

Brass Bands have played a Prominent Part in the History of Victoria

By C. C. Mullen*

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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

From the days of earliest mankind musical instruments have been used in religious and ceremonial processions. Primitive man used the bones, horns and skins of animals to make instruments with for the purpose of sending out messages by sound to call tribes together or to go into warfare. Later on the bark and roots of trees, cane and bamboo came into use for early types of pipe and flute music until metal was found to be important for making music sounds louder. References are to be found in the Holy Bible and Sacred Scriptures of bands of musicians of some sort being used in religious services and rituals, and Egyptians and Greeks of 5000 years ago used trumpets on big ceremonial occasions; while in the early Greek games and athletic competitions solo contests for singing and reed instruments were included. The Romans also had drums, cymbals and sounding horns. The development of music led to choirs and orchestras and groups of musicians called "bands" coming into existence, and some of these latter were used in the church before the organ was invented.

The Brass Band as we know it today is of far more recent origin, and it really derives from the military band, which is a combination of reed and brass instruments. Most British and European regiments have had their bands for war or concert purposes, and it was this type of band that was first known in the early days of the settlement of Victoria. Circus bands on a smaller scale were also prominent.

Between the years of 1835 and 1850 there was little in the way of music in Melbourne's new settlement except individual musicians or small family groups, and the piano, harp, violin and flute players who were engaged at social gatherings. Nearly all the early bands in Melbourne after 1850 were connected with churches or friendly societies.

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BAND PLAYED AT EUREKA REBELLION

In the year of 1851 two great events occurred that helped to place Victoria on the musical map. They were the creating of Victoria as a separate colony from New South Wales and the discovery of gold in the Ballarat and Bendigo areas. People began to flock from all parts of the world to the newly founded goldfields, and among them were bandsmen and musicians from the British Isles and Europe. The uprising of the miners under Peter Lalor against the Victorian Government over the issue of miners' licences and the battle of Eureka Stockade has been told often, but, of all the accounts that have been written, no writer has mentioned that a band of musicians had actually been conscripted by the miners to lead them through the streets on the historic day of Eureka. It is interesting to give an account of this by "One Who Was There" in *The Australasian Bandsman* of 26th October, 1923 (page 13),¹ when the writer said:—

"'Twas in the early part of 1854 that our band, after a prolonged tour, which had carried us from our own lands in Fatherland, throughout the length and breadth of Great Britain, and from thence to Australia, entered into an engagement with Messrs. Noble, Jones and Foley, circus proprietors, for a lengthy season in Ballarat. As everyone knows, Ballarat was at this time in that ferment of agitation over the "gold licence" question, which came to such a dramatic climax in the famous Eureka Stockade.

We arrived at Ballarat to fulfil our engagement on a Sunday afternoon, and, on reporting ourselves at the circus, were somewhat disconcerted by a serious warning from Mr. Foley of the immediate necessity of obtaining licences to dig for gold. These were necessary even before residence on the goldfields was permitted by the police, and the licences cost £1 per month or £2 in three months. Some few days before, the Hanoverian Band, a similar organisation, which was engaged in street playing, had been accosted by the troopers, who demanded their licences. Failing to produce them, they were hauled to the lock-up, tried, and fined £5 each, and had, in addition, to procure the necessary licences. We, of course, complied with the requirement at the earliest opportunity and so were not molested by the police. Our band consisted of an F flute, Eb clarinet, Bb cornets, Eb horn, and Eb bass. Money was plentiful, and we did very well. We never played for less than £1 per hour, and generally received more; but, unfortunately, it did not last long, for we were there only some four or five weeks when the storm burst.

The discontent among the miners had been working up for a long time, and towards the end daily became more acute. Defiance and rebellion met the troopers everywhere in the course of their duty, and they, in endeavouring to stamp out the trouble, injudiciously goaded the men further and further on the road to violence. Meetings were held all over the place, and finally, carried away by the spirit of the hour, the miners kindled huge bonfires and openly gave expression to their feelings by burning their licences. But, as I am not giving you a full history of the riot, I will confine my tale to my immediate share in the events of that stirring period.

¹ *The Australasian Bandsman*, 26th October, 1923 (published by Absalom Gartrell, at Bathurst Times office, 97 William Street, Bathurst, N.S.W.).

Among the rough population of that wild district there was a gang of men who excelled in lawlessness. Rightly or wrongly, every special act of violence was attributed to the Tipperary boys, as they were usually called. Coming straight from California, then under the reign of terror which existed in the wildest western goldfields, these men brought with them their rifles and pistols and, rumour said, scrupled not to use them when they deemed fit.

Shortly after we had settled, there were a number of miners who were found without licences, and they were tried and imprisoned in the lock-up—a building of logs in the police camp. This sort of thing had often occurred before, but on this occasion the Tipperary boys took the matter up, and determined to attempt a rescue. They decided to arrange a procession to the police camp, demand the prisoners, and, if they were not liberated, to take them by force. A number of the ring-leaders visited our lodgings (near the famous Charlie Napier Saloon, in Main Road), and demanded that we should lead the procession. As they accompanied the demand—which we could see was not to be trifled with—with a promise of £50, we consented, and played the crowd up to the camp. Matters, however, did not go to the satisfaction of the Tipps., and ended in a free fight, during which we prudently decamped. That £50 still lies to our credit with the Ballarat miners, for we have not yet seen the colour of it.

