



The 2010s

At a glance

3D printing, YouTube explosion, FaceTime, WhatsApp, more Facebook, Instagram and TikTok: these are just a few of the products and services that are changing the way we work, think and play. Netflix takes over and video stores are forced to close down, Google Translate replaces humorous attempts to communicate with real people in foreign countries, Siri answers questions on beat boxing, Google Maps replaces paper street directories, Uber is the new taxi, Airbnb takes a bite out of the hotel market and semi-driverless cars take to the streets. All this leaves us wondering, what's next for this century?

With technological change impacting social life, people find themselves more lonely than ever in industrialised, consumer-based societies. Children spend more time on their devices than with Auntie. But this is not the only thing worrying parents.

As well as the continuance of world-wide terrorism in this decade spearheaded dramatically by militant Islamic group Isis, closer to home, a Royal Commission into sexual abuse centring around Ballarat brings the regional town into national focus. The Loud Fence Campaign recognises past suffering through colourful displays of ribbons on the fences of churches and schools where suffering is found to have occurred. Cardinal George Pell is trialled and convicted for sexual abuse.

Julia Gillard becomes Australia's first female Prime Minister and Mary MacKillop, Australia's first saint. Refugees are high on the political agenda with riots, deaths and class action for reopened offshore Australian detention facility Manus Island. One detainee, Behrouz Boochani, writes *No Friend but the Mountains*. The award-winning book is published after having been sent one text at a time via messaging services such as WhatsApp over a period of almost five years.

Chinese community contributions to Ballarat are recognised in 'Open Monument', a joint venture between City of Ballarat, Sovereign Hill and the Chinese communities of Ballarat and Melbourne. The monument is on part of the land once home to Chinese miners during the gold rush, within 100 metres of the BMBB bandroom, both on the Len T Fraser Reserve. By 1858 there were 10,000 Chinese miners living in this area bordered by Main Road and stretching up to include the Llanberris Athletics Reserve.

Ballarat district girl, Michelle Payne, triumphs over personal and professional adversity when she becomes the first female jockey in over 150 years to win the Melbourne Cup. Australian actor Rachel Griffiths directs a film, *Ride Like a Girl*, to tell the story.



Gentrification occurs in Ballarat with house prices soaring. Ballarat University becomes Federation University with campuses in Ballarat, the Wimmera and Gippsland. Pinky's Pizza and chips, cheese and gravy make way for The Forge, Mitchell Harris Wine Bar, The Hop Temple and a plethora of other dining hot spots making Ballarat a go-to destination for tourists and home buyers seeking refuge from the heat of Melbourne house prices. Royal South Street celebrates its 125th anniversary, Her Maj gets a refurb and the long-term Ballarat Creative City Strategy is launched.

Look at Ballarat's growing population:

2011	84,935	
2012	86,000	1.25%
2013	88,400	2.79%
2014	93,320	5.56%
2015	99,841	7%
2016	104,355	4.52%
2017	106,762	2.31%
2018	110,030	3.06%

Extinction Rebellion, school strikes and climate change rallies occur across the globe after scientific publications on anthropogenic climate change and a right wing swing in politics in the US, England and Australia stimulate a cry for emergency action.

Meanwhile, entertainment is king, most of it on tap at the touch of a button. So how does a local community band like Ballarat Memorial Concert Band fare in the new climate of distraction and uncertainty?

The band in the 2010s



2017, Carols at the Barrels, Hop Temple. Source: Wade Carman Facebook posted by Bronwyn Hutton

We reach the last decade of the first 100 years of this community band. The 2010s, being the most recent history, are well and truly within living memory of band members. There is exponentially more data and more accessibility to data than in any other decade.

As well as the banding highlights, in this chapter we explore ways in which digital social media has impacted the band, how it represents itself, and how the history is documented.

At the end of the 90s the band entered into the www.world when it set up its first webpage. Since then, the band has updated its website several times, most recently in 2019 to host this ebook:

<https://ballaratconcertband.org.au/>

Ballarat Memorial Concert Band

New members welcome - all ages, all levels.

Rehearsal: Wednesdays 6.30pm - 8.45pm, Wilkinson Hall, Len T Frazer Reserve, Barkly St, Ballarat (near the skate park) *no rehearsal during school holidays

For more information call 0422812514, find us on Facebook, or just come along! ballaratconcertband.org.au

2019, Screenshot of BMCB website. Source: BMCB



The life of the band is also being cumulatively documented on a number of Facebook pages:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/165996610085671/>



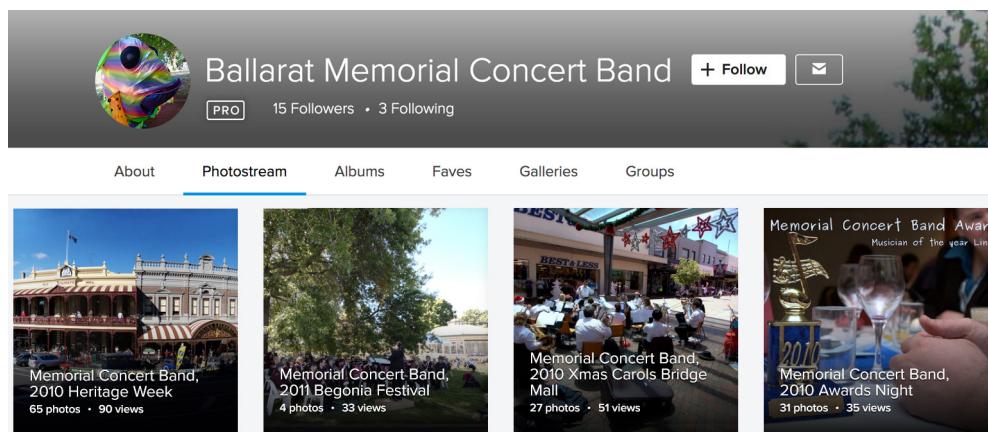
2020, Screenshot of Members of Ballarat Memorial Concert Band - Past and Present Facebook page. Source: Facebook

<https://facebook.com/Ballarat-Memorial-Concert-Band-149201555135856/>



2020, Screenshot of Ballarat Memorial Concert Band Facebook page. Source: Facebook

They also have a flickr feed set up by and with photos from Doug Irvin:
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/bmcb/>



Ballarat Memorial Concert Band flickr feed. Source: Doug Irvin/ flickr

By accessing these pages you will have more images at your fingertips than in any other decade in this history. You will also be able to follow what happens next. If you play with the band, or join the committee, you will be part of that ongoing history.

The 2010s are a decade of adventure, celebration and stepping out for the band. Across the following pages you will find out why.



Zoom and Simon combine forces (2010–2012)

Simon and Zoom share the role.

In early 2011 the committee met and discussed how to create a larger and more cohesive band. It was decided we would combine the Senior Band (Zoom Beck MD) and the Developmental Band (Simon Marcollo MD) which resulted in a bigger ensemble and new rehearsal format that continued to support the transition between easier to intermediate levels. The opening up of rehearsals to differing levels of music and incorporating a short tea break seemed to appeal to most of the band members and has been positively received.

– Zoom Beck, Musical Director's Report 2011–2012

In 2011 the Ballarat Wind Orchestra was formed and performed at the Mid Europe Windband Festival in Austria. Sixteen of the thirty two musicians were BMCB members past and present. BMCB musical directors Simon and Zoom were two of these members.



2010, Begonia Festival, Zoom Beck conducts selections from *Mamma Mia*.

Source: BMCB Archive



2010, Begonia Festival, Simon Marcollo MD 'Tooters and Squeakers'. Source: BMCB Archive

Each band leader has their own way of connecting with their members. Just as Brenda had been a conscientious communicator through monthly newsletters and personal notes, Zoom was very diligent about making and distributing multiple copies of photos for band members. Perhaps the Becks will be the last band leaders to create and sustain this form of physical communication.

