

MASTERTON DISTRICT BRASS BAND

**FORMERLY
MASTERTON MUNICIPAL SILVER BAND INC.**



125 YEARS

1873

1998



Masterton Trust Lands Trust

It is a privilege to be asked to put down a few thoughts at this time as the Masterton Municipal Band celebrates its first 125 years.

The story of the Band is one of ups and downs, of times of hardship, of times of triumph, such as occur in the lives of individuals and other institutions. Throughout however there is always the spirit of real friendship, of mutual support, of tremendous hard work and self sacrifice, as well as a lot of fun.

The Band has always been an integral part of the Community, although many of us tend to take it for granted. Thus it is a pleasure to acknowledge the contribution of all members, past and present, to this Community.

The Masterton Trust Lands Trust is only 1 year older than the Band. We have been fortunate to be able to help at times over the years and will always be able to do so. We congratulate and thank you for all that has been achieved, and look forward to the future of the Band.

O. F. Prior,
Chairman,
Masterton Trust Lands Trust.



Masterton District Council

From the Mayor

I consider it a privilege to write this preface on the occasion of the Masterton District Bands 125 year celebration.

George Groombridge who so ably wrote the centennial book has added the next 25 years history of the band, a history that is possibly only surpassed by another Masterton institution, the Masterton Trust Lands Trust who celebrated their 125 year anniversary last year, 1997.

A feature of the past 25 years has been the contribution of a number of members who have supported and helped sustain the band through that period. Their efforts have been significant considering the difficult economic environment during that period and the increasing number of recreational and supporting pursuits available to young people today.

The number of young people introduced to the band and the band music over the past 25 years has been a feature and does bring real credit to their band and its leaders.

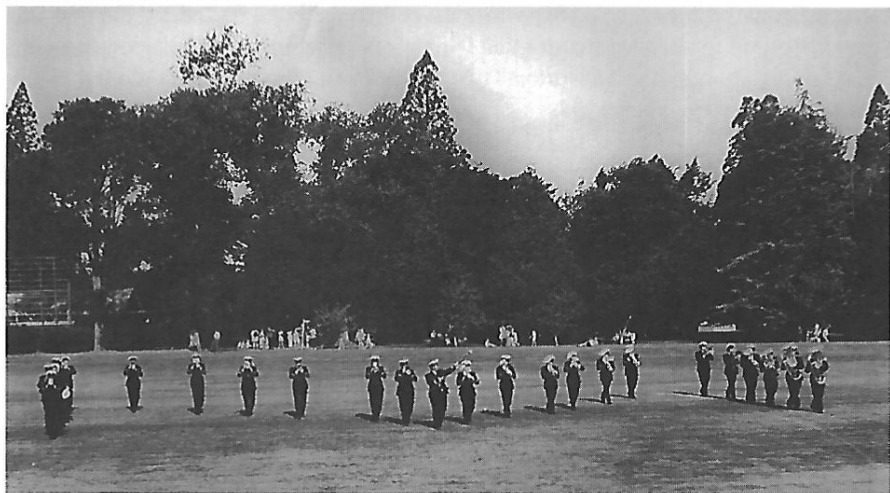
The new uniforms and the new band headquarters at Queen Elizabeth Park are two significant achievements during the 25 year period, and have only occurred through the hard work and dedication of a number of special band people.

The band has met so ably the many and varied requests to perform, and on all occasions has added so much to the large number of special events that are now a feature of the Region. The Christmas and Anzac Day parades continue to be two of the main events on the Band's events calendar.

As Mayor I continue to be extremely proud of the Band, and congratulate them for their outstanding contribution to our community over the past 125 years and for achieving the 125 year milestone.

**RC FRANCIS
MAYOR
31 August 1998**

One Hundred and Twenty Five years of any organisation is a great occasion in any person's language and therefore the Masterton District Brass Band has every reason to celebrate this milestone this year. As will be seen from the Centennial history of the Band, its members have been part of, and seen, some major changes take place. To review the last twenty five years it is imperative that we take time to see the changes that have taken place in the town of Masterton itself. The main street of the town shows for visitors the most notable change.



