert Band, Mark Witham (conductor):

[Declaration Overture \(Claude T Smith\)](#)

[Abide with Me \(William H Monk arranged by Jay Dawson\)](#)

[The Witching Hour \(Randall D Standridge\)](#)

Do you recognise these band members?

And of course, there was more dressing up (than in any other decade):



October 2018, Grampians Brass Festival. Source: Ararat City Band Facebook (photographer: Peter Pickering)



2018, Christmas at Bakery Hill McDonalds. Source: Ararat City Band Facebook
(photographer: Peter Pickering)

A final Uniting performance

Not only had Charlotte Withers brought McHappy Day and McDonald's Christmas concerts to the band, but the band had been a regular feature performance at Charlotte's church for some time. You might remember the 'Silent Movie' junior band event that happened there in 2006 which was one of these concerts. This by the way, was dedicated to Lindsay George for his sixtieth anniversary with the band.

There were concerts at Wendouree Uniting Church (which I organised) from 1998 to late 2018 (continually from 2014). The church unfortunately closed this year. These concerts were great as we also featured guests from the local community including: Ballarat Grammar Pipe Band, students from Coward-Lemke Music School, Ballarat High School, Vocalise, Hanz On drumming.

– Charlotte Withers



Take a look at the program for A Spring Afternoon of Music, Wendouree Uniting Church, 23 September 2018.

Source: Charlotte Withers Archive



As we will hear later in this chapter, this is not the last performance nor the band's last MD for the decade.

First though, let's take a moment to pay tribute to Lindsay George, find out how the band was tricked into marching again and take a look inside the band's closet in 'The evolution of the uniform'.

A tribute to Lindsay George

In 2017 the band lost beloved life member, brains trust and heartbeat of the band Mr Lindsay George, member since 1946. Four years earlier the band dedicated the drum room at Wilkinson Hall to him for his eightieth birthday. He was delighted. Lindsay is very much missed.



Read [Musicians' Tribute to Band Heart, The Courier, July 2017.](#)



2010, Band Member of the Year presentation to Lindsay George with Zoom Beck (MD). Source: BMCB Archive



2010, Band member of the year perpetual shield with Lindsay George. Source: BMCB Archive



DISCOVER MORE

You can read more about the Ballarat Wind Orchestra's debut European tour on their [website](#).



The marching experience



2017, Begonia Parade with crowd. Source: BMB Archive

To march, a band needs an MD (and preferably a drum major) who knows how to lead it. That is, if the band has not marched for some time. When Brenda took over the baton she brought with her many years of marching experience. After she left, however, marching petered out by 2007. Fortunately, it started up a decade later in 2017. So by its centenary year the band will be well in the swing of it, having marched at the Begonia Festival for three consecutive years. This may not have happened, though, if not for a cunning plan.

How the band was tricked into marching again – Wade Carman's legacy

Wade explains his passion for getting the band back on their feet:

For me growing up, I love marching. One of my dreams has always to be a drum major at the Edinburgh Military Tattoo.

I was always pushing the publicity for the BMB and one of the biggest events they have in Ballarat is the Begonia Festival. The Begonia Parade has over 10,000 people turn up to be there, so I was thinking publicity ... we should be there ... why aren't we there?

– Wade Carman

The band had not marched for ten years and to purchase a full set of lyres (clip on instrument stands that hold music for ambulant playing) for a fifty piece band, would have been a considerable outlay for the band. At the time, one of the trumpet players was doing a piano exam for which she had to memorise her music. This gave Wade an idea.



Wade pulled out the theme from the *Rocky* movie and started the band on a mission to memorise the music (without ever mentioning marching). He used the piano exam as a reason, explaining, 'You're going to benefit from memorising something'.

This was around October 2016. By just before Christmas, the band had accomplished it. That's when Wade announced, 'We're going to march in the Begonia Parade next year, playing the music from memory'.

When the big day came the band did themselves proud.

Each year, before the Monday Begonia parade, judges audition each musical item before the march begins to choose a winner for that year's parade. Mayor Samantha McIntosh was with the adjudicators on this occasion in 2017 and Wade remembers that 'We just stood in line and played it from memory and they were astounded. We ended up winning the musical entry.' So not only did they surprise themselves by rekindling their marching heritage, they took home a trophy.



2017, Begonia Parade winner. Source: BMCB Archive

Band member and President Bec Paton reports: 'First year [2017] with most of us marching, we won the best musical entry at the Begonia Festival, so we were pretty stoked'.