But that was not our only dealing with the gang. On the morning of the building of the famous stockade, we were again honoured by a visit from them. This time they wanted the loan of a cornet, to be used as a bugle for the miners, and also a double-barrelled gun, which they had found out we possessed. We deemed discretion the better part of valour, and lent the gun and one or two cornets, the miners giving their guarantee for £5 for the gun and £3 for the cornets, if they were not returned. We never saw cornets, gun or money after. But about an hour later they returned and, with levelled guns and pistols, ordered us to immediately turn out, again with the promise of £50, which was "paid" like the previous sums. Naturally we complied, and without delay got on the road. A stop was made as we reached the circus, which was pitched at the corner of Main Road and now what is Barkly Street, to enforce the services of two of the circus boys with bass drum and cymbals. Then away up the road we went, playing our liveliest march. It was a strange sight—a constantly increasing body of men, clad in the greatest variety of garments, from the flannel and moleskins of the miner straight from the shaft, to the extravagant garments and colours of the goldfields dandy—men of all nations and colours—the most mixed assemblage of men that could be imagined, some defiantly swaggering, others evidently marching under compulsion; and all escorted by the triumphant Tipperary boys, who dominated the situation with their weapons. As the procession advanced up the road and the music rang out, every shaft and every tent sent forth its occupants to see what was afoot, and no sooner did a head appear than a loaded weapon was presented at it, and a peremptory order issued for the newcomer to join the ranks at once. So on we marched, up Barkly Street, round into Victoria Street, impressing every man we saw into the service, taking no denial and no delay until we arrived at the Eureka, where the miners had formed their camp. Here we were added to the hundreds already at work, and very soon every man was found a job in the building of the Stockade, which was being constructed of the material nearest to hand. Slabs, logs, timber from the claims, boulders, everything and anything that they could lay their hands upon was used. The band was forced to keep playing all the day to liven up the men at work, until, at last, the rude defence was completed, when Peter Lalor, taking no pity on us, asked Verne if the band was

required any further. Verne replied, 'Not at present; if I want them again I know where to find them.' We waited for no second bidding, and very soon left the Stockade behind us.

There is no need for me to tell you of the night march of the soldiers against the flimsy barrier, of those deadly volleys at short range, of its brave though vain defence by men armed with pikes and other makeshift weapons—that is all a matter of history now. Nor is there any need to tell how the miners, whilst defeated by force, won their fight in a more lasting way than force could ever had done, by arousing public sympathy and attention to the injustices they had suffered and were suffering; or of the happy outcome of it all in the later liberal mining legislation, and the value to Australia of the gold mines and miners of the present day, forming, as they do, the foundation of the prosperity of almost every colony.

It is nearly fifty years now since I, as a youth, passed through those epoch building times, but the incidents of those few weeks will ever remain fresh in my memory."

Thus Ballarat was placed on the music map early, and little did those pioneers know at the time that they were laying the foundations in a gold miners' camp of that which became in after years Australia's most graceful and cultural inland city, which also became the bandsmen's "Mecca" in Australia.

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BALLARAT'S EARLY FAME

Among the earliest bands in Ballarat was that of the Prout family. In the year 1850 Samuel Prout had a band composed mostly of Cornishmen at Devonport, in Devonshire, and when he left for Victoria shortly after the start of the goldfields most of the players came out with him. On arrival in Ballarat, Sam Prout reformed his band under the name of "Prout's Ballarat Band," and it was for many years a part of the life of Ballarat. With the advent of contesting, Prout's Band became famous throughout Australia for its splendid marching, and won more quickstep competitions than any other. Attired in blue and yellow uniforms with dark blue helmets and coloured plumes, Prout's Band was always a most spectacular combination when on parade. On the death of Samuel Prout in 1890, a son, Albert, led the band until 1896, when another son, Arthur, became bandmaster until he transferred to Melbourne in 1923. Several of the younger members of the Prout family helped to keep the band going, but it finally disbanded in 1924 owing to the moving picture industry claiming bandsmen for theatre orchestras of the day.

It is said that wherever Welsh people go they take their music and singing with them, and this was shown, not only in the early days of the Ballarat and Bendigo goldfields, but in other mining towns, such as Castlemaine, Maldon, Creswick, Clunes, St. Arnaud and Daylesford in Victoria, and in Newcastle, Broken Hill, Wallsend, Cessnock and Kurri Kurri in New South Wales, where bands and choirs quickly sprang up; while the discovery of gold in the Kalgoorlie, Coolgardie

and Boulder districts saw Western Australia come to the fore with some splendid bands at the end of the eighteen-nineties. Later on, the opening of the big coal mines at Wonthaggi, Yallourn and Morwell was responsible for musical strongholds helping Victoria to retain her position as the premier brass band State of the Commonwealth.

In the eighteen-fifties the leading musical combination in Victoria was the band of Her Majesty's Fortieth Regiment, which was connected with the Somerset Light Infantry. The barracks were in Spencer Street, Melbourne. This band was famous for its playing at the balls at Government House, and at the Botanical Gardens and Treasury Gardens and the beaches. It also played at Greenwich (later Newport) on the opening day of the Geelong to Melbourne railway line, which was the 25th June, 1857. A large procession was held in Geelong to celebrate the event, and it was led by the band of the Geelong Regiment, and it included bands of the Geelong Fire Brigade, the Odd-fellows, and the Rechabites.