'I used to get all my photographs printed and put them in albums, but these days it's all digital,' said former band and committee member Cheryl Russell.

Here are a couple of these last photos from Cheryl's album, printed a couple of years before Kodak went bankrupt due to continuing to focus their business on film rather than digital photography.

Zoom conducts under what appear to be some very precarious circumstances.



2010, Zoom conducting on the palettes while the band played on the back of a truck In Ballan. Source: Cheryl Russell Archive



2010, Ballan Festival Zoom Beck. Source: Cheryl Russell Archive

That was on the back of a truck. It was really long and skinny, and nobody could hear what anybody else was playing properly. Anyway, the crowd seemed to like it!

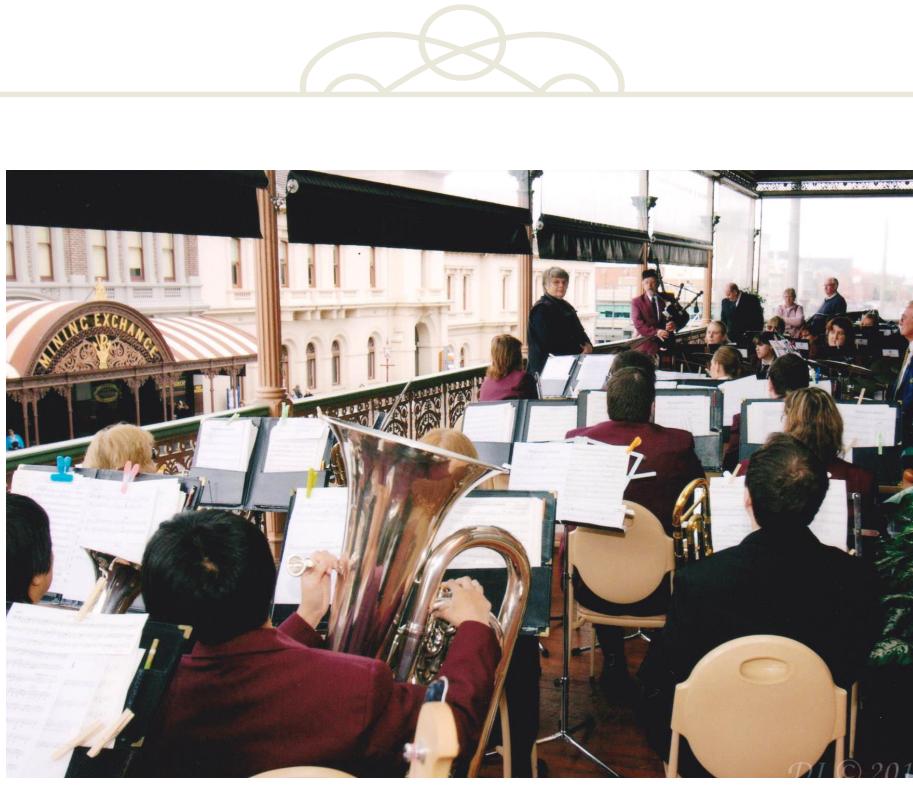
– Cheryl Russell

Christmas concerts and Heritage Week/end were also on the band's annual performance schedule. Zoom explains the history of the Heritage Weekend gigs in her 2011–12 reports and why some people weren't quite the same afterward:

Our Heritage Week performances were again a big success. What started three years ago as an all Saturday gig in the Titanic Bandstand had made a positive move to the George Hotel Balcony.



2010, Heritage Weekend in Titanic (Doug Irvin stood on rail to take photo). Source: BMCB Archive



2012, The Bagpipe Tunes with Brenda. Source: BMCB Archive



2012, David Paton, Heritage Weekend. Source: BMCB Archive

Last year we only agreed to four gigs on the Saturday and alternated with the Ballarat City Band over eight single hour brackets. David Paton added his excellent skills on bagpipes while Alan Williamson designed/donated our new banners which were displayed very effectively from the balcony. In 2012 the council asked again that we endeavour to play both Saturday and Sunday and this time after consulting the band we tentatively agreed. I was amazed and impressed how all the band members came together for both days and we managed to cover all parts with no problems. A special mention goes to Alan, Sarah-Joy Muirhead, Bronwyn Hutton, Wade Carman and Lindsay George who played most of (or all!) weekend in both bands. They were exhausted and a few didn't regain normal feeling in their lips until later in the week. Ouch!"

– Zoom Beck



It is good to see that the band were adventurous enough to brave another bagpipes and brass band performance collaboration after the 70s fiasco. But then again, we only see one piper this time, not the whole pipe band.

The band also played regularly on the stage at the Begonia Festival.



2010, Begonia Festival with Pat Russell, Linda Bolan, Paula Robinson.

Source: Cheryl Russell Archive



2010, Begonia Festival with Pat Russell

plus possibly Linda Bolan.

Source: Cheryl Russell Archive



2010, Begonia Festival with Brenda Beck, Vince McDonald and Simon Marollo.

Source: BMCB Archive

For a long time, Barry Wilkins directed the Begonia Festival which earned him the nickname 'Mr Begonia'. Unbeknown to the band when they played on the stage was that Mr Begonia himself was to lead the band in 2013.



Barry Wilkins at the helm (2013)

Barry Wilkins, who grew up in Ballarat, was no stranger to conducting nor large-scale community music events by the time the band was looking for a new MD. Barry had performed a role for many years, not dissimilar to Frank Wright in Greater London, organising outdoor music events for Ballarat. In 1969–1992 he was the director and chief executive officer of the Ballarat Begonia Festival Association. His contributions over many years included Begonia Festival director, Begonia Brass Ensemble director, putting on the annual carols at the North Gardens Soundshell broadcast live through 3BA, and many years of conducting for Ballarat Light Orchestra Company and Ballarat Lyric Theatre performances. These were the events and performances in which members from the Soldiers' Band had played too, helping out in pit orchestras for live shows or performing solos for the carols.

Barry dedicated decades to enriching the cultural life of Ballarat through live performance. In 1992 he was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for services to tourism, festivals, the arts and community.

In 2013 Barry took up the BMCB baton, which also coincided with a personal lifestyle move from Ballarat to Bacchus Marsh in March of that year. The committee had to twist Barry's arm to take the honorarium for leading the band (if only just to cover his travel costs).

While he was MD, he cooked up a plan for the band to play at Sovereign Hill:



July 2013, BMCB play at Sovereign Hill. Barry Wilkins seated front left with baton. Source: BMCB Archive

Note the period costume, garnered from Lyric theatre and not period-specific to the gold rush.



Many members remember it as a highlight gig: they dressed up and performed in the Sovereign Hill theatre.

And we got in trouble about that because we didn't clear the costumes with them or anything, we weren't very particular about that!

– Kath Chapman

We did it well and we played in the theatre. It was lots of fun. We went to the photo studio and had that photo taken.

– Bec Paton

One of the players went out to play a fanfare and announce that we were going to play in the theatre and scared the horses. There were a few things that didn't work well that day. We didn't get invited back, let's just say!

– Kath Chapman

Band members remember that it was 'lovely' to have Barry at the helm but, alas, as the junior and senior bands had only recently amalgamated, what was ultimately required was a bandmaster with a playing, not just conducting, background. If the band had been at a different period developmentally, Barry may well have been the perfect match for the band. But the developing players who may not have had the benefit of private lessons needed an instrumentalist as band leader.

The band was on a steep learning curve.