I tricked them into doing it, intentionally, because I saw it was the only way to do it. They benefited from it and in fact we then went on to memorise more music, they learned to march, they actually won something for the marching which, for them, inspired them to keep doing it. Which was the biggest thing.

– Wade Carman



Zoom Beck was asked to be drum major for the 2017 Begonia parade:

I had marched in a few bands and also while studying music in the US so it wasn't too hard. We ended up winning best musical entry in the parade so it was a huge confidence boost for the band.

– Zoom Beck

Wade also remembers that over the years of marching Mayor Samantha MacIntosh became one of the band's biggest fans. 'Everywhere we went she was always there, cheering us on.'



12 March 2018, Ballarat Begonia Festival, Botanical Gardens. BMCB march with Mayor Samantha McIntosh. Source: City of Ballarat

Playing on the move

Marching is an art made possible by the transfer of lived experience. Players at first unsure of taking on what felt like the momentous task of learning to march benefited from a musical director who was able to impart his childhood experience and love of marching. Just as had happened throughout the history of the band.

People like Brenda and Wade who have grown up with the tradition bring it forward for the next generation.

Wade reflects on how the culture of marching has been carried through in his lifetime. Most occasions for marching in his hometown's Stawell Brass Band were memorial services for war including Anzac Day, Remembrance Day or the Boer War. 'I've probably done over 100 war memorial services in my twenty years of playing and there's no one in my family who has ever been to war.'



While some band members had marched before, either with Brenda or with other bands, for many members it was a brand new experience.

Is marching hard to learn?

Yes! I hadn't done it before. I play saxophone and keeping the reed in a good position while you're moving, there's a few things to think about. Plus we had to memorise the music which some people who have been playing for years found harder than others.

– Bec Paton

Band member Nicole Melton had a different experience when marching was reintroduced at BMCB:

For me it wasn't an issue because I have been marching forever. When I was in the brass band in Maryborough, that's when I started marching and the president and drum major over there is one of the head adjudicators for the Nationals. I learned from him what he looks for. And then when you come to someone else, you've got to work out what their cues are to be able to go off them, and not what you're used to.

– Nicole Melton

Pam Clark is a life member of both BMCB and Creswick Band. When asked about whether Pam missed marching when it dropped out of the band's schedule she said:

I did then but not now - it's hard to read the music when it's on the little stand and I've had two hip replacements! When marching in Creswick they often put us behind the horses in the Anzac Parade. One year, I slipped on horse poo!

– Pam Clark

Amanda Bentley remembers her experiences of marching with the Soldiers' Band in the 70s:

Marching ... I hated it when I started. Playing cornet is hard enough, without that!! Nearly broke a tooth marching down Sturt Street when I put my foot in a pothole! We were playing for the reopening of the Regent Cinema [1976]. George Horwood was the drum major ... I eventually learned to march quite well, but wrecked my ability to learn choreography, because I immediately lead off with my left foot!

– Amanda Bentley

A problem perhaps not encountered too frequently by military officers?

The following account from Tanya Hale beautifully illustrates the considerations that each individual has to make as they confront the challenges of marching for the first time:

One challenge that has paved the way to a number of achievements has been learning to march with the band in parades, in particular the Begonia Festival parade.

Those of you readers who have ever marched in community concert or brass bands will understand how difficult it is, as you have to keep in time with the music, keep in step with the band, maintain your position in the formation during the march and keep an eye out for directions from your drum major amongst other aspects.

– Tanya Hale



2017, Begonia Parade, preparing to march. Source: BMCB Archive



2017, Begonia Parade, drums at the ready.
Source: BMCB Archive

My first march with the band was in the Begonia Festival parade in 2003, and the fact that I had to keep all the aforementioned aspects in mind was nerve-wracking enough without the fact that we didn't actually undertake any proper marching practice in the lead-up to the event due to circumstances beyond our control. Thus, my debut march ended up being a struggle for me, as I struggled to keep in step with the band as well as maintain my breathing as we played our marches. I was on the edge of the parade formation, and as we passed thousands of spectators who were positioned along the parade route, I can honestly admit that I was worried about whether those people were able to spot me, an uncoordinated first-timer, amongst marchers who'd clearly done this performance many times before. However, I eventually made it to the end of the parade route with my fellow marchers without any major dramas, and I was very happy to have taken this big step out of my musical comfort zone and experienced what it was like to play in a marching band.

Going on from the Begonia Festival parade, my marching experience and confidence grew with every parade we marched in and every marching practice session we undertook, and at the point in time at which I write this [2019], I am proud to report that I've performed in twelve marches with the Memorial Band.

