

# 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		Darling Darling	17. 7.32 24. 7.32	Special meeting - Secretary V.B.L. Mr. Sullivan Special meeting - Band enter South Street Competition and join Victorian Bands League. Resignation to V.B.A. Graded "A" with the Bandmasters consent (apparently he did not)
W. Wilkinson	20. 2.30	Queen Carnival		W. Wilkinson	9. 8.32	
A.S. Darling	26. 2.30			W. Wilkinson	26. 9.32	Special meeting - Report on V.B.L. Bandmaster to pick contest band.
W. Wilkinson	22. 3.30			W. Wilkinson	10.10.32	B. Harding permit Eupho from Melbourne - Band to enter "A" and "B" grade contest at South Street and the members obtain leave from work, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday and be available 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.
A.S. Darling	3. 4.30			Darling	8.11.32	Band won "B" grade aggregate - Rickart Cup. Take an interstate trip 1933.
A.S. Darling	15. 4.30			Darling	5.12.32	Lodge appeal against re grading to "A" grade
A.S. Darling	30. 5.30	Annual Meeting		Hewitt	19.12.32	Special meeting - Bass instrument was found on doorstep - handed to police under protest through solicitor - instrument found to be property of Band. Solicitor instructed to initiate proceedings for the recovery of all instruments held by the City Band which are the property of this band (Ballarat & District Soldiers & Sailors Instrument Fund Committee)
W. Wilkinson	15. 5.30	1000 buttons ordered for contest appeal		Hewitt		
A.S. Darling	19. 6.30			Darling	9. 1.33	J. Ratcliff appointed Deputy Bandmaster due to the leave of absence of Bandmaster at New Zealand contest
A.S. Darling	18. 7.30			Hewitt	2. 2.33	Sub Committee to wait on Solicitor re missing instruments
W. Wilkinson	14. 8.30	Band to enter Tanunda contest - leaving Ballarat October 20 and returning 27th. Coronation Ceremony 12th August		Hewitt	16. 3.33	Mr. A. Trahair to represent band V.B.L.
W. Wilkinson	28. 8.30			Hewitt	4. 4.33	Annual Meeting - Cr. Darling (President) C.J. Hewitt, P. Mather, F. Richardson, W. Wilkinson, G.M. Cameron (V.P.) Bandmaster, Frank Wright; Drum Major, Warrant Officer A.E. Jones.
Hewitt	18. 9.30			Darling	10. 4.33	Special meeting - Verbal resignation of Bandmaster as from 29th July - Applications be made.
Hewitt	6.10.30			W. Wilkinson	25. 5.33	Resignation of F. Wright; resignation of Mr. Geo. Smythe as librarian
A.S. Darling	18.11.30	Band to compete Christmas contest - Bendigo. Commence raising money for Tanunda 1931.		Hewitt	6. 6.33	Special meeting - Applications for Bandmaster - 5 from Melbourne; 5 from S.A.; 2 Queensland; 3 Vic. country; 15 rejected - 22 applicants. The Sub-Committee approved in order - J. Watson, W.L. Taylor, W.S. May, Geo. Simpson. If S. Watson not available, Geo Simpson to be appointed.
A.S. Darling	18.12.30			Hewitt	2. 7.33	Mr. Jerram appointed deputy conductor until Mr. Watson takes over. J. Zillies resigned - clearance granted and Soprano returned. Band divided into 3 groups for a popular bandsman contest.
A.S. Darling	15. 1.31	Purchase Leedy drum. Band picnic Wilson's Reservoir		F. Richardson	12. 7.33	S.M. Watson welcomed as bandmaster. enter "B" grade South Street.
W. Wilkinson	12. 2.31	Private wire be installed for Broadcasting Band. Theatre concert May, July, September, November 3BA		W. Wilkinson	15. 9.33	Major A.E. Jones transferred to Bendigo - resigns 5th Nov. Junior Band be formed.
A.S. Darling	24. 2.31	Photos of band winning street march and quickstep Tanunda be purchased		Hewitt	11.10.33	New system for signing uniforms & instruments etc.
W. Wilkinson	19. 3.31	Minutes handwriting changes - possibly being F. Richardson		Hewitt	25.10.33	
A.S. Darling	21. 4.31	Annual Meeting		W. Wilkinson	16.11.33	A. Trahair resigned as V.B.L. delegate. Warrant Officer Harry Dawson appointed Drum Major.
W. Wilkinson	14. 5.31			F. Richardson	11.12.33	Leave of absence granted Secretary until Annual Meeting - Geo. Wilkinson acting Secretary.
F. Richardson	9. 7.31	Leave granted Frank Wright to adjudicate Maitland contest. Purchase of hessian to cover walls of Institute for broadcasting.		F. Richardson	11. 1.34	W. Trahair acting Assistant Secretary
		Coconut matting for floor; fireplace be installed		W. Wilkinson	8.2.34	Junior Band formed
		Resignation and clearance of John Zillies. List of singers for broadcasting - C. Gower; W. Scott; N. Dunstan; G. Callinan; G. Beckwith, I. Brimacombe; E. Daff; S. Jones; Ted Hocking; J. D'Albora; Jim O'Shea; The Goons; Mrs. Ritchie; Miss Dickenson; Miss Miller; Miss C. Allen; Mrs. Morrison; Miss Chrissie Moore and Mrs. Burke (Miss Alhons)		Hewitt	15.3.34	
Darling	24. 7.31					
Darling	13. 8.31					
W. Wilkinson	10. 9.31	Purchase 6 music stands				
Sprake	8.10.31	To attend Tanunda 1932				
Darling	10.11.31	Donation of set of music folders. Resignation of A.E. Burtons and A. Henderson.				
Hewitt	8.12.31	Queen Carnival 1932 Committee between Trip to Buninyong at Easter. Medals offered for solo contests.				
Darling	19. 1.32					
A.E. Jones	2. 2.32	Mr. James welcomed				
Darling	5. 3.32	Special meeting - constitution be changed. "The Band must be affiliated with the Victorian Bands League Association"				
Hewitt	19. 4.32	12th Annual - Mr. A.R. Rutherford be elected Life Member. Retirement from Treasurer of C.E. Harris.				
Hewitt		£35 for Tympani purchased from Allan & Co. Band apply for grading in Victorian Bands League.				
Darling	17. 5.32	List of bandsmen be forwarded to V.B.L.				
A.E. Jones	14. 6.32	Special meeting to meet representatives V.B.L. - due to misunderstanding VBL did not arrive.				
Darling	10. 7.32					