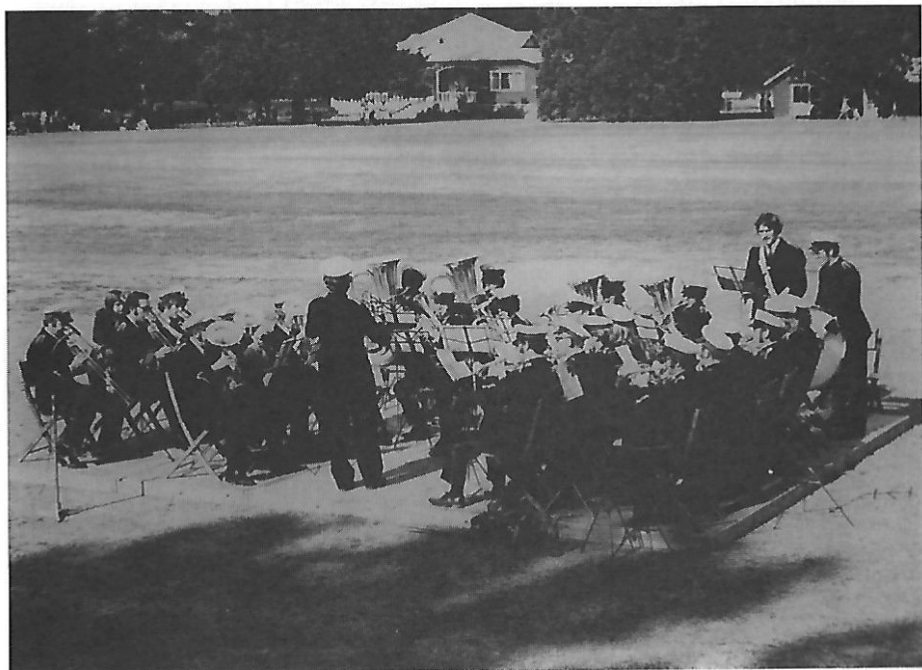
Masterton Brass Band forming the big M.

No longer can a five front band march with confidence straight down the main street, as now there are courtesy crossings that raise the street for a short while and then plunge the unsuspecting bandsperson back onto the tarseal once again. Islands of trees now are placed throughout the whole of the main street thus making the task of keeping a full front very difficult.

The Christmas Parade is still a main feature of the Band's effort as it runs up to the festive season and even this event is often a stop and start affair as the band has to wait often for the parade to catch up.

Since the publishing of the Centennial history the major change for the band has been the building of the bandroom in Park Ave. This task, headed as it was by several of the tradespeople within the band ranks, has, in lots of folks opinion, been instrumental in keeping the 'esprit de corp' of the band so high. The factor of keeping the ranks of the band full is still one that continually "dogs" the committee and its supporters. Now, as the only Brass Band left in the Wairarapa, it has become almost an expectation that there will always be a band.

Our band then, has a past that it is very proud of and is now looking forward to a future that will be different but yet challenging.



D. Carman conducting the Band.

In this supplement to the centennial history it will be our hope to enthuse you once again with hope that buoyed you up in the time past when you were part of this historic organisation of fellow musicians. The old bandroom is gone but never will the memories of that place

fade. Even now, the new bandroom is beginning to take on an aura of its own. In its walls you will see all of the old photos of bands in the past and up to the present.

It will be our intention in this booklet to let you be part of the ongoing work of the band and to see once again friends from the past when you were part of the town band. Names will be mentioned within this volume and photos seen that have been part of the last twenty five years of the band. In no way can we print all we would have like to but we will endeavour to cover as much as we can in the space available to us.

One of the major important additions to the ranks has been the advent of young women to our band, this of course could be seen by some of the older members as a backward step, yet even these same people, once they have realised the role they have played and are in fact playing, will accept their presence.