My most recent marches with the band are of particular note here because they were at the Begonia Festival parades in 2017 and 2018, when Wade had us swapping our march cards that had our marches we'd played in the previous parades for two tunes we learned off by heart: Gonna Fly Now from the movie Rocky for the 2017 parade and Superstition by Stevie Wonder for the 2018 parade. I can admit that those parade marches were much easier for me than the previous parade marches because the need to look down at our march cards that were clipped on to our lyres to jog our memories was taken out of the equation, meaning that I was able to concentrate on keeping in step and maintaining my position in the formation during the parades.

All the same, the challenge of marching with the Memorial Band is one I'm glad to have overcome, as well as one I enjoy, especially as we march along the Begonia Festival parade route every year.

– Tanya Hale



2017, Leading the Begonia Festival Parade. Source: BMCB Archive



2017, Turning at Begonia Festival Parade. Source: BMCB Archive



The evolution of the uniform

Over the decades the Soldiers' / Memorial Concert Band has undergone change in its players, repertoire, gender representation, military connection and instrumentation. Uniform reflects all these changes.

Out of the closet



1920s, WW1 'Digger' army uniform with slouch hat

At first, the uniform for the Soldiers' band reflected the military ties of the band and the memorialisation of those who served. But it was not long before army property was returned and a new uniform envisaged.

1924 Minutes

It was decided that members return all Military property as soon as possible. New uniforms were ordered.

The matter of new uniforms was then discussed and samples of cloth and after a good deal of discussion it was decided to purchase same from the Sunny Side Woolen Mills at 10/6 yard

Then it was moved that tenders be called for the making of same 31 uniforms Midshipman Tunic, Gold Buttons and Braid. Tailor made. Samples and prices to be returned by Saturday next.

Special Meeting regarding the uniforms where tenders were discussed, patterns inspected and a decision arrived at after a good deal of discussion that Mather Bros tender at 4.12.6 pound be accepted with the addition of 2 small buttons on each sleeve. And it was moved that the wide gold braid be put on the coat sleeve, but the narrow black braid with gold lacing won out to correspond with the trousers. It was also suggested that one whole uniform should be made and shown to the committee to see if anything else is required for same. Motion carried.



1924-26, with Alf Rowell as MD. Bow tie, double breasted. Source: Bob Pattie Archive



1930s, Band photo – same uniform but with triple cords across the front. Modification, embellishment.

Note MD Frank Wright has his own conductor's uniform. Source: Bob Pattie Archive

5 Dec 1932 Minutes

That it be left in the hands of the Secretary re ordering new caps.

1937/38 Minutes

New uniforms ordered.



In 1945 they moved to single breasted coats. Fashion followed the times; money was saved on fabric between the Depression years and ration years of World War II and the double breasted suit saw a return to single. New caps, no bow ties, buttoned up to the closed collar.



1946, Memorial Band's final parade. Source: BMCB Archive



Over half a century later, band drummer Lindsay George, who joined the band in 1946, surprised the members at the 2011 AGM by appearing in several past band uniforms. He brings the past to life here in vivid 21st Century colour.

When uniforms become lost or worn out it prompts a change to keep up with the times. Especially if the band is preparing for a South Street Competition or important occasions. To survive and thrive, attracting younger players is vital. Uniform can play a big part in how relevant young players feel that banding will be to them.

2011, Lindsay George displays the 1940s uniform at the AGM



1959: Navy blue; a return to double breasted, with striking, bold red stripe down the leg, ornate cuffs, shirt collar and tie. Red, navy with gold cap.



1959, Band photo. Source: BMCB Archive



1960, Band photo. Source: BMCB Archive



By 1962 the band wears the same uniform but with new caps reminiscent of the Royal Australian Navy: white, navy and gold.



1962, Aub McGregor and colleagues. Source: Geoff Smith Archive



1963, South Street, Winners 'B' Grade Championships. Source: BMCB Archive

Cheque to help band



Vice-president of Ballarat Y's Men's Club, Mr Allan Harris, right, hands a cheque for \$50 to the president of Ballarat Soldiers' Memorial Band, Cr W. E. Roff, to assist the appeal being held to purchase new uniforms for the band while the club treasurer, Mr E. Smith, looks on. The Y's Men will also provide staff for the "Music for the People" programme being provided by the band at the Ballarat Sound Shell next Sunday afternoon.

1967 November 29,
The Courier, article
with Mick Smith
for funding for new
uniforms (maybe
just replacements).



1970, Band photo. Source: BMCB Archive



1970: Same uniform but new navy cap with red stripe.