The population of Melbourne in the eighteen-fifties had reached 150,000 in 1857, and it was increasing every week. But many newcomers were going on to Ballarat and to Bendigo and other diggings. In 1857 the famous Cremorne Gardens at South Richmond were also established at a cost of £100,000, and the band of the Fortieth Regiment performed there on big occasions.

In 1861 William Stoneham formed a private band in Geelong which was known as Stoneham's, while he also conducted the Geelong Volunteer Band.

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THE BEGINNING OF BAND CONTESTS

The first band contest ever held in Victoria was during the Easter encampment of volunteers at Werribee in 1862, when the three bands taking part were the Geelong Garrison Artillery, the Ballarat Rangers, and the Castlemaine Grey Rifles. The adjudicators were Bandmaster Johnston of the Fortieth Regiment (British Army), George Chapman (formerly of the private band of Her Majesty Queen Victoria), and David Wilkie, of the early Melbourne music warehouse of Wilkie, Webster and Co. This firm is said to have been started by Joseph Wilkie, a piano tuner of Broadwood and Sons in London, when he arrived in Melbourne in 1850 and set up a shop in Collins Street, where he was later joined by John Campbell Webster. In 1863 George Leavis Allan joined the firm, which then became Wilkie, Webster and Allan, and for nearly a century has been known as Allan and Co. Pty. Ltd., or Allans.² The Geelong band was placed first, with Castlemaine second, and Ballarat third.

² *Music in Australia*. By W. Arundel Orchard, O.B.E., F.R.C.M. (Published by Georgian House Pty. Ltd., Melbourne, in 1952.)

The band of the Castlemaine Grey Rifles was specially brought to Melbourne to take part in the funeral of the two famous explorers, Burke and Wills. Robert O'Hara Burke had resided in Castlemaine, and before the ill-fated expedition had received a commission as a captain in the Rifles. Bandsmen were hampered in the funeral procession owing to the hot day, and instruments became so heated that the players had to dip them in water en route. One old-time bandsman who took part with the Castlemaine band said years afterwards that he well remembered dipping his cornet in the horse trough outside the Royal Artillery Hotel in Elizabeth Street. The band, which numbered 36, was congratulated by the famous bandmaster, Johnston, of the band of the Fortieth Regiment, for its fine playing of "The Dead March in Saul", by Handel.

Among the early bands of Bendigo were those of Nat Hallas, James Northcott (Northcote), Alton Middleton and Oscar Flight. Nat Hallas came from the Staleybridge Band in Lancashire (England) in the 'fifties. He had a small band of eight or nine players (all brass), and they were known as the "Lancashire Band" and had their first engagements in Melbourne. Afterwards they joined in a circus band, but some years later they settled in Bendigo, and Nat Hallas was able to get together a fine brass and woodwind combination. Northcote's band was also of the military type, but Alton Middleton, who had been with Nat Hallas, formed a drum and fife band also in Bendigo under his own name, and in 1884 this became known as the Bendigo Brass Band.³ At the end of the 'seventies there was another Bendigo band known as the Sandhurst Imperial Band. Oscar Flight often conducted Northcote's band, and on the death of James Northcote Flight took over the band, which became known as the Bendigo City Brass Band. Bendigo had additional bands at Eaglehawk and at Golden Square in the eighteen-eighties, while another one was formed at Long Gully in 1889 by a Mr. Dates, the members of which were miners. Dates was its first bandmaster, and it bore the name of Dates' Hopetoun Band. This was a compliment to Lord Hopetoun, for when he was Governor of Victoria the band made its first public appearance when Lord Hopetoun visited Bendigo. Tully's Sandhurst Drum and Fife Band was still another band of Bendigo during that period.

The brass band owes much to Adolphe Sax, a Belgian, who invented the saxophone in Brussels in 1840. This instrument, used widely in dance bands, takes its name from its inventor. His saxhorns were also new instruments of the valve type, to be made of brass from the high soprano down to the bass tubas. Saxhorns completely revolutionised French military bands in 1854, and it was said that the stage band of the Paris Grand Opera in 1857 consisted of 22 saxhorns out of a total of 26 performers. The rapid development of the sax-

3 *The Herald*, Melbourne, 4th Sept., 1920.

horns helped to spread their fame into British army and military bands and bring about the all-brass bands of the British Isles.⁴

James Hore, who came to Victoria about the year 1848, was associated with early military bands in Melbourne before forming a brass band with the assistance of his brothers. That was known as Hore's Saxhorn Band, and the Hore family claimed it to be the first all-brass band in Victoria.⁵ James Hore lived in the Fitzroy and Collingwood districts, and in the eighteen-eighties he formed a boys' band at St. Ignatius (R.C.) School on Church Street hill in Richmond, and this later became St. Ignatius Band. James Hore had graduated from the famous Kneller Hall School of Music in Middlesex, England, which for years has been the military school of music for the training of conductors of British regimental bands.

Brass bands began to arrive after the eighteen-seventies, and in 1881 there were several in the suburbs of Melbourne, including South Melbourne, Richmond, Collingwood, Prahran, North Melbourne and Brunswick. Band competitions were then becoming popular with both bandsmen and the musical public, and were helping to improve the bandsmen's knowledge of classical and operatic music, and these competitions necessitated far more time being given to practice under competent conductors. From 1880 to 1890 many band contests were held in Ballarat, Bendigo, Castlemaine, Maryborough, Geelong, Daylesford and at the Melbourne Exhibition. With the bursting of the big land boom in the early eighteen-nineties, some of these bands were disbanded owing to the serious unemployment position in Victoria, when many factories had to close down and hundreds of workers in Victoria were compelled to move to other colonies in search of work. Many went to Western Australia, where the discovery of gold at Kalgoorlie, Coolgardie and Boulder made work plentiful in the western colony.

