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OCS in Waiouru, 2013 with Mt Ruapehu in the background.

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After a cancellation the previous weekend due to poor weather conditions, on the 29th of September the Christchurch Arts Festival was brought to conclusion with a mass bands concert in North Hagley Park.

The New Zealand Army Band kicked things off by performing one of their renowned marching displays, followed by some of their own classics. At that point other brass bands from across Christchurch joined them on stage to form one mass band, complete with rhythm section and vocalists.

This conglomerate included the NZAB, Woolston Brass, Canterbury Brass, Addington Brass, Woolston Concert Brass, New Brighton Brass and Sumner Brass.

On the 11th of October a small, but experienced ensemble headed to Auckland to support the 97th commemoration of the Passchendaele campaign at the Auckland Museum.

The service was very moving and included a poignant speech from the Chief of Army, Major General David Gawn. The Last Post was sounded by ex-member Doug Rose on an original WW1 bugle.

The service also featured cornet player and pride of Tonga, Private Lolo Mei Langi Tu’uhetoka making his debut for the unit on side drum with the catafalque guard showing off his versatility.
Earlier this year a team of Army bandsmen combined with a few civilian brass musicians to form the Bavarian band known as the Shaky Plains. This band was to compete in Wellington on the 10th of October in New Zealand’s first National Bavarian Showdown. The event hosted ten Bavarian bands from around New Zealand all hoping to take out the title of New Zealand’s top Bavarian band.

Day one kicked off on Wellington’s waterfront with a morning of performances around central Wellington. Later, the bands took to the stage from 4.30pm in round one of the Bavarian showdown. For the first round each band played a bracket of 35 minutes, giving the judges a chance to have a look at and listen to every entry before picking their top five to make it through to the next day’s second round.

The evening concluded in very high spirits, with Christchurch’s Shaky Plains taking to the stage as the final band of the night. There was an impressive 800 strong crowd who had come along to take part in the festivities despite the unfortunate spell of rain.

The following day after a relaxing afternoon lounging about central Wellington and feasting on the many delicacies Courtenay Place Burger Fuel had to offer, it was time for the band to put their game faces on and head down to the marquee. Lee Family Barbers had Shaky Plains’ civilian counterparts looking sharp with freshly groomed beards and sculpted sideburns ready for action.

Pumped and ready, the Shaky Plains took to the stage and kicked off with their cracking arrangement of Macklemore’s “Can’t hold us.” As each chart flew by, their 50 minute bracket came to a close and they found themselves walking off stage with a buzz, knowing they had nailed it. This was confirmed by the screaming crowd left chanting for more - a job well done.

After a quiet beer in the performers tent to celebrate their stunner of a performance, the Shaky Plains made their way to the crowd in anticipation of the long awaited results. Who would be crowned ‘Champion Bavarian Band of New Zealand’?

Without further delay the acknowledgements were made to two ex-NZAB members, Leighton Roberts and Casey O’Sullivan, for their hard work and mammoth efforts in organising, supervising and coordinating the event. Then it was results time…

Champion Band - Wellington Bavarian! Second place went to Wanganui and what do you know, the Shaky Plains came in a very respectable third place.

With the results wrapped up, the Shaky Plains found themselves reminiscing over the previous couple of days before saying their final goodbyes and hitting the hay to sleep off the success and conclude a brilliant trip.

Pte Andrew Yorkstone
The New Zealand Distinguished Service Decoration (DSD) is awarded annually as a part of the New Year’s Honours and this year one of only two awarded was given to our very own WO1 Graeme Bremner. Needless to say we are very proud of all he has achieved and grateful for the knowledge and experience he has given and continues to give to the band. Below is the official wording of the citation for his award.

The New Zealand Distinguished Service Decoration (DSD) recognises distinguished military service by regular, territorial and reserve members of the New Zealand Defence Force, including command, leadership and service in an operational environment, or in support of operations.