2011, Lindsay George models the 1970s uniform at the AGM



1971, South Street, Winners 'B' Grade Championships. Source: BMCB Archive

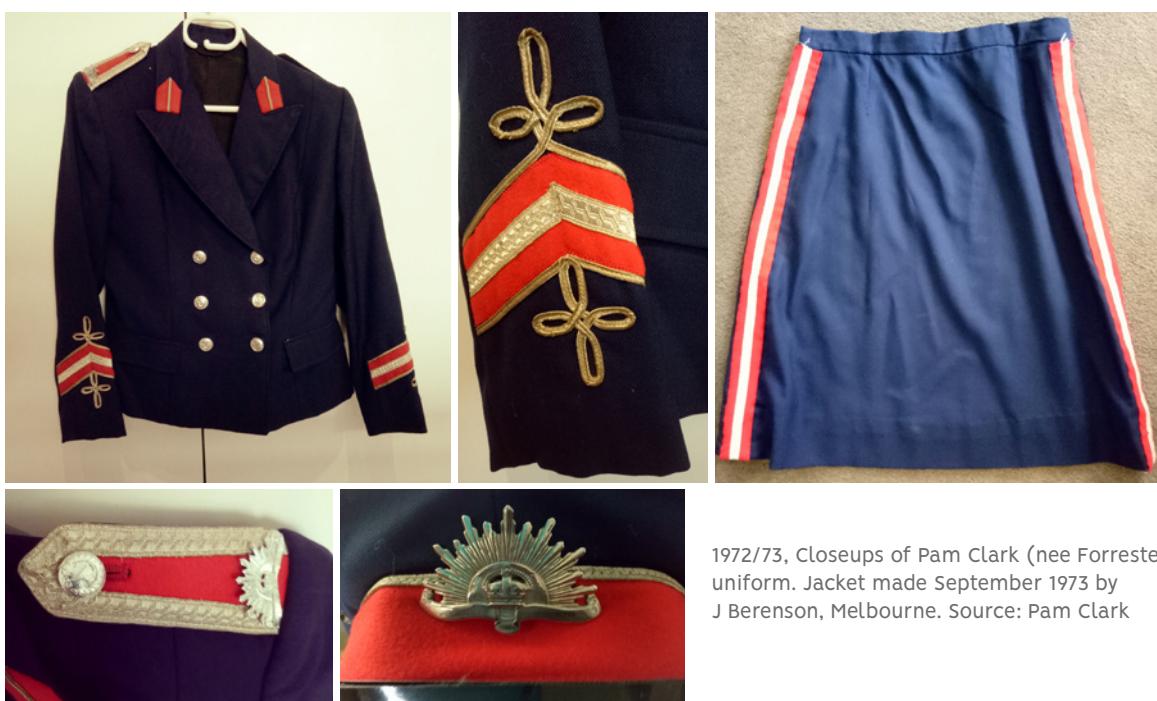


Women have had quite an influence on the evolution of band uniform in the last 100 years. Their part in the change in uniform is probably hidden by the fact that they weren't wearing it until the 1970s. But, for so many decades of the band's history, women were fundraising for it, commenting on it, showing interest in it and taking on the task of cleaning, repairing and pressing it. Not to mention getting it ready to be worn at competitions, playouts and special events.

The welcoming of women to banding in the 1970s necessitated more change.



1972, Same uniform but first band photo with Pam Clark heralding in a new era –
the first women's uniform is commissioned



1972/73, Closeups of Pam Clark (nee Forrester) uniform. Jacket made September 1973 by J Berenson, Melbourne. Source: Pam Clark



1975, Band photo – same uniform but with the addition of girls wearing uniform and two lads without regular uniform. Source: BMCB Archive



c.1976, Band photo with Jim Allen (MD), Pam Forrester (Clark), Amanda Bentley and Leanne Pattie. Source: Pam Clark Archive



1983, Band photo – Some women now wearing trousers. Still Ballarat
Soldiers' Memorial Band, still more female players



1987, Band photo, Ballarat Memorial Concert Band: mid blue blazer, black skirt or trousers, women wearing
tights (not bare-legged). Starting to be a more gender-balanced band. Source: BMCB Archive



2011, Lindsay George demonstrates how times have changed with a 1980s band windcheater at the AGM

One of the major challenges every community band faces is the rise and fall of member numbers. This is only remedied by creating a developmental band – the junior band of today becoming the senior band of tomorrow. To survive and thrive, attracting younger players is vital. The uniform has an important role to play in how relevant young people feel the band is to them.