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FAMOUS BAND FAMILIES

In 1884 three Englishmen, James Scarff, Samuel Lewins and Thomas E. Bulch, came out to Australia and settled in Ballarat. They hailed from Shildon in Durhamshire, where they played together in the local Temperance Band. Sam Lewins went on to Bathurst in New South Wales, where he formed the Bathurst Band, and was bandmaster of it for over thirty years. James Scarff joined up with the band of the 3rd Battalion Victorian Rifles, known previously as Ballarat Volunteer Rifles, and the band at the Victorian Railways Phoenix Foundry, both of which were conducted by J. B. Gray. Tom Bulch formed his own band, known as Bulch's Model Band, and some years later this became the Ballarat City Band. Prout's Band and Soldier's Hill Band were two others in the district, so it will be seen that Ballarat

⁴ *The Australasian Bandsman* (Bathurst, N.S.W.), 26th April, 1922. *The Observer's Book of Music* (Frederick Warne & Co. Ltd., London and New York).

⁵ F. S. Hore (Sydney), in letter to *The Argus*, Melbourne, 2nd May, 1934.

was well provided with music. Tom Bulch was a fine musician, and arranged some of the early operatic selections for band contests, as well as composing overtures and waltz music, and some good marches, such as "The Typhoon," "Newcastle," "Pile Arms," "Bathurst," "Postmen's Parade," and others. Some of the bands of sixty and seventy years ago had many temperance people connected with them, and these included the Melbourne Temperance Society, Hawthorn Rechabites, Geelong Teetotallers, Geelong I.O.R., and the Rose of Denmark Life Boat Crew. The name of the last one suggests that it was associated with the sea and shipwrecks, but this was not so. Actually it was composed of members who were supposed to go about rescuing men and women from the temptations of strong drink and, strange to say, it took the name "Rose of Denmark" from a hotel in Fitzroy. John Riley, who conducted the Life Boat Crew, was also in charge of the Irish National Foresters, St. Patrick's Society, and a private band known usually as Riley's Band. His brother, Captain Tom Riley, was bandmaster of the band of the 1st Infantry Regiment, the Victoria Police Band, the Melbourne Cricket Club Military Band, and the Melbourne Caledonian Kilties' Concert Band at the end of the eighteenthies and at the turn of the 20th century. The M.C.C. Military Band played at the open-air concerts on the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Monday nights, and the bandsmen of the Melbourne Caledonian Kilties' Band wore kilts, but, instead of being pipers, they played as a brass band. Captain Riley's father had been a military bandmaster with a Brunswick and Coburg regiment back in the eighteen-seventies.

Of all the families connected with bands in Victoria, the Codes were probably the best known and the most famous of their time. Edward Thomas Code was born at Bendigo on 19th January, 1864, and started his musical career as a boy in Middleton's Band, in which he was at first a French horn player, but later changed over to the cornet. In 1885 he removed to Melbourne and became bandmaster of the old Emerald Hill Artillery, which later became the South Melbourne Military Band. Some years later he moved to Carlton, where he established a music shop in Lygon Street, and he then became bandmaster of the old North Melbourne Garrison Artillery, and it is interesting to note that the commanding officer of the battery at that time was Major John Monash, who, many years later, finished a distinguished military career as General Sir John Monash and has generally been recognised as one of Australia's greatest sons. While at the North Melbourne Battery, Monash had been Lieutenant, Captain and Major in turn.⁶ Edward Thomas Code had other bands, including those of The Echo Publishing, The General Post Office Band, Dandenong Citizens' Band, and the Melbourne Central Mission Band, which was connected with the Collins Street Baptist Church. In those days

⁶ *The Victorian Historical Magazine*, December, 1957, p. 28.

the General Post Office Band played on the steps of the G.P.O. in Melbourne at night and on some Sunday afternoons.

In 1892 Mr. Code, with the help of his brothers, John, Alfred and William, decided to form his own band, and this was brought about at a meeting held in the London Tavern Hotel, Melbourne. The name decided on was "Code's Melbourne Brass Band," and this fine musical combination became the outstanding band throughout Australia and New Zealand for years, winning at Ballarat, Bendigo, Castlemaine, Bathurst, Adelaide, Sydney, Tasmania, and at the big Druids' competitions held at the Melbourne Exhibition. In the years 1898, 1899 and 1900 Code's Melbourne Band held the proud title of "Champions of Australasia." In 1901 the Prahran Council sought the services of Edward Code, and he built the Prahran City Band up into one of the big contesting bands of Australia. In 1905 Code's Melbourne Band ceased to be a contesting band and it became a concert one, playing at the big cricket matches on the Melbourne Cricket Ground and in parks and gardens around the city. Edward Code, on the retirement of Captain Tom Riley, was appointed conductor of the Victoria Police Band, while at the same time he held the position of senior bandmaster to the Melbourne and Metropolitan Bands Association, conductor of massed bands displays, C.M.F. Brigade military bandmaster, and an adjudicator at band contests. He had judged in all colonies of Australia prior to Federation and in all States after 1901. With his death in May, 1918, Code's Melbourne Band became defunct, but many of its players were in demand, as conductors or coaches, by newly formed or country bands.

