

BANDS ON THE AIR

SERIES No. 2

St. Kilda Will Come Again

*Dunedin Band Can Write
Extraordinary History Of
Competition Success in Palmy Days*

Special to the "Record" by

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CONDUCTOR Y. L. FRANCIS
Follows in the footsteps of a great leader.

A FEW years ago there was only one answer to the question, "Which is the champion band of New Zealand?"

St. Kilda, of Dunedin, had for long years a record for shield and medal collecting that other bands can only hope some day to equal. Marching—usually a relatively weak department in a civil band—was always one of St. Kilda's happiest departments. There was a time when the band could turn on a performance that made most military bands look bumble-footed. No other combination in New Zealand band history won so often in the quickstep—wins made up from highest points scored both in music and in drill.

Contest after contest St. Kilda carried off medals, shields, and other trophies.

The band was established in 1901, and until 1912 was known as the Mornington Brass Band. Its foundation conductor was Mr. E. Smith, and under his guidance the men quickly obtained the skill and discipline necessary to put them in the contest class.

FIRST success came at Gore in 1904, where Mornington won the B Grade championship. In February of the following year at the Exhibition Contest in Christchurch it tied for first place with the Wanganui Garrison, Wellington Garrison, and Kaikorai, in the A Grade own selection of Weber's works and was also placed fourth in the aggregate. In such a field the success was remarkable for a band little more than four years old. The result established Mornington in the A Grade status despite scoffers.

In 1908, at New Plymouth, the band proved its grading beyond all doubt. It won the A Grade championship.

Then came a break in this list of early successes. In 1909 finances would not permit making the trip to Hastings; that would have meant two North Island trips in successive years, so it stayed out of the contest. In 1910 the band participated in the Dunedin contest, but despite steady performances, it was not successful. In 1912 the St. Kilda Borough Council made an offer to take over the band, and this offer was accepted. The band became known as the St. Kilda Municipal Band, but the personnel remained much the same, and Mr. Smith still conducted.

UNDER its new name the band went from success to success. In 1912 it won first place in the two test selections, "Madam Butterfly" and "Meyerbeer"—with them the A Grade championship.

In 1914 the contest was held in conjunction with the Auckland Exhibition. The band travelled north, having refrained from going to Invercargill the previous year because of the intention to visit Auckland for the big contest. The trip was worth while—first place in the test selection of Haydn's works.

Then Europe went mad. St. Kilda, like many another band, lost its finest members to their service overseas. The band withdrew from the contest field and remained out of the limelight until 1923, when, now conducted by Mr. J. Patterson, it did

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ST. KILDA BAND, 1935.
Scooped the pool at Timaru. . .