Matthew Angus' era (September 2013 – September 2015)



c.2014, Matt Angus and BMCB. Source: Charlotte Withers Facebook



In stepped keen cyclist, professional instrumentalist and teacher Matt Angus. Around the same time Barry moved to Bacchus Marsh for a lifestyle change, Matt moved to Ballarat. His professional music background involved: performing (MSO, Orchestra Victoria, Andrea Boccelli, Jane Rutter, Yvonne Kenny); film soundtracks (*Babe*, *Elizabeth*, *Two Hands*); teaching clarinet, saxophone, oboe and bassoon (Xavier College, Wesley College, Ballarat Christian College).

Memorable moments from Matt's time with the band included the beginning of a long and mchappy relationship – in 2014 the band was invited to play at Bakery Hill McDonalds for McHappy Day to raise funds in support of families with seriously ill children through the Ronald McDonald House Charities Australia.

We started playing at Mchappy day as I work at Bakery Hill Maccas and they knew I was in a band and were looking for a musical act to perform.

– Charlotte Withers, band member since 1995

It was such a success that the band has played annually every year since and in the last four years have added Christmas concerts there as well.

During Matt's directorship, the band started to compete in South Street again.

Flautist Cathi Smith remembers this as a highlight for her:

I started playing with them again just before they started competing at South Street so it was when Matt Angus was conducting. He tracked me down and asked me to play and I brought Riley [her son] with me, he was on trumpet.

– Cathi Smith

Tanya Hale remembers the circuitous journey back to South Street. Sometimes a win is all you need to boost confidence! But in the end, the winning is not the best part.

There was a performance at the Sunday Band Contest in Maryborough in 2014 where I was stricken with a facial affliction known as Bell's palsy and found it difficult to get a note out of my clarinet, but neither that nor the fact that we were the only band in our section mattered because we won our section unopposed and celebrated our success like a band that had triumphed over its competition.

This was a moment where I can truly say that I enjoyed the celebration more than the performance as far as my contribution was concerned because of my difficulty with playing a single note while afflicted with Bell's palsy. The Memorial Band's success at Maryborough was the catalyst for us to prepare for a performance at the Victorian Band Championships, which took place during the South Street competitions, in 2015.

This was the Memorial Band's first South Street performance in two decades, and the journey to that performance was one that took many twists and turns as we prepared three pieces that were, as I look back on them now, more complicated than the pieces we'd played in Maryborough. In the end, the fact that we'd made it to performance day was an achievement in itself, as we took to the South Street stage and gave it our all.



Never mind that we ended up coming second to the Geelong Concert Band, because I for one was proud of the Memorial Band and the fact that we'd done our best for our first South Street performance in more years than I'd been a member of the band.

– Tanya Hale



Hear the 2015 Royal South Street, Victorian State Band Championships, 'C' Grade, Matt Angus (conductor):

Joyful Variations (Brian Beck)

Music for a Darkened Theatre (Danny Elfman arranged by Michael Brown)

Goddess of Fire (Steven Reineke)

Cheryl Russell remembers other highlights: 'The little concerts here [Wilkinson Hall] and all the dressing up.'

These included Halloween and an 80s themed 30th birthday party for Tanya Hale in 2013. Yes there are photos, but we are pretty sure that no-one would give us permission to publish them here!

The cabaret night was also a big hit for the band. But first, a big band had to be formed. Tanya Hale remembers:

There was a step out of my musical comfort zone that I took during the last year of Matthew Angus' musical directorship when he and Joanne formed a big band that was primarily made up of the Memorial Band's saxophone, trumpet and trombone sections, with other local musicians forming the rhythm section. Matthew and Joanne formed the big band as a side project to raise money for the Memorial Band, and after having initial reservations about the project, I eventually decided to take up the saxophone so I could get involved with the project. Thus, I took up the tenor saxophone, teaching myself the fingerings of the notes of the saxophone's range on a borrowed instrument, before I felt confident enough to attend the big band's first rehearsal in March 2015. Ultimately, I enjoyed every minute of my time with the big band, rehearsing the tunes that we planned on incorporating into our repertoire and performing at a cabaret night that was hosted by the Sunshine Community Brass Band in July 2015.

– Tanya Hale

The band also presented a performance the same year at the Wendouree Centre for Performing Arts in conjunction with Ballarat Grammar Symphonic Band, Ballarat School's Symphony Orchestra and Ballarat Grammar Saxophone Ensemble.



Take a closer look at the [YAKINI program, 2015](#).

Source: Pam Clark Archive



These are among the highlights members recall from this time. There is perhaps no sweeter memory than when the band market tested reed flavours for Matt's business Sweet Reeds which he launched in 2015 with his partner and band member Jo.

Wade Carman takes the lead (end of 2015 – end of 2018)

Wade Carman was already a band member with a banding, conducting and mentoring background. Growing up in Stawell, he learned saxophone and then switched to trombone. By the time he was in year twelve, he was the only music student in the year, and so took on leadership roles within the school such as conducting and mentoring. Wade had also attended the Wimmera Bands Group Music School for theory and practical skills. As part of this training, he was fortunate to attend a conducting course with the late Wilf Dyason, 'legend in brass banding circles'.

These experiences gave Wade the background to take on the assistant MD role at BMCB while playing under the directorship of Matt Angus. When Matt left, Wade took on the role of interim MD for six months while the committee made preparations to appoint their new musical director. Having been assistant MD, Wade was in a good position to keep the band afloat during the transition and became a prime candidate for the new MD position.

Cheryl Russell who was on the committee at the time and was one of a group of members appointing the new MD explains: 'Wade did a lot for the band and worked really hard.'

It wasn't a smooth beginning, however.

As the interim MD, you don't want to rock the boat, just keep it going, keep it surviving. But the following year when I was actually appointed MD, that's when I was able to carry forward my vision of what an MD should do.

– Wade Carman

This, he remembers, was a shock to the system.

Wade recalls the initial period of musical directorship as a 'trial by fire' for both he and the band.



Wade Carman conducting on The George Balcony, Heritage Weekend. Source: BMCB Facebook



I may have upset committee and band members when I put a lot of extra work on them because I had a very clear idea of this is what I need to do – and this is what they need to do. I know in the past, sometimes the MDs did everything and sometimes the MDs did nothing, so the committee's job fluctuated quite a bit.

– Wade Carman

He changed things like the system by which music could be purchased so that as MD he no longer had to go through the committee, but rather work within a budget set by the committee. He also axed the band's favourite tune, *Pirates of the Caribbean*, which they had played every year straight since the movie band score had come out in the early 2000s.

Over a period of months, Wade, brought to life a whole new repertoire. He also brought a lot of fun to the band such as, 'getting the band to dress up for gigs starting with McHappy Day' (Charlotte Withers).

Dr Who at the Grampians Brass Festival. The whole competition was about entertainment so the band got a chance to focus on entertainment. We got to take it to the next level. We have been doing it for four years running: Mexican Theme, Dr Who, Halloween and then Duke Box in 2019. For the Dr Who year, we brought big props. We had a dalek, a tardis, a tyrannosaurus rex, a cyber man, actors – Dr Who and a companion. We had a Dr Who spectacular! We had a great time.

– Bec Paton



Catch a glimpse of the *Dr Who Through Space and Time* concert at the 2017 Grampians Brass Festival.

Every second year the band has held a trivia night fundraiser to coincide with the Grampians Brass Festival theme.



2016, Mexican theme trivia night. Source: BMCB Archive



Wade worked hard and built the band from roughly twenty five members, reaching twenty members at rehearsals to sixty members, averaging forty at rehearsals.

But Wade recalls that even though the member numbers increased, the reliability of the players did not. 'I wasn't strict on them, I allowed the people to enjoy their time. If they were playing with another band then, generally, we could afford to lose players when another band couldn't.'