John James Code, like his brother, was a native of Bendigo, and started as a choir boy at the All Saints' Cathedral in that city. Afterwards he played with the Sandhurst Imperial Band under Harry Monaghan. He succeeded his brother as bandmaster of the North Melbourne Garrison Artillery, and was associated with Code's Melbourne Band as secretary and deputy-bandmaster. A splendid player, he won the Australian cornet championship at the South Street Society's competitions in 1901, and was afterwards conductor of the Footscray Municipal Band and the Williamstown Municipal Band. During the War of 1914-1918 he served overseas, and was in charge of the band of the 38th Battalion for some time until he took over the band of the 10th Infantry Brigade, A.I.F., in France.

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A WORLD RENOWNED MUSICIAN

Percy Edward Code, son of Edward Thomas Code, was one of Australia's best known musicians. Born in Melbourne, he played the bugle at Faraday Street school in Carlton, and studied the piano and violin as well as the cornet. At the South Street Society's competitions,

he won both the Eb soprano cornet and Bb cornet Australasian championships and was the most brilliant Australian born cornet player this country has produced. Mr. William Short, the English adjudicator, who was private trumpeter to His Majesty King Edward VII, and a member of the King's private band, came out to Ballarat in 1908 and again in 1910. He spoke highly of Percy Code's playing—so highly, indeed, that the young Australian was invited to become a member of the most famous band in the world—the Royal Besses o' th' Barn—and while overseas he studied under its famous bandmaster, Alexander Owen, who was in charge of the "Besses" on its first tour of Australia in 1907. As an Associate and Licentiate of the London College of Music, Percy Code, at the examination for the latter title, was awarded the maximum marks of 100, gaining the Diploma, also the gold medal given by the College to the candidate securing the highest number of marks in the British Empire. Returning to Australia in 1912, Percy Code was appointed conductor of the City of Ballarat Band, a position he held for ten years, while during that time he also conducted the choir of the Ballarat Choral Society and won the Australasian Championship with it. In 1923 he went to America as a professional musician, and while there occupied the post as solo trumpet in the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra as well as doing work in Grand Opera Orchestras. Returning home again, he was in the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra before joining the Australian Broadcasting Commission as one of its conductors. He was stationed in Sydney for a number of years as a conductor, but in the last few years of his career he had the honour of conducting some of the Victorian Symphony Orchestra's concerts in the Melbourne Town Hall. As a composer of brass band music, his solo works for band instruments are very popular all over the world, and at the Royal South Street Society's competitions in 1962 a special section was given over to his works, which include "Zelda," "Zanette," "At Dawn," "At Sunset," "Valse Caprice," "'Neath Austral Skies," "Wendouree," "Lucielle," and "Miranda."

His brother, Stanley A. Code, was one of the best trombone players in Australia, and won the trombone championship solo on two occasions at competitions of the South Street Society in Ballarat, besides being solo trombonist to three of Australia's finest bands of their day—Code's Melbourne Band, Prahran City Band, and the Prahran and Malvern Tramways Band. He was associated with orchestral work with the J. C. Williamson Theatres and the grand opera seasons, as well as being solo trombonist of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and Victorian Symphony Orchestra for more than 30 years.

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A TRIBUTE TO THE ROYAL SOUTH STREET SOCIETY

No organisation in the whole history of Australasia has done so much to uplift the standards of brass band playing as the South

Street Debating Society of Ballarat, Victoria, later the South Street Society, and now Royal South Street Society.

It was on 10th July, 1879, that a number of Welsh people living in South Street, Ballarat, formed the society for literary and debating work among the youth of the district. Later piano, violin, drama and singing were added, and the first competitions were held in 1891. While band contests had taken place in Ballarat for years before this, it was not until 1900 that the South Street Society included them. Nine bands took part in the first South Street Society's contest, and three judges—Dr. Ernest Wood, organist at St. Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne, Tom Bulch, of Ballarat, and Captain Tom Riley, of Melbourne, were appointed. The Lord Nelson Band, of St. Arnaud, were the winners, and the band took its name from the famous Lord Nelson mine in the St. Arnaud district at that time. Anthony Grieve, the conductor, was a former Englishman.

In 1901 Lieutenant Herd, formerly of Newcastle-on-Tyne (England), and conductor of the Wellington Garrison band (N.Z.) was judge, and Newcastle City Municipal Band, from New South Wales, was the winner. Code's Melbourne Band had to lower its colours to Newcastle again in 1902 and 1903. William Barkell, who led the Newcastle City Municipal Band, was a native of Ballarat, but had had experience with bands in England.

It was in 1902 that the South Street Society played its trump card when the Society brought out, by special engagement, Lieutenant James Ord Hume, the eminent English and Scottish bandmaster, composer, critic and adjudicator. He told the big assembly of bandsmen who had come from all parts of Australia that the South Street Society's competitions were the greatest musical event in the wide world, the greatest bands, greatest choirs, singers and instrumentalists. In England such contests did not last longer than a week, sometimes only three days, and a little city like Ballarat should be proud of itself in that it held the distinction of running one of the world's greatest musical festivals.⁷

Two very fine bands from Western Australia, in the Boulder A.W.A. Miners' Band and the Boulder City Band, then captured the championship in 1904 and 1905, and in 1906 St. Augustine's Orphanage Band from Geelong, whom Ord Hume had described as the "best boys' band in the world",⁸ won the big event. Percy Jones, its youthful conductor, had won the champion cornet solo the previous year, and at the age of 18 was the youngest bandmaster at the South Street Society's competition.

