

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 entrepreneurism 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.

In the 70s, when Bill could no longer drive himself to band, his good friend, Jim Allen drove him and, when Jim left, a very special lady called Peg Glover took over. All to ensure that this 'grand old gentleman', band member and proactive committee man through from the early 20s to the 80s, would not miss his beloved band practice.



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.

Geo. Herwood

W.A. Locke
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 Locke and Mrs. Beatrice Hawkes as worthy recipients for the 1980 Badge of Merit.

In requesting this award for Mr. Bill Locke 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 Locke.

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 Sebastapol 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 Sebast. 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 Sebast. 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 E♭
ANDANTE.
Andante.
"ROMANCE"
ANTON RUBINSTEIN.

1920

LIVERPOOL BRASS BAND (& MILITARY) JOURNAL.
PUBLISHED BY WRIGHT & ROUND, 34, ERSKINE STREET, LIVERPOOL.

SOLO CORNET B♭
ANDANTE.
Andante. ♩ = 66
"ROMANCE"
ANTON RUBINSTEIN.

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.

"ROMANCE." ANTON RUBINSTEIN.

SIDE DRUM.
ANDANTE.

1920

Frank Wright
LIVERPOOL BRASS BAND (& MILITARY) JOURNAL.
PUBLISHED BY WRIGHT & ROUND, 34, ERSKINE STREET, LIVERPOOL.

"ROMANCE." ANTON RUBINSTEIN.

BASS DRUM.
ANDANTE.

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 BNCB archive box. Source: BNCB 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
4–6 flutes – 1st 2nd
1–2 oboes – 1st, 2nd
1–2 bassoons – 1st, 2nd
4–12 clarinets in B ♭ – 1st, 2nd, 3rd
1–2 bass clarinets
2–4 alto saxophones – 1st, 2nd
2 tenor saxophones
1 baritone saxophone

Brass

3–9 trumpets/cornets in B ♭ – 1st, 2nd, 3rd
2 tenor horns in E ♭
2–4 horns in F – 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th
2–4 tenor trombones – 1st, 2nd
1 bass trombone
1–2 euphoniums/baritone horns
1–4 tubas

Percussion 1–8 players

Non-pitched

bass drum, snare, cymbals, whole drum kit, triangle, tambourine, congas, bongos, claves, sleigh bells, slide whistle, vibraslap, maracas etc.

Pitched

vibraphone, marimba, xylophone, glockenspiel, timpani

Other occasional instruments

synthesisers, piano, organ, string bass, electric bass guitar, guitar (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 Yarrowee 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.



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 telescoped 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.

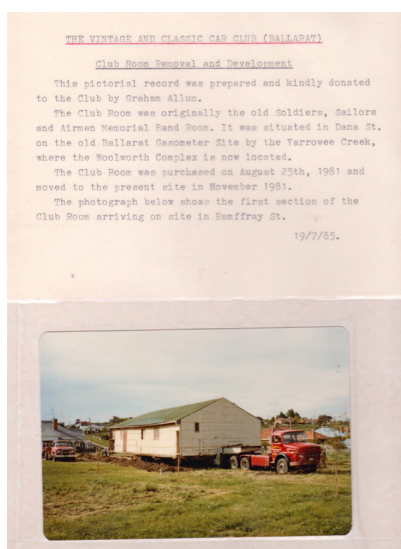


1967, Ballarat Gasometers. Source: Federation University Object 09150 Vic Coll item #4 1967, Geoff Biddington

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.



Photo of Les and Peg Glover on their wedding day.
Source: Les Glover

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'.



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:

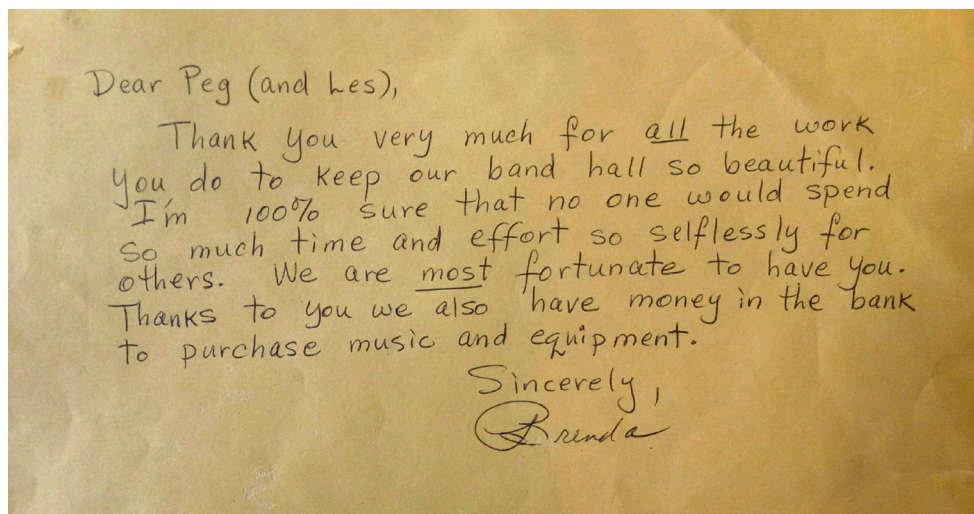
Players of instruments with water keys - especially lower brass! Please bring a towel along to rehearsal to save staining the floor. The hall manager spends many hours polishing out the water stains which you leave after every rehearsal.

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

Peg was greatly appreciated by the band for her incredible contributions. Her family remembers that every time the bandmaster changed she received an award for her service. In 2005 Peg was given a special presentation by the band at the AGM when she retired as hall manager.

Les: 'Well it really kept her going, she had a few [health] problems, but nothing would stop her going down to the bandroom.'

It is worth noting that with the 1970s change from single-sex banding to what former band member Dennis Hawkes refers to as 'co-ed', the culture of the Ladies' Auxiliary Committee also transitioned. Bryan Crebbin remembers that Peg Glover *was* the Ladies' Auxiliary in the 80s.



2000, Band Supporter of the Year Award, Peg Glover.
Source: Les Glover

Band Hall Manager Profile

Name: Peg Glover

Birthdate: October 3rd
(month) (day)

Role played in the band: Wilkinson Band Hall Manager

What are some other groups you have been involved/or are still involved in?
The Ballarat East Marching Girls,
and Sebastopol Marching Girls, as a chaperone and support person

Any best musical experiences?
Being made a life member of the band.

Any worst musical experiences?

What makes you come play in the band?
Because I like doing it, and I enjoy the company.

Do you have any.....
sports?
hobbies? walking and lawn bowls (Les) and Peg likes going to the pokies

Favourite.....
foods: all sorts
movies:
T.V. shows: Touched by and Angel, and all mysteries
books:
musicians/ or groups: Chiodo, and the Ballarat Memorial Concert Band

Try to think of a success you have had, or any goals you may have reached that you are proud of.

Since Peg and Les don't blow their own horns, I will blow a little for them.
Peg and Les Glover have been our Band Hall Managers since 1973 when the brass band rehearsed in the Eastwood St. Army hut (present day Coles parking lot). They clean and maintain the hall as their own home and are responsible for a large part of own band income by booking the hall out.
Peg and Les have supported the band in this unceasing way since their son Neil began playing in the band over twenty five years ago. They drove Bill Wilkinson to every practice in his later years (Wilkinson Hall, is named after Bill). Their loyalty and dedication to our band is touching and appreciated and they are always there for us.
Thank you Peg and Les.
With high regards, Brenda

Peg Glover BMCB Member Profile. Source: Glover Archive