This gave BMCB members broader experience and boosted support for regional bands and events. The downside was that the importance of turning up to every event and putting the Memorial Band first, of course began to erode. So, from this good will, the band sometimes suffered.

As a new MD, Wade said he struggled a lot at the start, and one of the problems he had was inspiring people to practise. Then one day, a friend of his said, 'it's not your job to get people to practise, it's your job to inspire people to *want* to practise'.

I can't make anybody do it, but I can make people want to do it. It's a very small thing, but it was a big revelation to me.

– Wade Carman

Wade's mentor Wilf Dyason also had a one liner that really impacted Wade which was, 'To be an MD, to be able to tell somebody else what to do, you need to be able to do it first'. Wade really took that to heart and set about putting in a minimum of four hours' preparation time for every rehearsal.



2017, Wade Carman and Libby Fawkes at Dr Who through Space and Time. Source: BMCB Facebook



2016, Combined Big 5 rehearsal with the Haddon Community Band and Ballarat government schools. 80+ participants. Source: BMCB Facebook



To get the best out of their players, an MD has to be across a lot of technical information for each instrument, especially if the players are not under the tuition of a private instrumental teacher.

You need to know the fingering, so if they are struggling with something, you could offer an alternate fingering for example. And with trumpet, not every trumpet has it but most of them do these days, if you're playing Ebs and Ds there's a little slide that you need to use to make it go into tune. A lot of the people in the band don't have proper teachers, so as the MD, I needed to know that sort of thing to be able to explain to them, when you play that note you're always going to be out of tune. You need to be able to do this to make it go into tune. Now that's something that if they had professional teachers, they would have learned, but most of them don't. It's a community band and they can't always afford teachers.

– Wade Carman

The importance of being funded

Wade is a strong advocate for all children having access to art, music being one of the arts. Sometimes art is expensive. So Wade got the developmental band going again during his tenure in July 2017.

We restarted the developmental band and we got up to about twenty four members at one stage, most of them primary school kids, a couple of parents in there as well. It was about giving kids the opportunity they may not have otherwise had.

– Wade Carman

During the setup of the developmental band they did an inventory of band instruments and discovered that they didn't have any easy entry-level instruments for beginners such as flutes or clarinets.

So the band has really good supply of instruments but they're all the really expensive ones that most people don't buy for themselves. So the smaller instruments that kids can start on just weren't there. So we did get a grant to go out and purchase instruments and purchase music and start the development program. And then we had to report back to the council on how that was all achieved. And we actually had a marketing push that was put in the newspaper and so some instruments were donated to the band as well. It's amazing how many people finish high school, they've been playing an instrument and it goes under the bed and is never seen for another ten years and then they pull it out and sell it. So we were calling out to those people, either pick it back up again or give it to somebody who's going to use it. We got two or three fully donated and we were able to purchase some really cheap secondhand, and then we bought, I think, four flutes, four clarinets, a saxophone and maybe a trumpet.

– Wade Carman

Saying 'Yes!'

Obviously community bands can't survive without money and if somebody comes in and says I want to pay you to do something, the answer should always first be 'yes' (laughing). Obviously it depends on what money they're offering and what the requirements are but that meant that we did things that the band may not have done in the past. So we did the cemetery gig.



Read about the
[Memorial Cairn](#)
[for Jesse Family](#),
[The Courier, 2016](#).



The family came to us and said this is the music we want you to play and we will sing and this is how much we want to pay and so we negotiated the fee. In the past the band would have said, 'We don't play that music, we don't have that music, so we'll not do the gig'.

– Wade Carman

Wade saw it as a challenge, said yes, and sourced the music. But playing in a cemetery was not something that many of the band members had done before.

In the past and for most of the history of this band, when a band member died the whole band would go to the cemetery to play at the graveside. This was also just a normal part of Wade's life growing up in Stawell. 'For me playing in a cemetery was commonplace, it wasn't strange – it was normal.' But for Memorial Band members in 2016 this was a curiously strange idea. Bec Paton's young daughter, Hannah, was one such member who joined them that unseasonably cold October day. When she entered the grounds she looked left and right and said to her mum, 'So this is what it looks like inside a cemetery.' She had never been to a cemetery before.



October 2016, BMCB play at the Cemetery. Source: BMCB Facebook

Wade felt that playing at a graveside was a good experience to offer a child and in this case to have as a positive experience and not a sad one. This is how it has been for banding communities since the 1800s but somewhere in the mid-twentieth century we lost this tradition in Ballarat. It must have been a very moving experience for all involved.

Saying yes brought new opportunities ... here's the band one year later and an anomalous number of gigs later:



October 2017, Playing the Rocky theme on a roundabout for Run Ballarat charity run. The mayor took time out of the race to conduct. Source: BMCB Facebook



There was sometimes unwanted red tape. OH&S inductions were new to the players, but something with which Wade, who had worked in the commercial sector before, was comfortably accustomed. The band found it cumbersome to do an obligatory OH&S induction before performing at corporate functions. Wade's 'yes' policy saw the band through a number of such performances and the members soon became familiar and accepting of the accompanying health and safety formalities. Another activity to occupy the band in this new era of insurance procedures.

Council insurance policies also now impact on when and where the band can march, which limits marching experiences.

Media control in a socio-digital world



2017, BMCB play at the train station for the first AFL match in Ballarat.
Source: Alice Marcollo posted to BMCB Facebook

Wade was one of the first MDs to be confronted with social media quality control:

One of the things I don't like is videos going online. It's mostly not that the band sounds bad, it's that video taken on the phone in a certain spot gives an unbalanced sound of the band. For example if you've got a French horn playing and the mum's standing behind the French horn filming their kid playing clarinet over there, you can't hear the clarinet at all. All you can hear is the French horn that sounds (really badly) louder than everything else. So when you watch something like that on Facebook it's not the sound that was actually heard on the day.

– Wade Carman

In this age of fast food for our ears, we accept a lot more in terms of low-quality sound and video grabs. But how does this affect our public image and the way in which we remember our performances? Compared with other eras in the band's history, the problem of PR quality control became suddenly very relevant.



It's a really poor way of expressing who you are. I actually upset a lot of people including parents when I called them and said, 'You need to go and delete that off Facebook'. I actually did it to my brother as well. We were playing at the train station, playing the Bulldogs theme song for the first AFL match in Ballarat and my brother was live streaming it and I turned around whilst conducting and saw that he was filming it and told him off while the band was still playing. I didn't realise he was live streaming it at the time so anyone watching would have heard him being told off by me and then he deleted it so it couldn't be seen again. But that's how passionate I was about it. You've got to only have the good things out there. It wasn't that I didn't allow any videos up, I said, send them to me and I'll let you know if they can be posted or not. I suppose then people were taking smaller videos from different places to try to find one that I'd say yes to. And so there were ones that I did say yes to because there were ones that looked and sounded good.

– Wade Carman

Raising the profile

One of the visions Wade had for the band as part of getting out into the community, getting known, and having beneficial experiences, was marching. (You can read about how the band was intentionally tricked into it, later in this chapter.)

Another way the band supported the fostering of community links in the mid-2010s was something called the Big 5 Concerts. The purpose of the concerts, which have been running for the past five years (at time of publication), is to let local secondary school students know that there is a pathway for continuing instrumental playing after they graduate from year twelve. They evolved from a sight reading day with a number of bands including Haddon, Melton Wind Symphony and then Ballarat High School. These were initiated by Zoom Beck a few years earlier.