Geelong people thought so much of the honour brought to their city that they organised a subscription to which Melbourne people were

⁷ *The Argus*, Melbourne, 23rd October, 1902.

⁸ *The Herald*, Melbourne, 9th July, 1921. *Australian Musical News* (Allan & Co. Pty. Ltd., Melbourne, 1915).

invited to contribute to send Percy Jones overseas for higher study in musical composition and pianoforte as, at the time, he was taking lessons at the Marshall-Hall Conservatorium and was a member of the Marshall-Hall Orchestra in Melbourne. In his travels in Britain and on the Continent, Percy Jones studied principally in London, Leipzig, Berlin, Paris, and Vienna. Before going away he accompanied St. Augustine's Band on a concert tour throughout Australia as conductor. In 1912 he returned home, and the Geelong Council appointed him conductor of the Geelong Municipal Band. Taking this band to the South Street Society's competition that year, he again carried off the championship. In 1913 he adjudicated at the big band contest conducted by the Australian Natives' Association at the Melbourne Exhibition, but, after that, he dropped out of band work and devoted his time to teaching.

When the Collingwood Citizens' Band, under Frank Johnston, won the big title at the South Street Society's competition in 1908, it received praise from the English judge (Mr. William Short) for its playing of a "William Tell" selection, but he was surprised when informed that the band had not been permitted by its local Council to practise in its own municipality on Sundays, and had to go some miles out of the city.

St. Augustine's Band again brought honours to Geelong in 1911 when it defeated all comers, and this time its youthful conductor was Leslie Hoffman. The Hawthorn, Footscray and Fitzroy bands were on the upgrade just prior to the 1914-18 war, and among the older Melbourne combinations the Richmond City Band held a high position. Its conductor, John Bowden, was also in charge of the Yarra Borderers Infantry (56th Battalion) and the Melbourne Harbour Trust Artillery bands. One of his brothers, Martin, was a champion tenor horn player, winning this solo section at South Street Society competitions on five occasions, while another brother, Robert, was a well-known League footballer of his time.

Most bandsmen of this time were members of their own civilian and local regimental bands as well. Prior to the outbreak of World War I in 1914, German street bands were a part of Melbourne's daily life.

When the Royal Besses o' th' Barn Band arrived in Melbourne in August, 1907, under the famous Welsh conductor, Alexander Owen, it was welcomed at Spencer Street Station by 1000 Melbourne bandsmen, who played under the baton of E. T. Code.

Prior to the War of 1914-18, a mounted military band existed in Melbourne, and it was a conspicuous one at the Exhibition Oval under lights in many band carnivals and military displays held there.

A notable Australian musician of this period was Robert Henry McAnally, who was conductor of the Salvation Army Austral Guards No. 1 Band (Melbourne), which toured Australia. Later he was in

charge of the Salvation Army Territorial Staff Band and the Victorian Professional Military Band.

Another famous band—the Geelong Harbour Trust Band—which was formed in 1898, made its appearance on the contest platform in 1910 at the South Street Society's competition, and, after annexing the "B" and "C" grades prizes, it won the big A.N.A. contest at the Melbourne Exhibition in January, 1913, and in October of the same year the Geelong Harbour Trust Band carried off the official First Class Championship of Australasia at the South Street Society's competition. It is worthy of note that one of the youngest players in the Geelong Harbour Trust Band was John Brownlee, who in after years became a world famed singer.

About this time brass band music was very popular in the parks and gardens around the City of Melbourne itself and in all suburbs, and there was keen competition among bands to give programmes on Sundays in Melbourne in the Botanical, Fitzroy, Queen Victoria, Alexandra, Exhibition and Flagstaff Gardens. The Melbourne City Council also arranged Wednesday night recitals in most of the city gardens during the summer nights, and these drew good crowds. Bands had their own programmes printed and distributed locally among suburban shopping crowds when they turned out on Friday nights and marched along the main thoroughfares.

The old Melbourne Tramways Band, under Tom Wilcks, played mostly on the St. Kilda Esplanade; and the Victorian Railways Military Band, under Arthur Wallace, and Victoria Police Band often turned out on Sundays. Some of the cricket clubs, notably Richmond, Collingwood, Fitzroy, Hawthorn and South Melbourne clubs, staged Saturday night open-air concerts on their cricket grounds, when first-class vaudeville, moving pictures and bands were presented to good attendances. Industrial picnics and moonlight trips down the bay on the popular bay steamers, the *Coogee*, the *Ozone*, the *Hygeia*, and the *Edina*, also helped to give good engagements to brass bands.

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SOUSA AND BESSES IN MELBOURNE

During the period from 1894 to 1914 many colourful naval and military processions took place in Melbourne, the torchlight parades at night being special features, while the ceremony of Trooping the Colour and the holding of Tattoos at the Melbourne Exhibition under lights drew big crowds. They were fine sights, for at that time all the different regiments had their own colourful uniforms. The kilted Scottish regiments added additional colour to the attractions. Nearly all the military bandsmen were members of their own district or suburban civilian bands as well, and these numerous turnouts all helped to bring about a fine spirit of comradeship among the players in general.

