

## FROM OUR PATRON

Peter Hayes

Although the Band was officially formed in 1936, there are records of the Band Parading in Whangarei in the early 1900s. The first official Pipe Major, appointed in 1911, was Alex McGregor, and it proved to be the start of many former Army Pipe Majors from famous Scottish Highland Regiments. He was followed in 1919 by John Cameron and MacGregor McKay in 1925. MacGregor McKay, an outstanding Piper and administrator, started a new era in the history of the Band. He also created one of the first Schools of Piping in New Zealand. In 1938 the Band had its own crest and a new uniform.

During the Second World War many of the older members were away overseas with the Forces. Drum Major Iain McInnes, and Pipe Cpl Tom McKenzie were killed in action.

I joined the Band as a Tenor Drummer in 1944-45. Pipe Major Melville Young, Pipe Sergeant Theo Young, and the Drum Major was Ian Heape, nick-named Cracker.

The Band practiced in the Old Skating Rink beside the river next to where now is the Telephone Exchange, Walton Street. The first Drum Major was Mr Iain McInnes, who was Mr Lou Morgan's wife's brother. Sadly as mentioned, he was killed in action in the Desert Campaign. Lou Morgan because of these facts, and a love of the pipes, dedicated his life to the Band, and along with the other early stalwarts, set the scene for the future outstanding achievements of the Band.

The first events that we attended out of Whangarei was a Band get together in Hamilton. This was the first major organised Band event after the end of the World War 2. We travelled by bus, and in those days in the old buses, it seemed to take forever to get there.

When we arrived we were billeted with different families so getting everyone to the different events was vary hard.

The Street March was up Victoria Street, the Quick Step was at the Claudelands Showground along with the last selection.

In those days too, there were only A Grade and B Grade Bands, and the only A Grade Band in the Contest was the Hamilton Caledonian under Pipe Major Sam Clothier. We thought that they were marvellous, so we the younger members, were determined to progress and to achieve high honours on the Contest Field. When we returned home the Committee led by Mr Lou Morgan and Joe McDonald were determined to start a Junior Band to really put Whangarei on the map.

A meeting of the Society in the YWCA Hall, which used to be beside the overhead Rail Bridge in Rust Avenue, was attended by 250 members. It was decided to form a Junior Band.

The Pipe Major was Hughie Smith, the Pipe Sergeant Fraser Simm, now in Waipu, and the Drum Major was Jim McLeish, who had been brought to Whangarei to teach Drill. Jim had been in the New Zealand Scottish Regiment during the war and was a strict disciplinarian.

The older members who broke away formed a Band of their own called the "Northland Scottish." They along with us used to parade in the town and a strong rivalry developed.

Jim McLeish and his family, because of the housing shortage after the war, lived in a tent at the Mair Park Camping Ground, until he managed to get a small house to rent in "Lovers Lane." The same Lovers Lane which now leads into Central Park beside the Library. Next door to them lived the Pierce family, who were great Band Members. Scotty Pierce, Jim Pierce and Keith Pierce (no less) were all Drum Sergeants in the Band, and their brother in law, Alf Hooker, was Drum Major. This brings us up to 1947.

The younger school members were kept together by Pipe Major Melville Young. In 1948 many 'older' members retired and the 'Junior Band' came into existence under Pipe Major Hughie Smith. Under Drum Major Jim McLeish, 1949 saw the Band attend the Auckland Provincial Contest, and the Timaru National Contest in 1950.

Through the efforts and forethought of a strong committee, attempts were made to bring a top class piper from Scotland. In 1951 the World Piobreachd Champion, Angus MacAulay, arrived and took over from Hughie as Pipe Major. Wanganui 1957 was his first contest, and Angus had the Band contesting regularly.

During the early 1950s a twenty year association with the Army began when the Band became the 'Band of the 1st Battalion Northland Regiment'. During this period the Band was assisted with travel, reeds, uniform maintenance, practice facilities, and time in camp prior to contests.

The Band has appeared regularly from Kaitia to Waiouru at Military Functions involving the Northland Regiment. A marvellous experience enjoyed by all, and a proud tradition for the future men and women of Northland.

In Rotorua in 1963, under Ross McKinnon, the Band won the B Grade Championship, and received A Grade status for the first time.

During the 1970s due to lack of numbers, the Band was relegated. With lesser numbers required in B Grade, it again started competing.

On Angus's retirement, Lewis Turrell became Pipe Major, and was followed by Glen Hamilton, Hughie Smith, Ken McLennan and today we are proud to have Bain McGregor.

All the Pipe Majors have built the Band, and took it to National Contests, but it was not until Christchurch 1985, under Ken McLennan, that it was again successful and attained A Grade status. The Band competed at Nelson in 1987, but during the following ten years, again through lack of numbers, was relegated to Grade C.

1998 saw the Band compete at Rotorua, taste success by winning Grade C, and was promoted to Grade B. Another proud moment for Northland.

## THE BAR MANAGER

Pearson HAMMOND

The Bar is running very well at present. The card system is working fine - Cards are excellent for our cashflows in the bar because liquor is paid for in advance and it allows me to get the discounts when purchasing product wholesale. Remember if you use the card system you save 50c a drink.