They're run at the Ballarat High School. It's Ballarat Memorial, Haddon Concert Band, High School, Mount Clear and Ballarat Secondary. Each band submits a piece and all the bands go away and learn the pieces at their own rehearsals and we come together on the day. We get there at 5.30pm and we've got about half an hour on each piece with the conductor. There are about 100 players and everyone sits in together and mixes up, so you don't sit with your own band, you sit with everybody. After the rehearsal we all go out and eat pizza in the quadrangle at Ballarat High and afterward we do the performance which is the five pieces. So it's quite a brief performance but it's 100 people playing together and it's the high school kids getting to know, this is where you can go.

And so Tim Scott, he was a big driver for it, Tim up until about a month ago was MD at Haddon for a decade but he also plays tuba at Memorial. He would get up every year and do what I refer to as 'The Instrument Under the Bed' speech. He'd turn to the audience and say 'There are representatives from a number of bands here today including Ballarat, Haddon, Creswick and Beaufort. There's no reason for those instruments at the end of high school to go under the bed, never to be seen, these are all the opportunities. You've spent all this money getting your kids to the point where they can play, don't let them stop now'. And that's what Big 5 is all about. I don't think we've missed a year since we started. Heather George is the driving force for that, because she's teaching at Ballarat High.

– Bec Paton

The concerts, which convert a small number of school graduates to the local bands each year are run on the premise, 'They know we exist and they know that we're not scary!', said Bec.

Along with the usual raising of public profile and campaigning for new band members, gigs as well as fundraisers were key in keeping the band sizzling:



2017, Bunnings sausage sizzle fundraiser.
Source: Bec Paton posted to BMCB Facebook

Nothing like a crisis for bringing people together!



Possibly December 2016, BMCB Christmas with Wade. Source: Charlotte Withers Facebook

One of the band's annual performances is the Christmas performance in Bridge Mall on a Saturday morning. Because of OH&S requirements, the band were aiming to unload their gear for the performance and be out by 7am. To save time in the morning, the trailer was loaded on Friday night and stored outside Wade's house. Band President Bec Paton wasn't convinced it would be safe but Wade persuaded her: 'There'll be a padlock on the back, it's got a lockable coupling, we'll lock the trailer to my car so the trailer can't be stolen. There'll be no issue'.



These were famous last words because by the morning it was gone. Not only the trailer and all the band equipment, but Wade's car, his trombone ... and wallet. So after a call to the police, and a sheepish call to Bec, Wade put a call out to everybody to ask them what they would like to do. The band was not put off, they wanted to do the gig, they just had to work out how.

Everyone met at the bandroom and started photocopying a steady supply of Christmas Carols. Members of the band who were teachers borrowed music stands from their schools and even a drum kit was procured at the last minute.

We spoke to the Bridge Mall people and said, 'this is what's happened, we're still coming, we want to do this', and we ended up being about an hour late and they ended up doing quite a social media thank you, so that got publicity. When we posted that the trailer had been stolen that was probably 7am, by lunchtime it had already been seen by over 22,000 people. So it spread like wildfire and it was really good to see that the band pulled together and worked as a team and decided to do the gig.

– Wade Carman



2016, Christmas Bridge Mall Source: BMCB Facebook

In the end, Wade had to buy a new car, the trailer was recovered and the insurance paid for a new trombone for Wade. In the meantime, however, Wade was tipped off that someone had pawned a trombone in a Ballarat shop that sounded very much like his own. So through a circuitous route, Wade was finally reunited with his stolen trombone.



Back to South Street

Tanya Hale remembers:

2018 saw us take to the stage and see if we could go one better than 2015. Wade was overseas at that time, so we were under the baton of Mark Witham, our guest conductor who led us on our journey to South Street success. This was a journey that didn't have as many twists and turns as the lead-up to South Street 2015, because we played three tunes that weren't as challenging as the tunes we played three years before, and we spent a lot of time on those tunes, both in rehearsals and separate individual and sectional practice sessions. All this hard work, along with Mark's constructive criticism of our efforts and encouragement of consistent improvement, reaped its rewards in the end when the Memorial Band was crowned the 2018 Open 'C' Grade Concert Band champions.

This achievement was pulled off in the wake of a competition where we faced opposition in the form of the Shepparton Wind and Brass Band, and while the Shepparton ensemble gave this competition their best shot (especially with, by matter of coincidence, a tune from their program that was the same tune we'd chosen to finish our program), I was over the moon when we were crowned the 'C' Grade concert band champions. This was because this achievement came three long years after we were declared the runners-up in the very same section, and I felt that this victory was well worth the wait.

—Tanya Hale



Hear the 2018 Royal South Street, Open 'C' Grade Concert Band, Mark Witham (conductor):

[Declaration Overture \(Claude T Smith\)](#)

[Abide with Me \(William H Monk arranged by Jay Dawson\)](#)

[The Witching Hour \(Randall D Standridge\)](#)

Do you recognise these band members?

And of course, there was more dressing up (than in any other decade):



October 2018, Grampians Brass Festival. Source: Ararat City Band Facebook (photographer: Peter Pickering)



2018, Christmas at Bakery Hill McDonalds. Source: Ararat City Band Facebook
(photographer: Peter Pickering)

A final Uniting performance

Not only had Charlotte Withers brought McHappy Day and McDonald's Christmas concerts to the band, but the band had been a regular feature performance at Charlotte's church for some time. You might remember the 'Silent Movie' junior band event that happened there in 2006 which was one of these concerts. This by the way, was dedicated to Lindsay George for his sixtieth anniversary with the band.

There were concerts at Wendouree Uniting Church (which I organised) from 1998 to late 2018 (continually from 2014). The church unfortunately closed this year. These concerts were great as we also featured guests from the local community including: Ballarat Grammar Pipe Band, students from Coward-Lemke Music School, Ballarat High School, Vocalise, Hanz On drumming.

– Charlotte Withers



Take a look at the program
for A Spring Afternoon of
Music, Wendouree Uniting
Church, 23 September 2018.

Source: Charlotte Withers Archive



As we will hear later in this chapter, this is not the last performance nor the band's last MD for the decade.

First though, let's take a moment to pay tribute to Lindsay George, find out how the band was tricked into marching again and take a look inside the band's closet in 'The evolution of the uniform'.

A tribute to Lindsay George

In 2017 the band lost beloved life member, brains trust and heartbeat of the band Mr Lindsay George, member since 1946. Four years earlier the band dedicated the drum room at Wilkinson Hall to him for his eightieth birthday. He was delighted. Lindsay is very much missed.



Read [Musicians' Tribute to Band Heart, The Courier, July 2017.](#)



2010, Band Member of the Year presentation to Lindsay George with Zoom Beck (MD). Source: BMCB Archive



2010, Band member of the year perpetual shield with Lindsay George. Source: BMCB Archive



DISCOVER MORE

You can read more about the Ballarat Wind Orchestra's debut European tour on their [website](#).



The marching experience



2017, Begonia Parade with crowd. Source: BMB Archive

To march, a band needs an MD (and preferably a drum major) who knows how to lead it. That is, if the band has not marched for some time. When Brenda took over the baton she brought with her many years of marching experience. After she left, however, marching petered out by 2007. Fortunately, it started up a decade later in 2017. So by its centenary year the band will be well in the swing of it, having marched at the Begonia Festival for three consecutive years. This may not have happened, though, if not for a cunning plan.

How the band was tricked into marching again – Wade Carman's legacy

Wade explains his passion for getting the band back on their feet:

For me growing up, I love marching. One of my dreams has always to be a drum major at the Edinburgh Military Tattoo.

I was always pushing the publicity for the BMB and one of the biggest events they have in Ballarat is the Begonia Festival. The Begonia Parade has over 10,000 people turn up to be there, so I was thinking publicity ... we should be there ... why aren't we there?