1996: Purple satin waistcoats, bow ties are back! Women in trousers, more practical designs and fabrics for everyone.



c.1997, Band photo in Bandroom. Source: Glover Archive

3 December 1997, Brenda's newsletter:

Remember - when you play out you are representing the band. Please wear **correct uniform** and have it clean and pressed. Polish your shoes and your instruments.

Uniform is long sleeved white shirt/blouse, black pants/ long skirt, black socks/stockings and shoes, band vest and bow tie. If you do not have a vest or bow tie see the uniform officer, Pam.



Pam had put a note in a previous newsletter that year (May 1997), with instructions:

If you wish to iron your vest, please put a cloth between the vest and the iron!

By now the band are marching again.



1997, Outdoor march, white Akubras are in. Source: BMCB Archive

2004: South Rotary Club funds the purchase of blazers for the band

2004: Maroon blazers and ties, black trousers.



2005, Band photo. Source: BMCB Archive



2010, Begonia Festival, Botanical Gardens, Pam Clark Life Member (French Horn). Note music stand matching banners. Source: BMCB Archive

2015 onwards: Purple polo neck short sleeve shirt, black trousers, black fleece top.



c.2016, Band photo. Note the eclectic array of jackets. It must have been cold! Source: BMCB Archive



2019, South Street Gold Winners. Source: BMCB Facebook



Former band President Bec Paton explains the decisions behind the change to a less military style uniform which is more casual, more comfortable and moving with the times.

They wore blazers until about 2015. They were finding that blazers, while one of the most expensive items, never sat right on the curvy members of the band, which is ... most of the female members. It never quite looked or felt right. So the band opted for a more comfortable fleece top and trousers, modernising the uniform with a smart, contemporary band look.

– Bec Paton

Sometimes, in December, there was even the addition of a Santa hat:



2016, Christmas band photo – Santa liked being MD. Source: BMCB Facebook

The band at the end of the 2010s



2018, BMCB after Royal South Street competitions, Founders Hall warmup room, Mark Witham guest conductor. Source: BMCB Facebook



At the end of 2018 Wade resigned to spend time with his partner in Ararat. Once again the band was on the lookout for a new MD. Mark Witham who had conducted the band in the 2018 Royal South Street competitions to 'C' Grade victory got the job.

Welcome Mark Witham (2019–current)



2019, BMCB South Street rehearsals with Mark Witham MD. Source: BMCB Facebook



Mark Witham. Source: Mark Witham Facebook

Mark Witham is a player (euphonium and trombone), band leader, adjudicator, music teacher, arranger and composer.

Mark's career is grounded in many years in the Australian Army Band as well as a Masters in Music (Technology), and directorship of Music and Performing Arts in leading NSW and Victorian schools. He also managed the Wendouree Centre for Performing Arts for a period before becoming the musical director of the BMCB and music director for Eureka Brass.

Music is not Mark's only love, however. If you are feeling peckish while driving down East Ballarat (current to the publication of this book), you can sample culinary delights at Mark and Madeleine's shop – The Little Cupcake!



Although Mark has only been MD for the BMB for a short time, the impact of his leadership was felt when he lead the band to "C" Grade victory in the South Street Competitions in 2018 when Wade was overseas. It was with great pleasure that the band was able to accept his application for MD in 2019.

In 2019 at the Royal South Street competitions the band achieved gold. This time the competition was not aggregated, there not being enough bands competing, so all the bands competed for the same title.

Here are the results from the Victorian Band's League:

Congratulations to all concert bands on their achievements in the Open Concert Band section at the Victorian State Band Championships. This section was judged in a festival format and the awards are as follows:

Knox Wind Symphony: Platinum
Ballarat Memorial Concert Band: Gold
Geelong Concert Band - Senior Band: Gold
Geelong Concert Band - Community Band: Silver
Shepparton Brass and Wind: Silver

Krissie Withers was MD of the Development Band through 2018, but stepped down due to other commitments. Trish Dulude took up the role of MD of the developmental band in 2019, combining it with a role as associate MD of the senior band.



2019, Trish Dulude conducting in Wilkinson Hall Bandroom. Source: BMB Facebook



Without mentors, we are nothing

To end this century of music, let us think about all the thousands of lives this band has affected. How much solace and joy it has brought to players, their families and to the wider community and how, without the innate desire to pass down and share the love of music, the band could not have survived nor thrived.

After all these years, mentoring is still the way we transfer skill and ignite and share passion.

