

Bands on the AirSeries No. 3

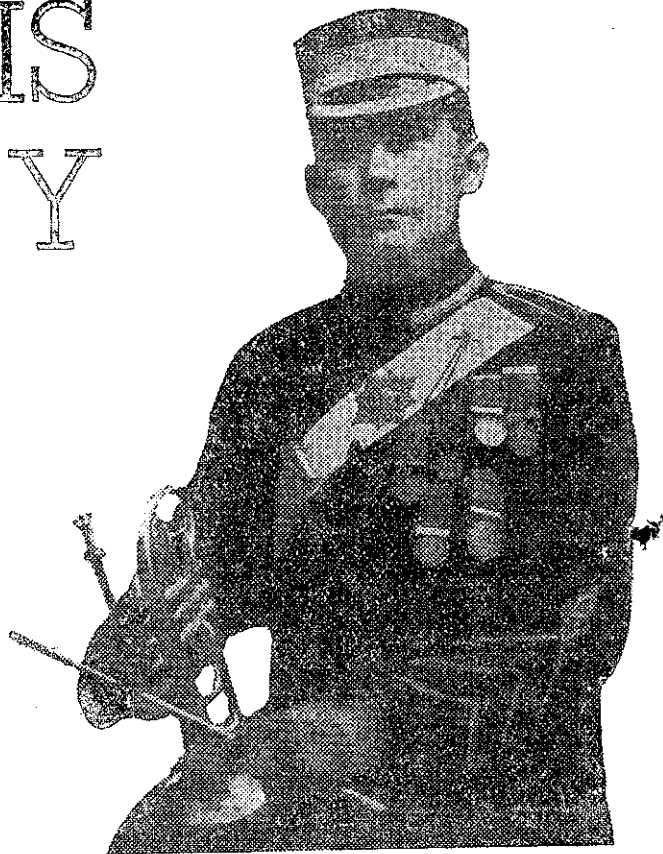
DERRY'S IS MILITARY

*The Story of an Enthusiast
Who Built a Great Band
Just For Fun*

Special to the "Record"

by

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THE LATE E. C. DERRY.

He was a Disciplinarian, but They Loved Him ...

HOW does the man-in-the-street make up his mind whether or not he likes a band? Is he sufficiently versed in band make-up to allow for many factors, or does he merely concentrate on one thing? Possibly he is unaware of the fact that there is more, a great deal more, than music in today's performances by any uniformed combination—for marching, appearance and tone are almost equally important in determining a band's success.

In the third article of a series dealing with the history of New Zealand bands heard through the radio, we now take the famous Derry combination—known throughout New Zealand and, through broadcasting, extensively overseas.

Firmly rooted to the musical soil of Christchurch is Derry's Military Band. It was founded in 1901 by the late Mr. E. C. Derry, and it was then known as "Derry's Private Band"—for the reason that all the members were Christchurch players gathered round him by the celebrated Derry himself.

Actually, Derry bought the instruments and nearly all the equipment in the first place, and conducted the band without fee, just for the love of the work.

In 1920 the band found itself in a flourishing position financially, and bought the instruments from the conductor. Derry then went to England in search of more instruments, and brought back with him a number of saxophones. Then he placed his "boys" on complete military instrumentation, and the combination became known as the most "military" band in the Southern Hemisphere.

The Founder

DERRY, the founder, was born in America, but he came to New Zealand as a boy and, after some schooling, joined the staff of the Addington Railway Workshops as a fitter. He blew a cornet so musically in his leisure that he retired the unbeaten cornet champion of New Zealand.

No bandmaster worth his salt stands for "temperamentalism" or nonsense of any kind, so Derry took the role of disciplinarian.

A man of resolute character, he "put the eye" on any

man talking or blowing out a mouthpiece when he was explaining the intricacies of any musical phrase. Then there was dead silence and "attention," as in any school-room.

But they liked him tremendously nevertheless.

After being conductor for 30 years, Derry died in Lewisham Hospital eight years ago. On his deathbed he said to Mr. Alfred Bristowe, present chairman of the Board of Control, "Carry on the band at all costs!" His wish has been fulfilled. To-day there is a stone in Bromley Cemetery bearing a tribute to his greatness as a man and as a musician. His bandmates erected it.

Known As "Bill"

FOLLOWING Derry came Mr. J. Scott, who conducted for three years, and then Mr. Gladstone Hill for another three years.

To-day the conductor is Captain W. S. King, ex the Lyttelton Marine Band and the Oamaru Garrison Band.

Captain King (he is known as "Bill" to his legion of musical and other friends) is a man of many parts. His knowledge of band music and its players is remarkably wide.

For many years a member of the staff of the old "Lyttelton Times," Christchurch, in leisure moments he contrived to become a champion rifle shot of the Dominion, and a chess player to be relied upon to solve practically any problem put before him.

THE band's strength to-day is 50, counting from double bass to piccolo, and it is increasing its membership, for many young players are taking to the brass, the silver, and the wood.

Its youngest member to-day is a brilliant piccolo player, and flautist, Trevor Hutton, whose father is also a noted player in Derry's; and the oldest member, probably, is E. Sharp, one of the band's stalwarts who has the widely-sought knack of making the euphonium sound exceedingly pleasant, even as a solo instrument—and to a layman's ears.

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