– Wade Carman

The band had not marched for ten years and to purchase a full set of lyres (clip on instrument stands that hold music for ambulant playing) for a fifty piece band, would have been a considerable outlay for the band. At the time, one of the trumpet players was doing a piano exam for which she had to memorise her music. This gave Wade an idea.



Wade pulled out the theme from the *Rocky* movie and started the band on a mission to memorise the music (without ever mentioning marching). He used the piano exam as a reason, explaining, 'You're going to benefit from memorising something'.

This was around October 2016. By just before Christmas, the band had accomplished it. That's when Wade announced, 'We're going to march in the Begonia Parade next year, playing the music from memory'.

When the big day came the band did themselves proud.

Each year, before the Monday Begonia parade, judges audition each musical item before the march begins to choose a winner for that year's parade. Mayor Samantha McIntosh was with the adjudicators on this occasion in 2017 and Wade remembers that 'We just stood in line and played it from memory and they were astounded. We ended up winning the musical entry.' So not only did they surprise themselves by rekindling their marching heritage, they took home a trophy.



2017, Begonia Parade winner. Source: BMCB Archive

Band member and President Bec Paton reports: 'First year [2017] with most of us marching, we won the best musical entry at the Begonia Festival, so we were pretty stoked'.

I tricked them into doing it, intentionally, because I saw it was the only way to do it. They benefited from it and in fact we then went on to memorise more music, they learned to march, they actually won something for the marching which, for them, inspired them to keep doing it. Which was the biggest thing.

– Wade Carman



Zoom Beck was asked to be drum major for the 2017 Begonia parade:

I had marched in a few bands and also while studying music in the US so it wasn't too hard. We ended up winning best musical entry in the parade so it was a huge confidence boost for the band.

– Zoom Beck

Wade also remembers that over the years of marching Mayor Samantha MacIntosh became one of the band's biggest fans. 'Everywhere we went she was always there, cheering us on.'



12 March 2018, Ballarat Begonia Festival, Botanical Gardens. BMCB march with Mayor Samantha McIntosh. Source: City of Ballarat

Playing on the move

Marching is an art made possible by the transfer of lived experience. Players at first unsure of taking on what felt like the momentous task of learning to march benefited from a musical director who was able to impart his childhood experience and love of marching. Just as had happened throughout the history of the band.

People like Brenda and Wade who have grown up with the tradition bring it forward for the next generation.

Wade reflects on how the culture of marching has been carried through in his lifetime. Most occasions for marching in his hometown's Stawell Brass Band were memorial services for war including Anzac Day, Remembrance Day or the Boer War. 'I've probably done over 100 war memorial services in my twenty years of playing and there's no one in my family who has ever been to war.'



While some band members had marched before, either with Brenda or with other bands, for many members it was a brand new experience.

Is marching hard to learn?

Yes! I hadn't done it before. I play saxophone and keeping the reed in a good position while you're moving, there's a few things to think about. Plus we had to memorise the music which some people who have been playing for years found harder than others.

– Bec Paton

Band member Nicole Melton had a different experience when marching was reintroduced at BMCB:

For me it wasn't an issue because I have been marching forever. When I was in the brass band in Maryborough, that's when I started marching and the president and drum major over there is one of the head adjudicators for the Nationals. I learned from him what he looks for. And then when you come to someone else, you've got to work out what their cues are to be able to go off them, and not what you're used to.

– Nicole Melton

Pam Clark is a life member of both BMCB and Creswick Band. When asked about whether Pam missed marching when it dropped out of the band's schedule she said:

I did then but not now - it's hard to read the music when it's on the little stand and I've had two hip replacements! When marching in Creswick they often put us behind the horses in the Anzac Parade. One year, I slipped on horse poo!

– Pam Clark

Amanda Bentley remembers her experiences of marching with the Soldiers' Band in the 70s:

Marching ... I hated it when I started. Playing cornet is hard enough, without that!! Nearly broke a tooth marching down Sturt Street when I put my foot in a pothole! We were playing for the reopening of the Regent Cinema [1976]. George Horwood was the drum major ... I eventually learned to march quite well, but wrecked my ability to learn choreography, because I immediately lead off with my left foot!

– Amanda Bentley

A problem perhaps not encountered too frequently by military officers?

The following account from Tanya Hale beautifully illustrates the considerations that each individual has to make as they confront the challenges of marching for the first time:

One challenge that has paved the way to a number of achievements has been learning to march with the band in parades, in particular the Begonia Festival parade.

Those of you readers who have ever marched in community concert or brass bands will understand how difficult it is, as you have to keep in time with the music, keep in step with the band, maintain your position in the formation during the march and keep an eye out for directions from your drum major amongst other aspects.

– Tanya Hale



2017, Begonia Parade, preparing to march. Source: BMCB Archive



2017, Begonia Parade, drums at the ready. Source: BMCB Archive

My first march with the band was in the Begonia Festival parade in 2003, and the fact that I had to keep all the aforementioned aspects in mind was nerve-wracking enough without the fact that we didn't actually undertake any proper marching practice in the lead-up to the event due to circumstances beyond our control. Thus, my debut march ended up being a struggle for me, as I struggled to keep in step with the band as well as maintain my breathing as we played our marches. I was on the edge of the parade formation, and as we passed thousands of spectators who were positioned along the parade route, I can honestly admit that I was worried about whether those people were able to spot me, an uncoordinated first-timer, amongst marchers who'd clearly done this performance many times before. However, I eventually made it to the end of the parade route with my fellow marchers without any major dramas, and I was very happy to have taken this big step out of my musical comfort zone and experienced what it was like to play in a marching band.

Going on from the Begonia Festival parade, my marching experience and confidence grew with every parade we marched in and every marching practice session we undertook, and at the point in time at which I write this [2019], I am proud to report that I've performed in twelve marches with the Memorial Band.

My most recent marches with the band are of particular note here because they were at the Begonia Festival parades in 2017 and 2018, when Wade had us swapping our march cards that had our marches we'd played in the previous parades for two tunes we learned off by heart: *Gonna Fly Now* from the movie *Rocky* for the 2017 parade and *Superstition* by Stevie Wonder for the 2018 parade. I can admit that those parade marches were much easier for me than the previous parade marches because the need to look down at our march cards that were clipped on to our lyres to jog our memories was taken out of the equation, meaning that I was able to concentrate on keeping in step and maintaining my position in the formation during the parades.

All the same, the challenge of marching with the Memorial Band is one I'm glad to have overcome, as well as one I enjoy, especially as we march along the Begonia Festival parade route every year.

– Tanya Hale



2017, Leading the Begonia Festival Parade. Source: BMCB Archive



2017, Turning at Begonia Festival Parade. Source: BMCB Archive



The evolution of the uniform

Over the decades the Soldiers' / Memorial Concert Band has undergone change in its players, repertoire, gender representation, military connection and instrumentation. Uniform reflects all these changes.

Out of the closet



1920s, WW1 'Digger' army uniform with slouch hat

At first, the uniform for the Soldiers' band reflected the military ties of the band and the memorialisation of those who served. But it was not long before army property was returned and a new uniform envisaged.

1924 Minutes

It was decided that members return all Military property as soon as possible. New uniforms were ordered.

The matter of new uniforms was then discussed and samples of cloth and after a good deal of discussion it was decided to purchase same from the Sunny Side Woolen Mills at 10/6 yard

Then it was moved that tenders be called for the making of same 31 uniforms Midshipman Tunic, Gold Buttons and Braid. Tailor made. Samples and prices to be returned by Saturday next.