Warrant Officer Class 1 (WO1) Graeme Alexander Bremner
For services to the New Zealand Defence Force and brass bands.
WO1 Bremner is the longest serving member of the New Zealand Army Band, having enlisted in 1965. He was appointed Drum Major in 1974 and in 1985 he became the first and only musician in the unit to be promoted through the ranks and attain the rank of WO1. He has held appointments as Drum Major and Bandmaster of the 1st Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment (RNZIR) Band, based in Singapore, and the New Zealand Army Band. In the 1980s he initiated an extensive programme of public performances by the RNZIR Band in Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and Singapore. In 2007 he was appointed as Liaison Officer for the New Zealand Army Band. He has managed a number of events for the Army Band, including the 2011 Rugby World Cup, The Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Pageant at Windsor, and the 2010 Edinburgh Military Tattoo. He is also a member of the Woolston Brass Band. WO1 Bremner has won the Brass Band Association of New Zealand’s Champion Drum Major trophy seven times.
Once again, individual members of the Army Band were put to the test with the annual solo competition. The outcome of this event was a mixed bag of ambitious choices of music and successes of young and old.

It was great to see some NZDF staff outside of the NZAB attend the event as well as our ex-members who always speak highly of the solos presented. This year’s event was adjudicated by two of New Zealand’s leading musicians in each of their fields; Nick Sharpe for the Brass and Vince Clarke judging the rhythm.

Nick Sharpe is one of New Zealand’s leading tutors of Brass performance and pedagogy, as well as a fine EEb bass player. Nick spoke highly of the quality of solos performed by the Bandsmen and found great difficulty in separating the top performers in each category.

Vince Clarke has been on the Christchurch Jazz scene for a number of years and has performed with some of the best jazz musicians around the world throughout his illustrious career.

It seemed the results showed a small Australian take over with our two newest recruits, who both originate from across the ditch, Pte Joel Williams (EEb Bass) and Pte Campell McKellar (Guitar) taking out events in their fields. However, our most senior member of the band, LCpl Brian Eckersley, confirmed he’s still “got it!” by winning the premier aria with his stunning performance of Sammy Nestico’s ‘In a Reflective Mood’ on Trombone.

Overall the standard of the solos were, as usual, very high and there was a wide variety of music choices from ‘Barnacle Bill the Sailor’ to ‘Some Skunk Funk’, all making the job incredibly difficult for our wonderful judges. The results are as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open Aria:</td>
<td>Pte Joel Williams (EEb Bass)</td>
<td>Pte Kyle Lawson (Cornet)</td>
<td>Capt. Graham Hickman (Cornet)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premier Aria:</td>
<td>LCpl Brian Eckersley (Trombone)</td>
<td>SSgt Phil Johnston (Bb Bass)</td>
<td>Cpl Kevin Hickman (Cornet)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premier Concerto:</td>
<td>Pte Campbell McKellar (Guitar)</td>
<td>Pte Stuart McFarlane (Drums)</td>
<td>Cpl Vaea Peterson (Bass Guitar)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rhythm Open:</td>
<td>Pte Campbell McKellar (Guitar)</td>
<td>Pte Stuart McFarlane (Drums)</td>
<td>Cpl Vaea Peterson (Bass Guitar)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Rhythm Technical:</td>
<td>Sgt Riawai Hina (Vibes)</td>
<td>Cpl Vaea Peterson (Bass Guitar)</td>
<td>Pte Stuart McFarlane (Drums)</td>
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<td>Aggregate Brass:</td>
<td>SSgt Phil Johnston</td>
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<td>Aggregate Rhythm:</td>
<td>Pte Stuart McFarlane/Cpl Vaea Peterson</td>
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Pictured below: Brass adjudicator, Nick Sharpe
Annual Formal Dinner

The annual formal dinner is a special occasion where NZAB members (mostly present members, with the exception of five ex-members this year) can celebrate the year’s happenings after the somewhat stressful and chaotic band solo week. Upon arriving at the Burnham Camp Sergeants’ Mess, the guests are welcomed with glasses of sherry. Shortly after the main body had arrived, outgoing SRSC Commander and the NZAB Commanding Officer MAJ William Blair entered the mess with OC CAPT Graham Hickman and CAPT Hickman’s wife, Dr Catherine Hickman. After a short welcome from the OC, guests were shown to their comically-debated allocated seats.