That's music isn't it, you can have three generations away in age and you can play in the same outfit.

– Dennis Hawkes

At Haddon, Dennis Hawkes, former Soldiers' junior band member from the 50s and senior band member in the 60s, enjoys supporting young player Hannah Paton who plays with both BMB and Haddon Band. He sits in on whatever trumpet part needs a player, whether it be second or third part. Often with the youngest player. Dennis' enjoys supporting young players like Hannah in this way:

The oldest with the youngest. Hannah's about the same age as I was when I started. However, she's obviously started a long way earlier in her life because of the standard that she's at now. Obviously she's got a long way to go, but she's a great little player. Mum and Dad have supported her well with her playing. Every time you see her she'll say, look at my new mute or my new trumpet and she's very proud of that.

– Dennis Hawkes

Throughout the band there are countless stories of such mentorship. It is the fabric from which the band is crafted.

I would say that my greatest joy of 70 years in music is to see former music students still playing and enjoying music.

– Brenda Beck

Who is John (Jack) Cartasso?

MD Mark Witham shares his story, which surprisingly links us back to 1930s crack euphonium soloist of the Soldiers' Band. Although Mark grew up in Hamilton, not Ballarat, he has a very close connection with one of the early members of the Soldiers' Band, Jack Cartasso (b. 1911 in Maldon. WW2 number: V146449). You will see him pictured on p. 63 in the section about Frank Wright, with Frank and Jack Zilles at the Creswick Baths.



Jack Cartasso. Source: VBL Archive



Jack was my euphonium teacher 1973–75. Jack was bandmaster of the Hamilton City Band, a local piano tuner and a well known musician.

I know very little of Jack's personal life. I've heard a few stories but only remember him as my teacher, mentor and bandmaster.

Jack heard everything, knew everything and musically could play anything. He was my absolute inspiration. Our Saturday lessons started at 9.00am and would finish about 1.00pm. Lessons were always in the bandroom and Jack never stopped talking. He's the most musical person I've ever met! Apparently he was a tertiary lecturer and a master euphoniumist. He would recall when he lived in the UK playing live in the BBC in a weekly sight reading competition, which he would frequently win. He told me an English paper once published 'best euphonium player in the world' about Jack.

His lessons were detailed, including acoustics, a lot of technique, massive amounts of scales and technical work. Jack excelled at repertoire and musicality. We would go over and over pieces getting every nuance just right.

My greatest moment for Jack was winning the Australasian Junior Champion of Champions at the prestigious Royal South Street Competitions. I only found out two years ago that Stevie Ford and Frank Dyer were also finalists!

The same year I received A+ for my AMEB Grade 6 exam and for three straight years I was the Victorian State Euphonium Champion and played in the Champion School Band, the Hamilton High School Brass Band, under my initial teacher and Jack's friend, Eric Beale.

Life in Hamilton, Victoria was a hub of music. I had the best teachers for primary school band and choir (both state champions), a class teacher in Grade 5 who was a musician too (Mr Brian Sullivan), a magnificent piano teacher (Elaine Lewis) who I still keep in touch with, my father Glen, my accompanist and greatest supporter but Jack was the best by a country mile. He was the ultimate teacher.

I remember his amazing collection of old cars and utes. One ute he had, an old Chevrolet, was so rusted in the floor you could see the road below. I remember his Chrysler Royal. What a magnificent machine that was! We both loved cars and music.

Jack would tune our piano at home, a feat which took two days because Jack was a perfectionist. He'd always forget to send the bill so dad would personally deliver cash to him which he was reluctant to take. One thing you had to be cautious of was inviting Jack to dinner. I remember once he left at 2.00am!

Jack is always in my head. He left a legacy for which I am forever grateful. Jack passed away while I was studying in the USA. I was extremely sad not to be able to say good-bye to my friend and mentor.

– Mark Witham, 2018



Coda

Banding is who we are

Brass banding has woven its purpose through time and place. From a call to action in military heritage (since Ancient Rome) to intentional recreation (British 1800s colliery and factory bands), to civic pride (villages, towns and cities across the British empire) threaded back into the battlefields of World War I (battalion bands) where they provided much-needed memories of home.

Civic, military and memorial purposes over the past two centuries have interacted and combined. Both military and civic uses of banding have been integral to the culture.

Over the last half-century, the Soldiers' Band / BMCB has shifted increasingly to a civic focus and the band's ties to war have become less immediate and more retrospective.

