

Edinburgh and from 1900 Presbyterian minister of Ravensbourne and St Leonard's in Otago,¹⁵ and Laurence Birks, BSC, a prominent engineer, who worked with a Christchurch Baptist company.¹⁶ Significantly, too, Birks had originally been active in the movement in Australia, first in Adelaide and then in Sydney as honorary assistant secretary to the Australian Council. As early as 1891 a company had also been formed at St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Dunedin, the pulpit of that 'rather delicate, sensitive and cultured' pioneer social reformer and preacher Rev. Dr Rutherford Waddell.

Already in 1884 Waddell had started the Young Christians' Band to link the Sunday School more closely with the Church, but by September 1890 the boys' attendance had dropped off markedly and the congregation was exhorted 'to remedy our defects in this direction'. The following year the brigade was started.¹⁷ In Wellington the movement, as in many other parts of Australasia, was linked with boys' institute work, mostly in inner-suburban locations.¹⁸ One of the most influential institutions from the 1890s in Wellington concerned with the welfare and training of young people was the St John's Presbyterian Church Young Men's Bible Class, and one of its most successful leaders was George Alexander Troup (later Sir George). Arriving in the capital in April 1888, Troup galvanised the six young men he found at the St John's Bible Class into the prototype class for the Bible Class movement throughout the Dominion. By introducing new ideas on co-operation and interchange of personnel, under Troup's 'inspiring guidance, [the] St John's Class became the pattern on which all the future work of the denomination [Presbyterian] for youth proceeded'. Once Troup became '... convinced that it was no longer possible to hold and effectively interest young people by the methods then prevailing he decided to adopt methods which gave to each member work and responsibility'.¹⁹ In under ten years this pioneer class attained a roll of over one hundred members and remained as large until Troup's retirement in 1908.

The original Wellington Boys' Institute arose, it seems, out of a Sunday evening mission school held from the early 1880s by the YMCA. The first moves to start the work came in 1891 and by June 1892 a building was opened (on reclaimed land at the corner of Cuba and Victoria Streets), following active promotion by prominent citizens. A Boys' Brigade Company was formed at the Institute in December 1892. When the parent Institute's work was on the verge of languishing, however, the St John's Bible Class stepped in to keep it going. After resumption of the original building by the City Corporation another was eventually purchased in Arthur Street and then, in 1914, the present Tasman Street building was opened.²⁰