Newly promoted LCPL Ross Yorkstone blessed the dinner and everyone proceeded to indulge in an exquisite cold tomato soup. An entrée of crumbed lamb was next, followed closely by the main, roast beef on a bed of risotto (PTE Stuart MacFarlane’s absolute favourite!). I hate to be blabbing on about food, but I was so impressed with the quality of it all, especially considering what the standard of the daily lunch at the soldiers’ mess is!

After the dining formalities, the ceremonial port was brought to the tables and toasts were given, followed by a speech from MAJ Blair. Although short and sweet, his speech showed once again why he was, in the words of CAPT Hickman, “the perfect Commanding Officer”. He started with a brief overview of his four-decade military career, reminiscing on “the best years” of his career, his time spent with 1NZSAS GP. However, it was later in his speech when he compared the NZAB to that same elite military unit that struck a note with the band. Who could be disappointed with a likeness in terms of precision, dedication and excellence to such a renowned unit?!

Following MAJ Blair’s speech the formal awards were presented. PTE Tom Baker was awarded the Triple M Cup as the top PTE soldier within the ranks. Departing SGT Tyme Marsters was deservedly named NZAB musician of the year. At the end of the formal awards ceremony, the top table and SNCO’s were led out by the CO, the OC and their partners. Now it was LCPL Yorkstone’s time to shine as he read out the nominations and presented the coveted ‘Free Spirit’ award. After 15 minutes of hysterical laughter at the expense of the nominees, PTE Joe Thomas was crowned ‘Free Spirit’ of the year. Then it was time to officially end 2013’s NZAB formal dinner. A great night was had by all, and it was a fitting occasion to reflect on the immensely busy year that we’d had. Until next year...

Pte Cameron Lee

For only $25 (Incl. P&P) you can buy your own copy of our newest CD: Feeling Good

Email: murray.johnston@ndzf.mil.nz

For more information

Feeling Good and our other albums are also available on www.cdbaby.com
This year was the third consecutive year that the Army Band has played at the NZ Trotting Cup at Addington Raceway so we’re getting to know our way around. We performed a compact, cut-down marching display in front of the track just after lunchtime and then reconvened at our stage in the large open area behind the stands. The day was then broken up into short sets of three to five songs in between the races through until the last race finished up around 5.30pm by which point only the seasoned and really determined race-goers were still hanging around easily differentiated by their footwear or lack of it. This year we were as popular as ever with numerous stage invasions throughout the day and much catcalling and heckling...and that was just from the band! The ‘rock band’ also took the chance to road test some of their new songs for a couple of the brackets and the weather was nice which made for a good day all round.

The next three days we performed at the Canterbury A&P Show with the band splitting on the Thursday so the dance band covered the show while the rest of the band played at a march out parade back in camp for Depot Company. Each day featured two hour-long sets on the More FM Stage with a break in between for band members to get lost in the show grounds, watch a few sheep shearing demonstrations and supplement their cut lunches with all sorts of carnival hot dogs, candy floss and strawberries and cream. On the Friday our performance was directly after a set by THE Jackie Thomas from X Factor, which meant the lawn was packed right from the start and we had exposure to a demographic of people who may not normally have heard us.

LCpl Sima Bagheri

On October 19th the New Zealand Army Band joined with the Officer Cadets School for the annual Taupo Charter Parade. Once a year the upcoming graduates of OCS march through the streets of Taupo in confirmation of a long-standing tradition where OCS was granted freedom of the city.

