

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.]

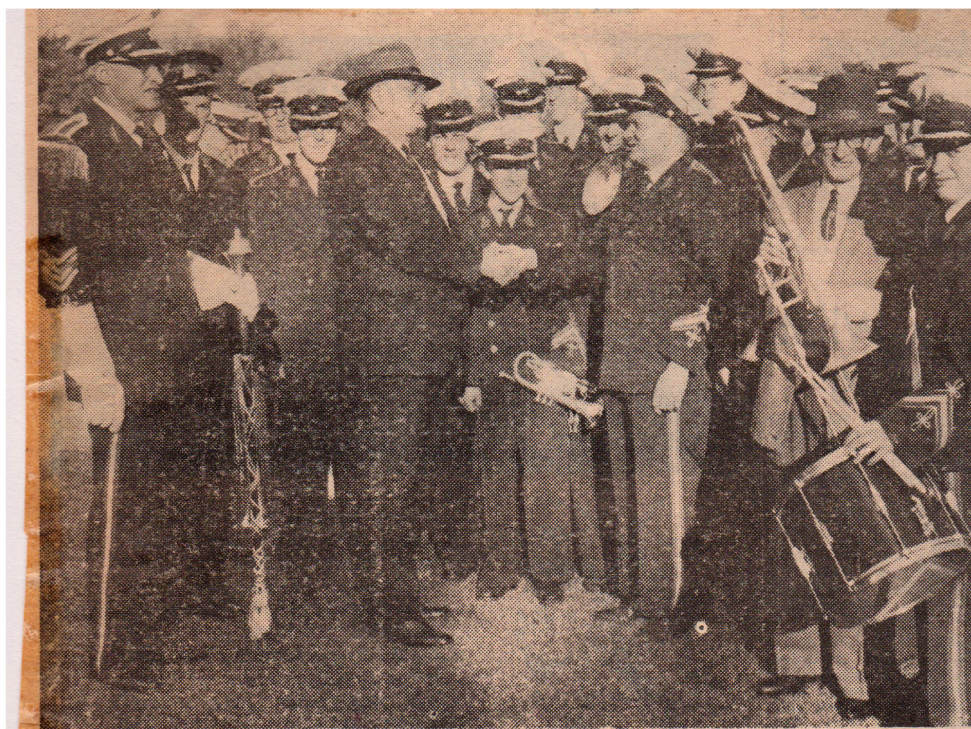
Tanunda S.A. 1st A Grade Quickstep, 1st B Grade Quickstep, 1st B Grade Test, 2nd A Grade Test and 3rd Street March

[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.

1962, 'B' Grade Quickstep winners, *The Courier*.
Source: Geoff Smith Archive

Prints of photographs taken by "Courier" photographers are daily on display in the "Courier" window. Copies may be purchased on application at the Office.



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

The Courier - MAY 1 - 1965

Soldiers Band has championship hip 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 39 bands which showed that despite such attractions as television, and other entertainments, bands were still popular and there were people willing to give up a 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: BMCB 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 Sebastapol 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.

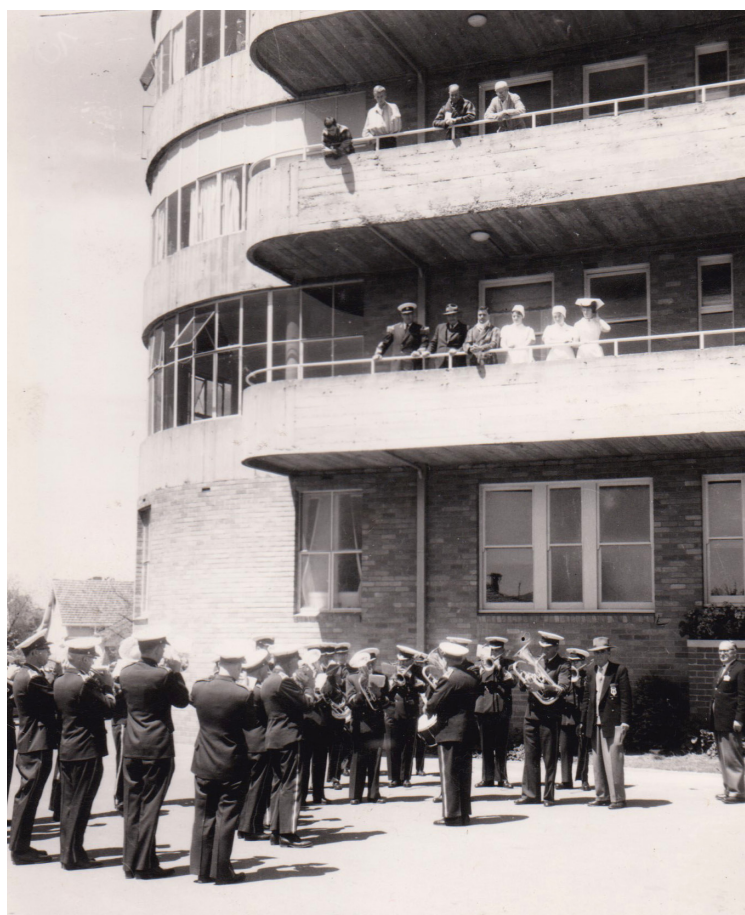
I think because you played in something for about ten nights. It would start off and it would be OK and by the tenth night, you'd have been playing together so many nights and it got so tight and so good and I loved that. And I was always a bit shy playing and I loved being out of sight of the people. 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

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.



View the [1964 Program](#) for 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 - Flugel 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 Heskith'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:

Brass band contest For Ballarat schools

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.

9 July 1970, 'Brass band contest for Ballarat schools', *The Courier*. Source: E J (Mick) Smith Archive



PLANNING FOR BAND CONTEST

Music teachers at Ballarat schools met with the secretary of the Ballarat Soldiers' Memorial Band, Mr Jim Allen, 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 Allen 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



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 Traves, of Melbourne, will be the adjudicator. Mr Traves 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 Mor-dioke 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.

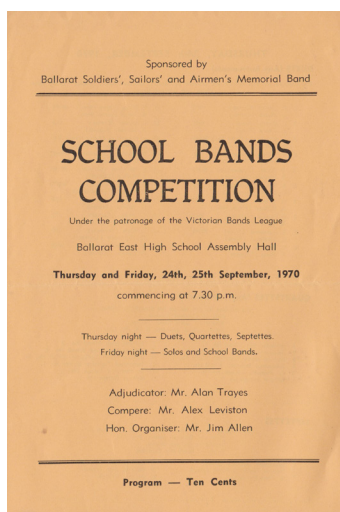
The school bands were formed last year by the Education Department as a result of pressure from the Victorian Bands League.

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