

BANDS ON THE AIR

SERIES No. 9

"HOW LIKE A BAND!"

*New Brighton Looked So Smart
The G.G. Snapped Them at the
Gee-Gees in New Uniforms.*

Written for the "Record" by ERIC BAKER

WHEN Lord Bledisloe was Governor-General of New Zealand, he never went far without his camera. I can remember an occasion when I was a member of the Press party accompanying his Excellency on a tour of inspection, and Lord Bledisloe suddenly broke off his conversation with local dignitaries, focused his camera on the newspaper party, and said smilingly: "Now, then, you fellows I'm going to get you for a change!"

We called the story, "The Biters Bitten."

Thousands of professional and amateur camera men have taken pictures of Lord Bledisloe, but few can claim to have been photographed by him. That's why the New Brighton Municipal Band, Christchurch, heard from 3YA occasionally, is so proud of a picture hanging in its bandroom. Lord Bledisloe, impressed by the band's smartness, snapped the conductor and members while they were playing sweet music at a Christchurch race meeting, and sent them an autographed copy.

That is but one of the hot spots in this band's history. It has shared, with many other bands in New Zealand, the inconvenience of having its gear destroyed by fire. Like them, too, it has played Phoenix, and to-day is a musical combination of considerable value to the City of the Plains as well as to the seaside borough.

NEW Brighton, popular seaside resort five or so miles east of Christchurch, was created a borough in 1896. Population then was small, but the residents were determined to have a brass band. Seaside boroughs got that way. . . .

A few players were gathered together and were admired by the locals at public functions. Even at that early stage, a highly expert bandsman was in the combination, the late Mr. Arthur Frec, afterwards soprano player for the Stanmore Band in its con-

HANGING in the place of honour in the New Brighton Municipal Bandroom is a picture of the band itself, cheeks distended, toes at an angle of forty-five degrees. It is a very remarkable picture. The finger that clicked the trigger that released the shutter and exposed the plate that took the picture of the New Brighton band was a vice-regal finger. The only hotter spot in the New Brighton band's history was provided by a fire that destroyed their instruments.

test days.

But like old soldiers the little band gradually "faded away," and the borough was dependent on the city for its brave music by the shore.

THROUGH the efforts of Captain A. W. Owles, known to everybody in New Brighton (and in Christchurch for that matter) as "Skipper,"

a band rotunda was built on the foreshore. Well, said the residents, there's the rotunda, now for a band again. And in 1907 a group was formed, including enthusiasts such as the late Charles Israelson, Bill Ellis, Jack Haig, Tom Palmer, Bill Taylor (now proprietor of the New Brighton Pier), Charles McCree and Edgar Colenso, with Captain A. P. Hopkins as drill instructor.

For a title "Marine" was chosen, and then came a hunt for a suitable conductor, Mr. J. Goodchild holding the fort until a full-time man was appointed. Someone discovered, in March, 1908, that Mr. R. I. Simpson, of Dunedin, was in Christchurch on a health trip. He was approached by Mr. E. A. M. Leaver on the band's behalf, and agreed to take over if work could be obtained for him.

The appointment was made and "Skipper" Owles paid Mr. Simpson a weekly wage until the new conductor was set up in a little business.

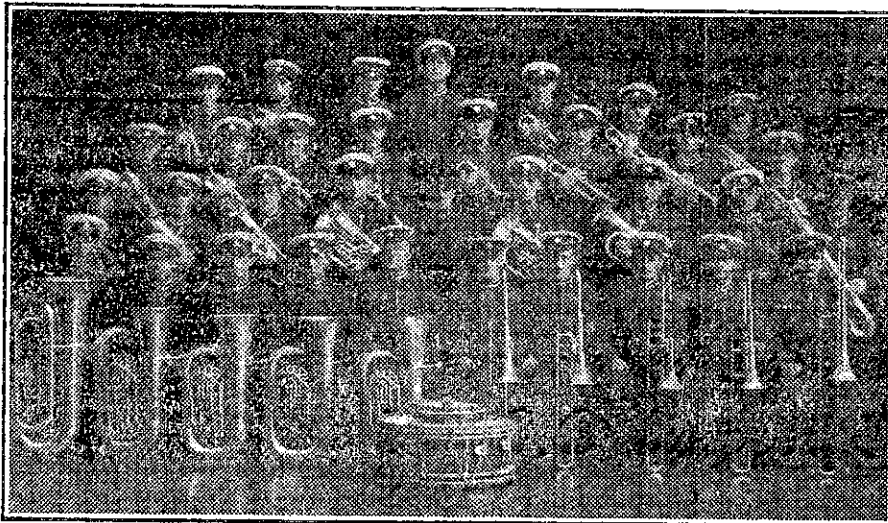
Now known as the New Brighton Marine Band, the next step was to obtain uniforms in keeping with the name. Very smartly turned out, the combination gained popularity

by leaps and bounds. Mr. Simpson remained conductor until 1913.

FOR several years the band went through a very chequered career — as all bands seem to do. The late W. S. Gilbert must have had something of the sort in his mind when he made one of his characters remark, "How like a band!"

A seemingly endless procession of conductors was appointed — all competent men. They included Messrs. D. Blyth, J. Thom-

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New Brighton Municipal Band in 1931.