Following the parade, the Army Band also performed a free public concert outside the Great Lakes Centre. In further support of OCS, the New Zealand Army Band was in Waiouru from Dec 8th to Dec 13th for the OCS Graduation. Along with providing music during the parade, the Dance Band also played for their graduation dinner. Our congratulations go to all the graduates!

Pte Taryn Dufour
Saturday the 23rd of November saw the band begin a very demanding but rewarding North Island tour. Our first performance was the next day in Auckland, where the band took part in the Auckland Santa parade for the second year running. The band really enjoy this gig as we are able to get up close and personal with the huge crowd and judging by the response we got along the route the crowd also enjoyed what we had to offer.

It was a really hot day in Auckland so you can imagine the state we were in after 75 minutes of marching and playing. We all took on as much water as possible and then played a big band set in Aotea Square for an hour which again was appreciated by the large crowd.

As soon as we could pack down from that concert we were on the road and heading for a series of evening concerts in New Plymouth, Wanganui and Feilding with a school concert thrown in at Nga Tawa School in Marton.

Smashing our chops on a street march the day before a concert tour was less than ideal but the band coped amazingly well and I guess it is a testament to the quality that we have around the stand that the band performed outstandingly during these concerts.

As usual the band featured a wide variety of music including brass band, classical and big band charts. Also featured were talented vocal and instrumental soloists, some of the highlights being New Zealand Cornet Champion PTE Kyle Lawson playing ‘Hora Stacatto’, PTE Abbie Bunting singing “Bathe in the River” and SGT Riwai Hina ripping up a funky Vibraphone solo called ‘Some Skunk Funk’.

The concerts were promoted with the help of the local brass bands in Wanganui, New Plymouth and Feilding. This formula seems to work well as we played to good houses every night.

After our final evening concert the band then got back into big band mode and travelled back up to Taupo to perform during the festivities planned around the Lake Taupo Cycle challenge.

All in all a great time was had, and thousands of New Zealanders got a taste of their New Zealand Army Band.

Cpl Kevin Hickman
Golden Jubilee Concert

Don’t forget to purchase your tickets!
We’re looking forward to seeing you there!
The Dance Band has played with various lineups during the last few months, proving that not only are we adaptable but as all good teams strive to, we have great ‘strength in depth’. We travelled to Waiouru in October for the Warrant Officers’ Course Graduation, which in recent years has become a regular fixture in our calendar, then performed a couple of sets in November at the Canterbury A&P Show whilst the rest of the band played for a military parade back in Burnham. The A&P Show was the first time our new guitarist Pte Campbell McKellar got a chance to let loose on the dance band charts and he didn’t disappoint!

We then had some more annual favourites; the Linton Families’ Day and the Officer Cadet School (OCS) Graduation Ball. As Sgt David Fiu, a long-standing stalwart of the dance band, was on leave conducting a civilian brass band’s Christmas concert on the day of the Linton Families’ Day, it left us without our lead vocalist. Rather than get somebody else to try and fill Dave’s shoes for the night, we took the opportunity to shake things up a bit. With so many enthusiastic younger members of the band and such a variety of talented vocalists it was easy to find keen musicians and singers to feature in a new lineup that we loosely named ‘Rock Band’. Pte McKellar featured as a lead vocalist several times, alongside Pte Selu Fotu and Pte Joel Williams who also played trumpet. Pte Raynor Martin on trumpet and Pte Cameron Lee on drums also joined us, both having played occasional dance band gigs before and there were still the ‘regulars’ of Sgt Riwai Hina (keys), Cpl Vaea Peterson (bass and vocals) and LCpl Sima Bagheri (vocals and rhythm guitar). It turned out to be a really wet and windy day in Linton when we arrived to set up so we had to set up in the gym as opposed to our usual spot on the back of a flat-bed trailer! We played short sets interspersed with magic shows and dance troupes and it was a good first run for a new lineup. Of course there were moments of slight uncertainty and almost panic but the crowd didn’t seem to notice and we were very well received.