From the 1970s onward, we notice an informalisation of banding culture coinciding with the widespread anti-Vietnam War sentiments and protests. By this time, the hero status days of the twentieth century brass band, during which people were given time off work and school to spectate at the famous South Street competitions, and the decades where Ballarat was the 'Bandsman's Mecca', were becoming a distant memory.

The decrease in march duration, disappearance of the quickstep competition, dissolution of an all-male playing culture, loosening of military ties and reimagination of the uniform by the 80s all reflect this cultural shift. However, the military heritage and connection is still present, expressed through repertoire, representation in military memorials and activities such as marching.

When we look at the photos from the 1920s and compare them with the recent banding photos, we clearly see the relaxing of a regimented culture. Formal AGMs with the mayor in attendance and smoke nights at the rifle range became Christmas barbeques and, later, McDonalds band meet-ups in the late 70s, dim sims at band practice in the 80s and, more recently, pizza nights and dress-up performances.

Turnouts, which are now called playouts, speak to the evolution of the informality of the band, but also to its consistency of purpose. Copperplate script for committee meetings, carvery knives for betrothals and wreaths for bereavement seem a long way off now, but the spirit of community has not changed.

The most profound changes for the band and its community have been the 1970s welcoming of women players, the 1980s change of instrumentation from all-brass to concert band, and the aforementioned loosening of formal structure and discrete military connection. These changes all reflect cultural shifts regionally, nationally and globally.

Still relevant, 100 years later

The band still provides a central recreational focus for people's lives; an opportunity to learn new skills, share experience and mentor new players; and a way for civic-minded people to be musically self-expressed while bringing unity and joy to the community in which they play and live.

Contribution to community life continues to be at the heart of the band.

Bec Paton, who describes herself as a recent member (only having been with the band for ten years), writes about the band in 2019, a year before its centenary:

It's a beautifully diverse, accepting, supportive, fun, group of people. We come together and we support each other and have a great time. The band started off as a bunch of traumatised ex soldiers, so how we got from there to where we are now, that's a big change so there's a lot of stories in that because change is stories. Every change has a story.

The band is not the competition results, the band is the people. The results is the boring stuff, we did South Street last year and we did well and we're really happy with that, but it's much more about the process of doing that and working hard and getting together and at the end it was great that we'd won our section but it was more that we'd accomplished this many months of preparation and put together something that was good and played music that we didn't think we could play. So setting a challenge and supporting each other to meet that challenge is pretty cool.

– Bec Paton

With all of the changes over the past century, what does the band offer current players? How might that parallel with what the original returned soldiers were seeking when they initiated the band?

The band gave me probably a bit of what it gave those guys way back then. Because I joined the band when my kids were little and I was a stay at home mum and confronted with being a parent of a child with multiple profound disabilities and it was actually my husband who suggested I join the band and it was wonderful because it was something that had nothing to do with disabilities. It was great because I got to meet different people and focus on that process of looking at the music, looking at the notes and getting the fingering right and keeping an eye on the conductor and your brain is so busy doing all these things and putting it together and at the same time being amazed by the gorgeous music being made around you. Sometimes it can be distracting while you're trying to concentrate (lol). You can hear someone do a beautiful part off in the ether and then realise, oh I forgot to count my bar numbers! But that's getting lost in the moment which I think we can forgive ourselves for that from time to time. So for me that was the big thing, it was something outside of dealing with disability because my life had become very much focused on that.

– Bec Paton

Who we are now

The band reflects a wide skill-set from diverse parts of the community and a broad mix of occupations coming together with a common purpose: to make music.

Most people I contacted for the research of this book were willing to see me within forty eight hours of the first phone call. This sort of 'can-do' attitude is catchy! I met people who give blood every fortnight, got the all abilities playground funded and built at Victoria Park, clean the hall and make the supper, and who volunteer their time at the Anzac and Remembrance Day services or Carols by Candlelight – in some instances for forty and fifty years running.

These are capable, humble, passionate and connected humans.

One of the palpable side effects of playing together, immediately noticeable when stepping into the bandroom, is that friendships made through banding have a special and highly valued quality.

Significantly different to 100 years ago, the band now has a balance of genders, and representation throughout the straight and LGBTQIA community as well as an increasing diversity of nationalities.

Here are some personal accounts from current members of what it means to be in the band:

I joined the band in 1995 when my Pop saw an advertisement in *The Courier* and thought it would be good. So I joined and have been there ever since (only missing a handful of rehearsals). I love the range of music but mostly the friends I have made through the band – even though some of them aren't playing with the band any more.