In the winter of 1911 Melbourne was honoured by a visit of the famous Sousa's Band from the United States of America. Mr. John Philip Sousa accompanied the band as conductor, and the party stayed in Melbourne at the Cathedral Hotel in Swanston Street. Sousa's Band was given a fine welcome by massed bands of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Bands' Association when they assembled in the Spencer Street railyards. As the train from Sydney drew in with the American visitors, Melbourne bandsmen played the "Invercargill" march by Alexander Lithgow, an Australian composer and South Street Society's conductor. The Royal Besses o' th' Barn Band came to Melbourne a second time to give a series of concerts, and its leader, Christopher Smith, some years later was adjudicator of the South Street Society's contest.

Victorian bands suffered during the World War I period between 1914-1918, when contests were suspended and their ranks depleted owing to the many hundreds of players who enlisted and went overseas on active service. It is worthy of note that one of the first Victoria Cross winners in the first war from Australia was a member of the Richmond City Band (Melbourne) in Thomas Cook. He was later killed in action. Bandsmen who were left at home were able to play their parts in giving service to the many patriotic concerts and open air displays. The South Street Society's contest had been conducted in 1915, and Collingwood Citizens' Band and Prahran and Malvern Tramways Band had tied for first place. Under the rules of the Victorian Band Association, when a tie occurred, the band scoring most points in the test piece was the recognised winner, and this went to the Collingwood Band. In the B grade contest, however, the Richmond City Band took the honours, and in so doing beat the Collingwood Band, who had won the official championship. The South Street Society did not have its next contest until 1919, when the Collingwood Band won. The Prahran and Malvern Tramways Band had built up a fine band owing to it having secured a number of leading players from the Geelong Municipal Band, Geelong Harbour Trust Band, and St. Augustine's Band, who had found work in Melbourne, and it also engaged Mr. Harry Shugg, one of Geelong's leading bandmasters, with the result that it won the South Street Society's prize three years running—1920-21-22. In 1920, Frank Johnston, the famous Collingwood bandmaster, was appointed conductor of the Victoria Police Band, and later he became in charge of the Melbourne Metropolitan Fire Brigade Band.

Many changes took place following the war. The advent of radio was the first big blow which bands received, as band concerts, both indoors and outdoors, were stopped owing to people wanting to listen to music in their own homes through radio. Players also lost positions in picture theatre orchestras when most picture house managements swung over to tinned music. It was interesting to note, however, that on three occasions *The Argus* newspaper, of Melbourne, took a vote

of its readers as to what radio programme or entertainment they preferred, and band music topped the list each time.

After 1924 the first signs of the big world depression were noticed, and work was not so plentiful for bandsmen. To make matters worse, an unfortunate split occurred between the South Street Society and the Victorian Band Association over the control of contests. The Melbourne and Metropolitan Band Association had urged that, as most of Victoria's leading bands were in Melbourne, the band headquarters should be in the city instead of at Ballarat, where the Victorian Band Association was housed. The Melbourne body then changed its name to that of the Victorian Band League and decided to conduct its own contests. This led to the Ballarat Association circularising all bands and warning them that if they took part in any such contests they would be liable for disqualification from playing in any Victorian or Australian championships, including those of the South Street Society. This led to a bitter conflict for some years, and the South Street Society's band competitions were suspended until 1932.

The Victorian Band League had elected as its president, Hubert Farrall, in June, 1921. He had been a prominent playing member of the Richmond City Band, and was keen to uplift the standard of musicianship in bands, the holding of monthly solo competitions for young players, more outdoor displays by massed bands, recitals every Sunday in the main city gardens, such as the Botanical, Queen Victoria, Alexandra, Fitzroy and Flagstaff Gardens, the formation of more junior bands, Saturday night concerts in city halls, and more attention being given to country bands. Farrall also set out to try to bring the two controlling bodies together as one united organisation, and several meetings of representatives were held, but no headway was made for some years. Later on another Melbourne Band Association came into being, but it did not last long.

It was not until 1931 that representatives of rival bodies had a meeting in Melbourne and decided to come to terms and form one controlling body, to be known as the Victorian Bands League. That was on 10th April, 1931, and the first meeting of the new body took place on 26th June, 1931, at the Richmond Town Hall (Melbourne), when Councillor Benjamin Warr, a playing member of the Brunswick City Municipal Band, was elected the first president. Cr. Warr had been a keen worker in the interests of bands, apart from his playing ability.

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NEW BANDS LEAGUE

There was an extraordinary coincidence about the new Victorian Bands' League being formed. Only a few weeks before (on Saturday, 21st March, 1931), Hubert Farrall, president of the former Melbourne body known as the Victorian Band League, who had been one of

the prime movers for the placing of the control of Victorian bands in Melbourne, lost his life on the ill-fated "Southern Cloud" plane. On Saturday morning, 21st March, 1931, the "Southern Cloud" left Sydney for Melbourne and was expected at the Essendon aerodrome at about 3.30 p.m., but it never arrived, and, despite extensive searching, it remained the biggest mystery in Australian aviation history for 27 years until its remains were found early in November, 1956. Farrall was one of the six passengers aboard, and at the time was manager of the Irrewarra Cream Co. Pty. Ltd., Melbourne.

The South Street Society's contests were revived in 1932, and continued in 1933 and the Melbourne centenary year of 1934, but the depression was still bad. The Metropolitan Fire Brigade from Melbourne, under Frank Johnston, became an outstanding Victorian band just then, and won two South Street Society contests running, besides having success in other States. Melbourne brass bandmen turned out in their best style to the many engagements and street marches during the centenary celebrations when the Duke of Gloucester visited Melbourne and the Eucharistic Congress was held in this city, despite the fact that the city's gala period between October and December was marred by the weather, which made it the wettest Spring in Melbourne's history.