The OCS Graduation Ball is almost always the final dance band gig for the year. It holds a bit of a stigma because the rest of the band finishes the graduation parade and are then free to ‘relax’ whilst the dance band up the tempo to help the graduating officers party up a storm at their celebratory ball. The band is always so well received at the ball that they never seem to mind that they have to work such a long day and are always encouraged to keep playing until well after the bar has closed… and there’s always the perk of a sleep in the next morning when the rest of the band go and load up our gear because we had to work so late! This year the dance band were asked if they would be willing to come back to Christchurch for New Year’s Eve to perform at the Christchurch City Council’s official New Year’s celebrations in Hagley Park. Everybody was keen so we assembled in Hagley Park on the afternoon of New Year’s Eve for setup and soundcheck. The festivities kicked off in the afternoon, focusing mainly on children’s entertainment until the ‘kids’ new year’ came round at 8.30pm complete with mini fireworks and a spell from the famous Christchurch Wizard. We then played two one-hour sets with a break in the middle while local band ‘The Easy Hearts’ took to the stage. Some of us had questioned how popular an alcohol-free New Year party would be after people had been given the opportunity to take their kids home at 8.30pm but it proved to have been a foolish question. The crowd numbered into the thousands and there was plenty of dancing and frivolities going on well into the night. As the headline act we were on stage to welcome in the New Year. We had to loop a couple of choruses to hit just the required time on the countdown clock and then the radio DJs took over for the countdown and the fireworks display which was inconveniently behind the stage which meant the crowd got a great view but the band and sound guys just had to have vivid imaginations! The Wizard then cast his official first spell of the new year and we hooked back into another few songs with ‘Superstition’, particularly fitting for that moment and even treating us to a sample of some of the Wizard’s, er, interesting dance moves. This was the last performance with the dance band for Sgt Tyme Marsters after over twenty years in the Army Band so it was nice that he could finish on such a high note.
While we were all enjoying our Christmas and New Year’s holidays the small country of Tonga was hit with its first ever recorded Category 5 Cyclone. Cyclone Ian tore through the Ha’apai Islands destroying work places, homes and also claimed one life.

With a holiday to Tonga booked for just a few days after, myself and the rest of the members in the unit who were travelling there had a good reason to be slightly nervous.

But all was well a couple of days later and the island weather was there to greet us. With Pte Lolo Tu’uhetoka there with his local knowledge we enjoyed the island lifestyle and its tourist attractions. But it was not all swim, sun and sand. Pte Tom Baker, Pte Taryn Dufour, Pte Campbell McKeller, Pte Lolo Tu’uhetoka and I all went along to high schools around the island to help out with the up and coming brass and rhythm players. Pte Baker also had the chance to conduct and take a full rehearsal at Tupou College (Toloa) which boasts the top brass band in Tonga.

As Tonga came together to fundraise and support the rebuild of the Ha’apai islands they had organised a charity rugby match held at Teufaiva Stadium in Nukualofa and I was lucky enough to be asked to play. There were three other games prior to the feature match, Toloa Old Boys (top Tongan club team) vs Ha’apai All Stars (top players selected from all other clubs). Being a part of the Ha’apai team was probably the highlight of my amateur rugby career, playing alongside members from the Tongan 7s team and Ikale Tahi (the Tongan national team). I saw a lot of these guys again a few weeks later in Wellington for the International 7s competition.

Playing in front of a big crowd, Crown Prince Tupouto’a Ulukalala in attendance as chief guest, friends watching, playing along side awesome players and supporting a good cause made it a great thing to be part of.