– Charlotte Withers

I may be a person with a disability, and a hidden one at that, but if there's one thing I pride myself on, it's showing people without disabilities that we people with disabilities can do anything they can do, especially with the right amount of support where it's required. I initially intended to join the Ballarat Memorial Concert Band in 2000 after participating in a school band workshop with them, but I got held back by my parents who insisted that the completion of my secondary education came first. But the day when I eventually joined the band didn't matter in the end, because I am proud to be part of a group that looks upon me as another member and sees my disability as something that adds to my uniqueness.

– Tanya Hale

I like being able to see families coming together to make music. My sister Boon comes with me when she can (she's blind but can see some things so uses an iPad to read music) and Mark Witham is currently MD and is also inclusive of people and a great teacher.

– Zoom Beck

It's an honour to be the music director heading into the centenary year.

– Mark Witham (MD)

I played with Memorial Concert Band soon after moving to Ballarat from Hamilton in 1991. Later, returning from a Melbourne work transfer, I was eager to play and immediately sought out the band to catch up with friends, and to see what was new. Brenda Beck was MD, and she is fabulous. Being involved in anything musical that has her touch is always a joy and I was keen to see her too.

Returning felt like a comfortable pair of slippers; the time away very quickly seemed a distant memory. New to the band was a young and very pretty trumpet player who, in addition to her nose ring, played with a beautiful sound. It was her sound that I noticed first. Meeting and chatting with her was the goal but every time I managed to sidle along the section, painstakingly seat by seat, a week at a time, Brenda would make me move back.

Triumph in the end and we finally chatted. Ultimately, we became a 'memorial band' relationship! This year we celebrate fifteen years of marriage.

I have very fond memories of playing in the band and I was fortunate, later to hone some conducting skills for a little while. In addition to proving very useful musical skills, I received tremendous joy conducting in what was the feeder band. The band was kind in allowing me to explore the arcane arts of French horn and trombone too. This opportunity to explore, play and conduct has assisted me tremendously as now a music teacher.

While I haven't performed with the band for a while now, I enjoy catching up with my friends here and there. In some cases, playing in other ensembles for one off gigs.

Memorial gave me a chance to develop as a player, explore other instruments, conduct and meet lovely people.

– Simon Marcollo

Matt [16] loves his music and wants to do something with it, even if its just playing with others or in bands. I think the others are a bit young yet to have had music playing impact them much. However Dan [12] has mentioned that one of the others in learner band will be in his class next year at college so he is looking forward to that as he only has one friend from school going into the selective class with him.

As you know our kids do lots of things, scouts, ballet, now basketball too. So I guess you could say making new friends who may not be interested in gaming influences – but share what interests you yourself have – could get them away from computers.

– Kathryn Flind

I joined the band in 2009. At that stage I was a full time mother and carer. I had two little girls aged eighteen months and three years.

Before the kids were born, I was a teacher. We had moved from Melbourne and the only people I knew in Ballarat were my colleagues at the school. After the kids were born, the only people I saw were my mothers' group and doctors and therapists. It was my husband who suggested the band, he worked with Karen Roberts – clarinet player. I went along a couple of times and realised I was out of my depth. It had been over 15 years since I had picked up a clarinet. Thankfully the developmental band was quite strong at that point and provided a more gentle reintroduction to playing.

It was wonderful to meet new people and to do something separate from being a mum, a role that had become all-encompassing with my eldest child's diagnosis of a rare syndrome that would cause severe disabilities. Band became an outlet and the people I met through the band became both a distraction and, in time, amazing support. I was so grateful to the band for what it was giving me, I joined the committee to give something back.

I've been in the band a decade now. I have been on the committee for much of that time. Often as either president or vice president. My younger daughter is now a member and sight-reads better than I do.

People I have met through band have become some of my closest friends. They are a diverse group of wonderful people. Some are older than I am, some a lot younger, some gay, some straight, some working, some studying, some looking for work, some retired, some religious, some not. We work together to make music, to make others smile and to continually improve our skills and knowledge.

Discussions about how we would celebrate the centenary of the band began in 2017. In early 2018 our MD at the time sent me a link to a grant from the Public Records Office. With the help of Cheryl Russell, Georgina Williams and others, we got the submission in and the result is this ebook.

I am so proud we now have this record of how this wonderful community began and became the diverse, supportive, inclusive, group of musicians that I look forward to seeing every Wednesday night.

– Bec Paton

The fundamental human need to make and experience music together has not changed over the last 100 years, and is likely to remain undiminished as it is central to our biology. Music is who we are.

Here is a band that has stood the test of time and continues to look forward to a bright future.

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