Special Meeting regarding the uniforms where tenders were discussed, patterns inspected and a decision arrived at after a good deal of discussion that Mather Bros tender at 4.12.6 pound be accepted with the addition of 2 small buttons on each sleeve. And it was moved that the wide gold braid be put on the coat sleeve, but the narrow black braid with gold lacing won out to correspond with the trousers. It was also suggested that one whole uniform should be made and shown to the committee to see if anything else is required for same. Motion carried.



1924-26, with Alf Rowell as MD. Bow tie, double breasted. Source: Bob Pattie Archive



1930s, Band photo – same uniform but with triple cords across the front. Modification, embellishment.
Note MD Frank Wright has his own conductor's uniform. Source: Bob Pattie Archive

5 Dec 1932 Minutes

That it be left in the hands of the Secretary re ordering new caps.

1937/38 Minutes

New uniforms ordered.



In 1945 they moved to single breasted coats. Fashion followed the times; money was saved on fabric between the Depression years and ration years of World War II and the double breasted suit saw a return to single. New caps, no bow ties, buttoned up to the closed collar.



1946, Memorial Band's final parade. Source: BMCB Archive



Over half a century later, band drummer Lindsay George, who joined the band in 1946, surprised the members at the 2011 AGM by appearing in several past band uniforms. He brings the past to life here in vivid 21st Century colour.

When uniforms become lost or worn out it prompts a change to keep up with the times. Especially if the band is preparing for a South Street Competition or important occasions. To survive and thrive, attracting younger players is vital. Uniform can play a big part in how relevant young players feel that banding will be to them.

2011, Lindsay George displays the 1940s uniform at the AGM

1959: Navy blue; a return to double breasted, with striking, bold red stripe down the leg, ornate cuffs, shirt collar and tie. Red, navy with gold cap.



1959, Band photo. Source: BMCB Archive



1960, Band photo. Source: BMCB Archive



By 1962 the band wears the same uniform but with new caps reminiscent of the Royal Australian Navy: white, navy and gold.



1962, Aub McGregor and colleagues. Source: Geoff Smith Archive



1963, South Street, Winners 'B' Grade Championships. Source: BMCB Archive

Cheque to help band



Vice-president of Ballarat Y's Men's Club, Mr Allan Harris, right, hands a cheque for \$50 to the president of Ballarat Soldiers' Memorial Band, Cr W. E. Roff, to assist the appeal being held to purchase new uniforms for the band while the club treasurer, Mr E. Smith, looks on. The Y's Men will also provide staff for the "Music for the People" programme being provided by the band at the Ballarat Sound Shell next Sunday afternoon.

1967 November 29,
The Courier, article
with Mick Smith
for funding for new
uniforms (maybe
just replacements).



1970, Band photo. Source: BMCB Archive



1970: Same uniform but new navy cap with red stripe.



2011, Lindsay George models the 1970s uniform at the AGM



1971, South Street, Winners 'B' Grade Championships. Source: BMCB Archive

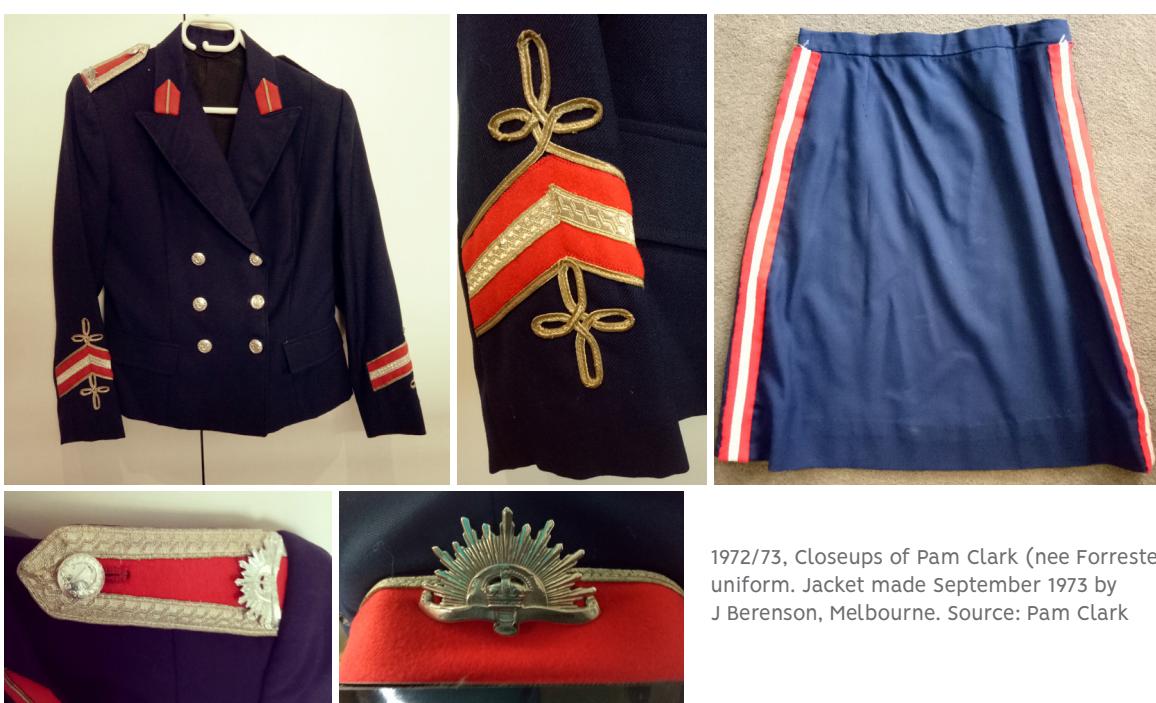


Women have had quite an influence on the evolution of band uniform in the last 100 years. Their part in the change in uniform is probably hidden by the fact that they weren't wearing it until the 1970s. But, for so many decades of the band's history, women were fundraising for it, commenting on it, showing interest in it and taking on the task of cleaning, repairing and pressing it. Not to mention getting it ready to be worn at competitions, playouts and special events.

The welcoming of women to banding in the 1970s necessitated more change.



1972, Same uniform but first band photo with Pam Clark heralding in a new era –
the first women's uniform is commissioned



1972/73, Closeups of Pam Clark (nee Forrester) uniform. Jacket made September 1973 by J Berenson, Melbourne. Source: Pam Clark



1975, Band photo – same uniform but with the addition of girls wearing uniform and two lads without regular uniform. Source: BMCB Archive



c.1976, Band photo with Jim Allen (MD), Pam Forrester (Clark), Amanda Bentley and Leanne Pattie. Source: Pam Clark Archive



1983, Band photo – Some women now wearing trousers. Still Ballarat
Soldiers' Memorial Band, still more female players



1987, Band photo, Ballarat Memorial Concert Band: mid blue blazer, black skirt or trousers, women wearing
tights (not bare-legged). Starting to be a more gender-balanced band. Source: BMCB Archive



2011, Lindsay George demonstrates how times have changed with a 1980s band windcheater at the AGM

One of the major challenges every community band faces is the rise and fall of member numbers. This is only remedied by creating a developmental band – the junior band of today becoming the senior band of tomorrow. To survive and thrive, attracting younger players is vital. The uniform has an important role to play in how relevant young people feel the band is to them.

1996: Purple satin waistcoats, bow ties are back! Women in trousers, more practical designs and fabrics for everyone.



c.1997, Band photo in Bandroom. Source: Glover Archive

3 December 1997, Brenda's newsletter:

Remember - when you play out you are representing the band. Please wear **correct uniform** and have it clean and pressed. Polish your shoes and your instruments.

Uniform is long sleeved white shirt/blouse, black pants/ long skirt, black socks/stockings and shoes, band vest and bow tie. If you do not have a vest or bow tie see the uniform officer, Pam.