Unfortunately we couldn’t pull off the win going down 22-25. With Lolo being a Toloa Old Boy himself, he was stoked with the outcome. Tom and Taryn were also on Lolo’s side as they both donned the blue uniform and supported the cause by playing with the Toloa High School Band which performed throughout the day.

With the small island community all coming together to help each other we managed to raise close to $30,000 that day.

Our trip definitely turned out far different than we had first expected, but we found that when the opportunity presents itself, even playing your cornet or making a tackle can help a lot in the right situation.
Wellington International Sevens

The beginning of the year saw the NZ Army Band return to the International Rugby Sevens event in Wellington. During a busy first week back after the holidays including a trip to Wellington for the CDF handover parade, the Drum Major somehow managed to get us back into top marching form and put together another world class marching display especially for the event. Luckily we'd memorised the music before the holidays so a quick recap was all that was needed before we headed out to the marching paddock. As in our previous appearances at this event, we took part in the street parade on the Wednesday before performing our full display on the Friday night in the stadium. For the parade, the band was scheduled as a part of the finale, marching right in front of the All Blacks Sevens team’s vehicle. We performed a variety of music from our display with amended dance moves allowing us to entertain without holding up the flow of the parade. We were very well received by the energetic crowds that lined Lambton Quay and the enthusiasm proved to be just a taster of things to come when we took to the stadium a couple of days later.

The next day the band was tasked to provide light entertainment for the Governor General’s Waitangi Day garden party. Wellington produced a stunning day however not such a stunning temperature (31 degrees!) to perform three hours of music dressed in ceremonial reds in direct sunlight.

Friday was our day to perform to the sold out crowd at Westpac Stadium. When I first joined a brass band twelve years ago I NEVER imagined that one day I would be ‘rocking out’ with a brass band in front of 10,000 screaming fans to chart-topping songs such as ‘Living on a Prayer’, ‘Thrift Shop’ and Beyonce’s ‘Crazy in Love’.

Saturday was the final performance day of the tour. At 0700hrs the Dance Band flew down as the advance party for the Marlborough Wine & Food Festival. 1000hrs saw the crowd spill into the Brancott Estate Vineyard and at 1030hrs they were dazzled for an hour with a performance by the fabulous NZ Army Dance Band. 1200hrs saw the remaining members of the NZAB arrive and at 1330hrs we all took to the stage to perform a very energetic set that had nearly the whole audience up dancing to crowd pleasers such as ‘Time Warp’, ‘River Deep, Mountain High’ and ‘September’. To finish the day off we performed the well-received Sevens marching display to the 12,000 strong audience.

A very fast paced tour yet a fantastic start to 2014!

Pte Cameron Lee
CDF Change Over Parade / Remembering Mrs Doris Bremner

The band hit the start of 2014 running with the farewell of our existing CDF Lt Gen. Rhys Jones and welcoming in our new CDF Lt Gen. Tim Keating on a warm summer’s day in Wellington. This was also the final Wellington parade for soon to depart CSM WO1 Pat Cooney. The excellent drill and quality of music of the Army Band was a fine send off for both Lt Gen. Rhys Jones’ and WO1 Pat Cooney.

Alongside the NZDF Maori Cultural Group and a 50 strong guard, the Army Band were on parade on the freshly pressed lawn of Government House and both the old and new CDF spoke highly of the band on parade, as well as the look of the new ceremonial uniform.

Following the parade, our brass quintet ‘rocked the house’ at a formal dinner hosted by the Governor General Sir Jerry Mateparae and fine words of praise were received from ‘Hobbit’ Lt Cdr. Mark Hadlow as well as other ‘top brass’ in attendance at the dinner.

Pte Joe Thomas

In loving memory of Mrs Doris Bremner (1916 - 2014)

Thank you for the years of unconditional support, you will never be forgotten. Rest in peace.
The band were lucky enough to have our success in the 2013 Edinburgh Tattoo featured on the front cover of the November 2013 issue of New Zealand Mouthpiece magazine!