

75 Years of Band Music

1881... Work began on the Panama Canal. Another Czar of Russia was assassinated. Chief Sitting Bull surrendered at Fort Buford. There was a severe earthquake in Wellington. Christchurch opened a telephone exchange, and Admiral Aslamhexoff, with one Russian warship, visited Auckland. Down in Dunedin, without much preliminary flimflam, a meeting was held in Conroy's Hotel at which one of New Zealand's most famous brass bands was formed. Now that the Imperial Russian Navy and Chief Sitting Bull are no more, the facade of Wellington has been changed under the impact of several more recent shocks, and Christchurch has a telephone exchange which is a little more up-to-date, it's good to see that Dunedin's Kaikorai Brass Band (Inc.) still makes music under its original name, 75 years on.

Kaikorai's first conductor was Mr. T. Chapman, and the last surviving member of that foundation group in Conroy's Hotel, Mr. Alex Haigh, died only last year. This month, a number of anniversary functions for old Kaikorai bandsmen and their supporters are taking place in Dunedin, and the band itself will give a recital from 4YA on Wednesday, August 22, at 7.30 p.m.

The first uniforms, in which the band posed so proudly in the Dunedin of 1898 (see picture below) were of the "hussar" style. They were covered in braid across the front of the tunic and capped by a neat pill-box. In 1884, E. Stratton was appointed conductor, and he took the band to its first major contest in Dunedin in 1885. It gained third place. Next year, at Oamaru, Kaikorai came fifth. The following year, on the eve of the contest, Mr. Stratton told the band he could not go to Invercargill with them, for business reasons; but they carried on without a conductor, played a tuneful *Dorothy* selection, and won second place. It was at this contest, medals not then being awarded to soloists, that H. Pettitt (euphonium) won his section and was awarded a pair of boots. In 1894, Kaikorai became New Zealand's Champion Band, a position



★ THE present conductor, N. A. Thorn (right), and (above) a recent photograph of the band: Left to right—Back row, J. Dickinson, L. G. Rush, R. E. Fay, J. L. Dawson, A. R. C. Taylor, F. Knopp, C. L. Joyce. Third row, W. E. Willers, N. J. Wilson, G. J. Gallagher, N. F. MacDonald, C. W. Rush, A. M. Campbell, J. E. Lanham (deputy-conductor), H. Derby. Second row, W. T. Murphy (drum-major), B. A. Gordon, H. J. Morgan, S. S. Robinson, C. R. Calverley, A. R. Joyce, W. M. Archibald. Front row, B. J. Thorn, N. P. Roberts (secretary), B. N. Bain (treasurer), S. L. Wood (president), N. A. Thorn, Miss P. Westland (accompanist), R. R. MacDonald (deputy-conductor), T. T. Cairns, M. S. F. Blackie



from which other bands have found it hard to dislodge them over the years.

In 1902 G. B. Laidlaw, a successful Scottish conductor, was persuaded to stay in Dunedin and succeed Mr. Stratton. The following year, seven members of the Band were selected to tour England and Wales with the New Zealand Band, though only five of them were eventually able to go.