Pam had put a note in a previous newsletter that year (May 1997), with instructions:

If you wish to iron your vest, please put a cloth between the vest and the iron!

By now the band are marching again.



1997, Outdoor march, white Akubras are in. Source: BMCB Archive

2004: South Rotary Club funds the purchase of blazers for the band

2004: Maroon blazers and ties, black trousers.



2005, Band photo. Source: BMCB Archive



2010, Begonia Festival,
Botanical Gardens, Pam
Clark Life Member
(French Horn). Note music
stand matching banners.
Source: BMCB Archive

2015 onwards: Purple polo neck short sleeve shirt, black trousers, black fleece top.



c.2016, Band photo. Note the eclectic array of jackets. It must have been cold! Source: BMCB Archive



2019, South Street Gold Winners. Source: BMCB Facebook



Former band President Bec Paton explains the decisions behind the change to a less military style uniform which is more casual, more comfortable and moving with the times.

They wore blazers until about 2015. They were finding that blazers, while one of the most expensive items, never sat right on the curvy members of the band, which is ... most of the female members. It never quite looked or felt right. So the band opted for a more comfortable fleece top and trousers, modernising the uniform with a smart, contemporary band look.

– Bec Paton

Sometimes, in December, there was even the addition of a Santa hat:



2016, Christmas band photo – Santa liked being MD. Source: BMCB Facebook

The band at the end of the 2010s



2018, BMCB after Royal South Street competitions, Founders Hall warmup room, Mark Witham guest conductor. Source: BMCB Facebook



At the end of 2018 Wade resigned to spend time with his partner in Ararat. Once again the band was on the lookout for a new MD. Mark Witham who had conducted the band in the 2018 Royal South Street competitions to 'C' Grade victory got the job.

Welcome Mark Witham (2019–current)



2019, BMCB South Street rehearsals with Mark Witham MD. Source: BMCB Facebook



Mark Witham. Source: Mark Witham Facebook

Mark Witham is a player (euphonium and trombone), band leader, adjudicator, music teacher, arranger and composer.

Mark's career is grounded in many years in the Australian Army Band as well as a Masters in Music (Technology), and directorship of Music and Performing Arts in leading NSW and Victorian schools. He also managed the Wendouree Centre for Performing Arts for a period before becoming the musical director of the BMCB and music director for Eureka Brass.

Music is not Mark's only love, however. If you are feeling peckish while driving down East Ballarat (current to the publication of this book), you can sample culinary delights at Mark and Madeleine's shop – The Little Cupcake!



Although Mark has only been MD for the BMB for a short time, the impact of his leadership was felt when he lead the band to "C" Grade victory in the South Street Competitions in 2018 when Wade was overseas. It was with great pleasure that the band was able to accept his application for MD in 2019.

In 2019 at the Royal South Street competitions the band achieved gold. This time the competition was not aggregated, there not being enough bands competing, so all the bands competed for the same title.

Here are the results from the Victorian Band's League:

Congratulations to all concert bands on their achievements in the Open Concert Band section at the Victorian State Band Championships. This section was judged in a festival format and the awards are as follows:

Knox Wind Symphony: Platinum
Ballarat Memorial Concert Band: Gold
Geelong Concert Band - Senior Band: Gold
Geelong Concert Band - Community Band: Silver
Shepparton Brass and Wind: Silver

Krissie Withers was MD of the Development Band through 2018, but stepped down due to other commitments. Trish Dulude took up the role of MD of the developmental band in 2019, combining it with a role as associate MD of the senior band.



2019, Trish Dulude conducting in Wilkinson Hall Bandroom. Source: BMB Facebook



Without mentors, we are nothing

To end this century of music, let us think about all the thousands of lives this band has affected. How much solace and joy it has brought to players, their families and to the wider community and how, without the innate desire to pass down and share the love of music, the band could not have survived nor thrived.

After all these years, mentoring is still the way we transfer skill and ignite and share passion.

That's music isn't it, you can have three generations away in age and you can play in the same outfit.

– Dennis Hawkes

At Haddon, Dennis Hawkes, former Soldiers' junior band member from the 50s and senior band member in the 60s, enjoys supporting young player Hannah Paton who plays with both BMB and Haddon Band. He sits in on whatever trumpet part needs a player, whether it be second or third part. Often with the youngest player. Dennis' enjoys supporting young players like Hannah in this way:

The oldest with the youngest. Hannah's about the same age as I was when I started. However, she's obviously started a long way earlier in her life because of the standard that she's at now. Obviously she's got a long way to go, but she's a great little player. Mum and Dad have supported her well with her playing. Every time you see her she'll say, look at my new mute or my new trumpet and she's very proud of that.

– Dennis Hawkes

Throughout the band there are countless stories of such mentorship. It is the fabric from which the band is crafted.

I would say that my greatest joy of 70 years in music is to see former music students still playing and enjoying music.

– Brenda Beck

Who is John (Jack) Cartasso?

MD Mark Witham shares his story, which surprisingly links us back to 1930s crack euphonium soloist of the Soldiers' Band. Although Mark grew up in Hamilton, not Ballarat, he has a very close connection with one of the early members of the Soldiers' Band, Jack Cartasso (b. 1911 in Maldon. WW2 number: V146449). You will see him pictured on p. 63 in the section about Frank Wright, with Frank and Jack Zilles at the Creswick Baths.



Jack Cartasso. Source: VBL Archive



Jack was my euphonium teacher 1973–75. Jack was bandmaster of the Hamilton City Band, a local piano tuner and a well known musician.

I know very little of Jack's personal life. I've heard a few stories but only remember him as my teacher, mentor and bandmaster.

Jack heard everything, knew everything and musically could play anything. He was my absolute inspiration. Our Saturday lessons started at 9.00am and would finish about 1.00pm. Lessons were always in the bandroom and Jack never stopped talking. He's the most musical person I've ever met! Apparently he was a tertiary lecturer and a master euphoniumist. He would recall when he lived in the UK playing live in the BBC in a weekly sight reading competition, which he would frequently win. He told me an English paper once published 'best euphonium player in the world' about Jack.

His lessons were detailed, including acoustics, a lot of technique, massive amounts of scales and technical work. Jack excelled at repertoire and musicality. We would go over and over pieces getting every nuance just right.

My greatest moment for Jack was winning the Australasian Junior Champion of Champions at the prestigious Royal South Street Competitions. I only found out two years ago that Stevie Ford and Frank Dyer were also finalists!

The same year I received A+ for my AMEB Grade 6 exam and for three straight years I was the Victorian State Euphonium Champion and played in the Champion School Band, the Hamilton High School Brass Band, under my initial teacher and Jack's friend, Eric Beale.

Life in Hamilton, Victoria was a hub of music. I had the best teachers for primary school band and choir (both state champions), a class teacher in Grade 5 who was a musician too (Mr Brian Sullivan), a magnificent piano teacher (Elaine Lewis) who I still keep in touch with, my father Glen, my accompanist and greatest supporter but Jack was the best by a country mile. He was the ultimate teacher.

I remember his amazing collection of old cars and utes. One ute he had, an old Chevrolet, was so rusted in the floor you could see the road below. I remember his Chrysler Royal. What a magnificent machine that was! We both loved cars and music.

Jack would tune our piano at home, a feat which took two days because Jack was a perfectionist. He'd always forget to send the bill so dad would personally deliver cash to him which he was reluctant to take. One thing you had to be cautious of was inviting Jack to dinner. I remember once he left at 2.00am!

Jack is always in my head. He left a legacy for which I am forever grateful. Jack passed away while I was studying in the USA. I was extremely sad not to be able to say good-bye to my friend and mentor.

– Mark Witham, 2018