During the centenary celebrations Melbourne was also favoured with a visit by the Band of His Majesty's Grenadier Guards, which gave a series of public concerts, including a special one on Melbourne Cup night, 6th November, 1934, at the Melbourne Exhibition Oval. The music public and bandmen in general were a little disappointed at the Guards' Band, which they did not think was outstanding from a musical viewpoint, and old-timers said it was not up to the standards of the Royal Besses o' th' Barn and Sousa's, which had been in Melbourne some twenty years before.

Stephen Yorke, formerly of the Royal Military School of Music at Kneller Hall in England, was rehearsing the band of the Gloucestershire Regiment in India in 1933 when he received a cable from the Australian Broadcasting Commission, inviting him to come to Australia and conduct the National Military Band, which had been formed in Sydney the previous year by his friend, Captain (afterwards Major) Adkins, who had visited Australia for the purpose of assisting to uplift the standard of both military and brass bands.⁹ While in Melbourne in 1932 Captain Adkins conducted a massed bands display at the Exhibition, and gave some sound advice to local players and bandmasters on discipline and appearance when on concert platforms or on parade, while he suggested Melbourne bands should add a bit more colour to their uniforms. Stephen Yorke was appointed adjudicator of the South Street Society's contest for 1934.

⁹ *Tempo Music Journal*, Sydney, December, 1942.

Broadcasting by Victorian bands was started in 1924, and Victorian bands seemed to be just getting on their feet again towards the end of the nineteen-thirties when another big blow came to them with the outbreak of World War II. The ranks of musicians were soon depleted by many going overseas on active service. Bandmasters realised that the only way to keep going was to recruit boys and to form more school bands. In this way they did a good job. But more trouble was in store when the Federal Government brought in the closing of shops on Friday nights. Most suburban bands had relied on playing out on Friday nights in the shopping areas as one of their chief means of financial support from local residents and shopkeepers.

When things were back to normal after the war, the South Street Society's contests were resumed in 1947, and the Victorian State Government decided to donate the sum of £500 to the South Street Society for use in the bands' section.

In 1949 the St. Kilda Municipal Band, from Dunedin, New Zealand, came over to Ballarat and won the Australasian championship. In April, 1950, fifty-four members of the Royal Papuan Constabulary Band, under their conductor, Inspector D. Crawley, visited Melbourne and gave several lunch hour recitals at the Town Mall. Music lovers of Melbourne heard another overseas band in March, 1951, when players of the 1st Battalion, The Black Watch from Scotland, under Warrant Officer (later Squadron-Leader) L. H. Hicks, gave concerts in the Melbourne Town Hall.

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HIGH STANDARDS MAINTAINED

In recent years Hawthorn City, Preston City, Malvern Municipal and the Kingsville Bands have been the best Melbourne combinations, and they have compared favourably with the best bands of the past. The increasing cost of instruments and uniforms, as well as music, is a heavy drain on band finances, and higher travelling expenses to Interstate capitals or country towns is one of the main reasons for bands not going away like they did years ago.

The high standard of Victorian bands all down the years has been due mostly to bandmasters setting a fine example in teaching young players a love for classical works of the great composers relating to Grand Opera, Ballet, Symphonies, Oratorio, Sacred and Religious works, and good songs that have been set to music.

The Chapel Street Methodist Church in East St. Kilda had a group of musicians in 1888 who played as the Austral Brass Band, and some years later this became the St. Kilda City Band. It is of interest to note that Harry Hawker, an early famous Australian airman who met his death at Hendon in England in 1921, was a member of

this band, which was conducted at the time by his father, George Hawker.

In addition to those already named, leading Victorian conductors would include Sharpe Brearley (Geelong Town), Tom Davison (Coburg Municipal and Box Hill), John Dyamond (Richmond District, who was deputy conductor of the Victoria Police Band for many years), John Booth Gore (Hawthorn City), J. H. Graves (Geelong Garrison, Geelong Harbour Trust and St. Augustine's), Thomas Hellings (Collingwood Imperial and Richmond City), Hugh Niven (Brunswick City Municipal, Royal Australian Air Force, Wonthaggi Union and Eaglehawk), William Ryder (Prahran and Malvern Tramways), Alfred Rowell (Ballarat Soldiers' Memorial), William Saville (Fitzroy), Charles Smith (Melbourne Vice-Regal, Preston Citizens, Victoria Police Band), Norman Uren (Hawthorn City), Albert Wade (Ballarat City), Frank Wright (Ballarat City), Tom Campbell (Kingsville-Yarraville), and William Philpott (South Melbourne City and Malvern Municipal). The last named has had more success in recent years in leading Malvern Municipal to Australasian champions at South Street, and also winning the big contest at Perth in Western Australia in 1960. Since his retirement, owing to ill-health, his son, Harry, has taken charge of the band.

A fine tribute was paid to Frank Wright, A.L.C.M., formerly of Ballarat City Band, who went to England and became Professor of Brass and Military Band Conducting and Scoring, and also Music Director (Parks Department) for the London County Council.

Naval and Military Bands and Salvation Army Bands have all played a prominent part in the musical history of Victoria, but a special article would be necessary in order to record their histories.

The most recent visit of an overseas musical combination to Victoria was that of Her Majesty's Scots Guards Band, under Captain James Howe, in March, 1964, when it played at the Moomba Carnival in Melbourne.