1930s, Overview from minutes 1930-34. Source: BMBB 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 BMBB 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:

H Cotton Geo Nagel	That H Brews resignation be held over carried
W Wright S Wilkinson	That after amounting to £15-7-0 summarised as follows Secretary's honorarium £10-10-0, Tulloch & Kings 17/6, Pearse & Sykes £2-10-0, Miss Campbell 10/6, Wason £10-10-0 be passed for payment carried
S Nagel A Henderson	That we play at Britannia on nights allowed & that Secretary apply for a further two months. carried.
S Wilkinson W E Allen	That the matter of Alfred Hall in case of Bris. be closed be left in the hands of the Sec. carried
W Wright S Wilson	That if Vocation contract be received we go so held by bus, if not we go by train carried.
S Nagel W Wright	That band take part in concert at Coliseum on 5 <sup>th</sup> June carried.
S Wilkinson W Wright	That the matter of a box for music stands be left in the hands of W Wilkinson & W E Wilson carried

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

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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



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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.

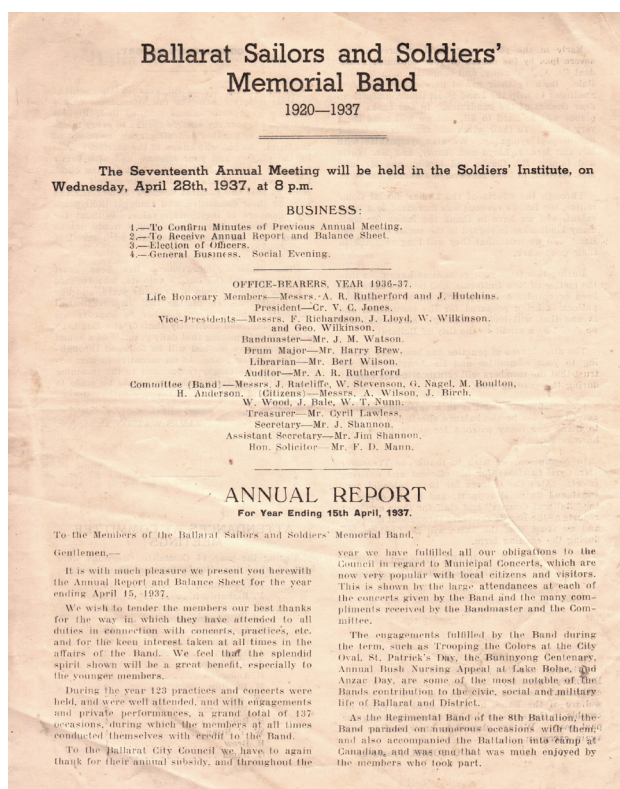
[Unplaced in "B" Grade Selection, third place in "B" Grade Quickstep - RSS].

(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

**S**T. 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, Bungee C.Y.M.S. members and parish unit (to the number of about 100), led by their chaplain, Rev. Fr. Patten; L.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

sence 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 æsthetic 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 solos 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 eurythmics 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

**T**HAT 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 Bungerees 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; Bungerees 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 girls 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**

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**BELL BROS.**

Kilgour Street Bakery,

Geelong

*Brown Bread a Specialty.*

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**Bacchus Marsh**

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**BRIDGE INN**

BACCHUS MARSH.  
(Under New Management.)  
Opposite Madderly Park and Railway Station.  
Jack Brennan (late of Panten Hill) will  
Welcome Your Patronage.  
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. Spielvogel, G. Bunting and S. Samson.

Intending competitors are reminded that entries for all subjects positively close on Friday next, 18th inst., and may be lodged at Allan's Music Warehouse, Collins street, Melbourne, or posted direct to the general secretary (Mr. L. A. Backman), Box 33, P.O., Ballarat.

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



[illegible]

1932, South Street comps. Source: VBL scrapbook