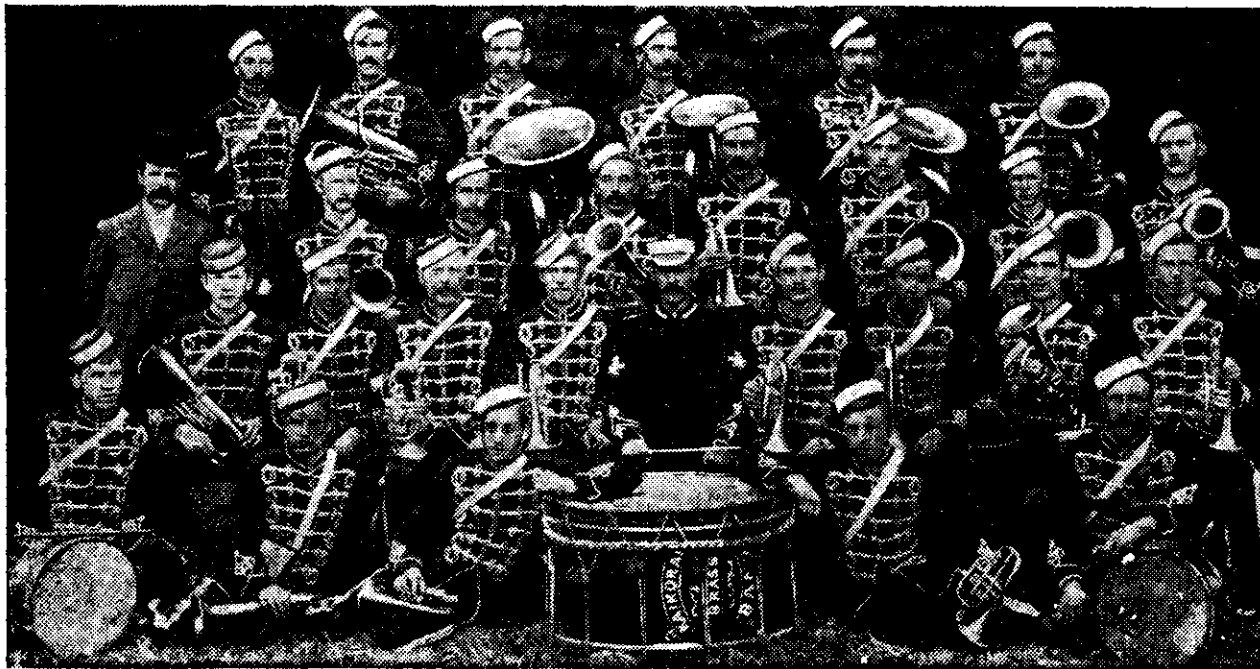
After winning the national championship at Palmerston North in 1904 (for which the famous musical firm of Boosey and Hawkes presented the soloists' gold medals), and the North and South Island Championships in 1907, the Kaikorai players went to the 1908 contest in Ballarat, Australia. By 1920, Mr. Laid-

law had died, and Hilmer Davie, champion horn player and drum major, succeeded him. In the band at this time were Messrs. Schnack and Dixon, who both later conducted champion bands, and A. Homer, eventually elected to the national executive of the Brass Bands' Association.

Two other later conductors were E. Franklin and T. Kirk-Burnnand, Mr. Kirk-Burnnand conducting the band when it celebrated its 50th anniversary. Even during the difficult war years the band carried on, and in 1946, its conductor (H. H. Osborne), entered a band which consisted largely of boys in the A grade section at Christchurch, thus maintaining the Kaikorai tradition of

participation—though not without criticism. In 1950 a 27-year-old conductor, N. A. Thorn, was appointed, and during his term the band has won the national championship three times, has come second once and third once. They won the quickstep five years in succession, the hymn test four times. They won the street march twice and came second twice. (On the other year it was not held.)

While the band is a youthful one, the length of service of most of its members is at least ten years. The soloists, J. Lanham (cornet), S. Robinson (trombone), R. MacDonald (euphonium), and B. Gordon (horn), are all still in their late twenties, yet have played for the band for at least sixteen years each. With such soundness of wind and limb, the Kaikorai Brass Band is almost sure to celebrate, in 1981, as a very spry centenarian indeed.



★ ONE of the earliest Kaikorai Band photographs—the band of 1898: Left to right—Back row, R. Pettitt, J. Flint, J. Davie, H. Pettitt, A. Millar, P. Don. Second row, J. Wilson (hon. sec.), A. Webster, W. Bevan, E. Ferry, W. Wakelyn, L. McConnell, W. Kennedy, H. Davie. Third row, D. Whelan, J. Scott, W. Irvine, G. Whale, E. Stratton (bandmaster), E. Kerr, D. Cunningham, D. Ross, J. Patterson. Front row, F. Davie, W. Henderson, A. Don, A. Thomson, F. Wilson

N.Z. LISTENER, AUGUST 17, 1956.