At this early stage it would be right and proper to acknowledge with

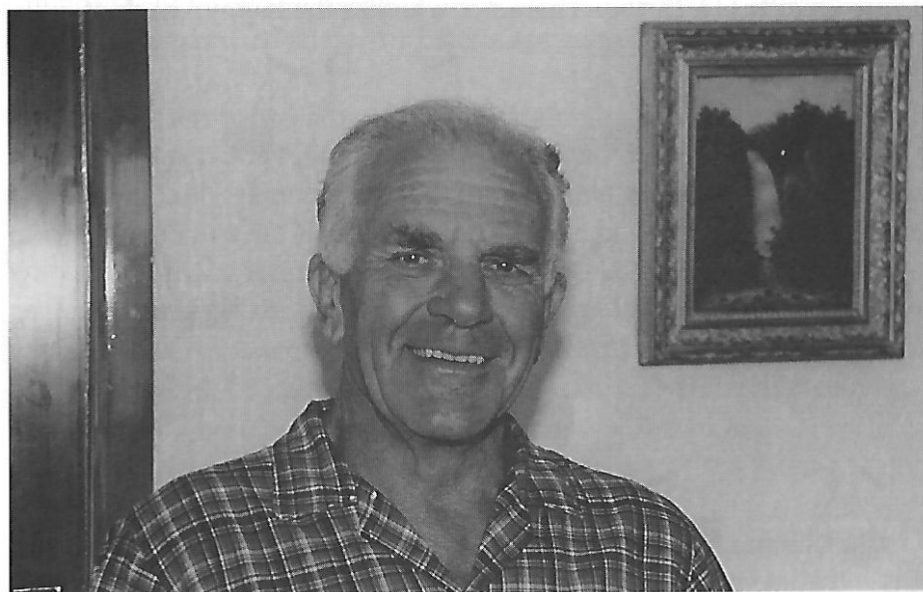


Ted Paris with Rebecca Davison.

gratitude the core of older more mature players who have notched up years of service both in the ranks and on the committee of the band. Their devotion is a lesson to us all.

In this regard it is interesting to see that today's learners have the advantage of modern tutorial material, a far cry from those of us who learned off a one page sheet that certainly had all the essential elements but there was no real incentive to rise above the ability to play the scale and to tongue the note properly, whereas today's learners have tunes introduced almost as soon as they are able to cope with the instrument. In speaking with some of the band tutors it does appear however, that there still needs to be a lot of encouragement from the tutors in order to see that they are helping the learners to take their place in the ranks alongside the more experienced players. The two copies of the tutorial books came with the cooperation of the librarian Ben Rickards and older bandsmen will be pleased to see that stamped clearly throughout the books is the fact that the copies are the property of the "Band Library".

Whilst he and I spent sometime in the bandroom a nostalgic aura



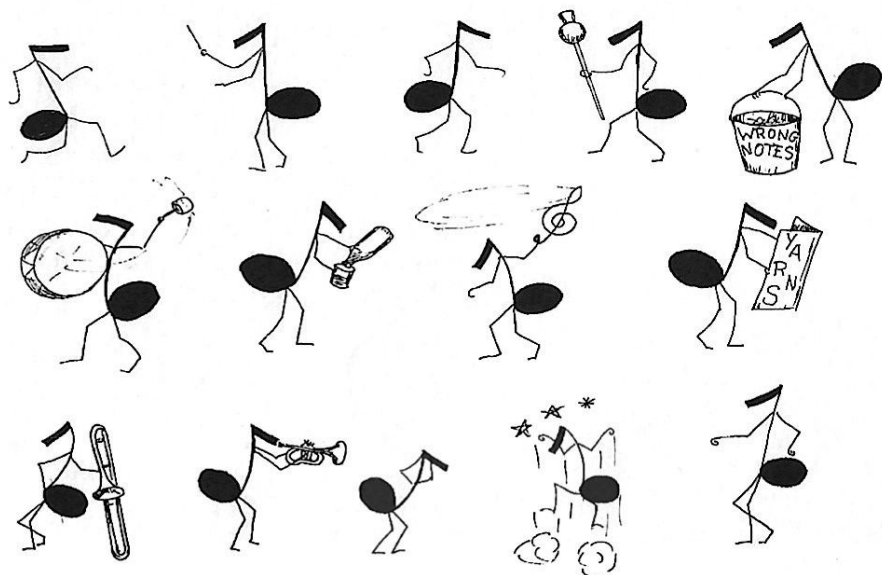
Ben Rickards.

came over me and I was transported back through time via the photographs on the walls. Over the past twentyfive years there have been notable changes mainly in the quality of the uniforms that the band now are wearing and the fact that now all of the photographs are in colour. The band's excellent collection of older photos will of course be part of the feature of the celebrations at the bandroom.

A sad note for some of the bandsmen will be the picture of Ken Hudson the drummajor who endeared himself so much to the band and whose life was tragically cut short as he endeavoured to save the life of a young recruit in the NZ Army whilst helping in a handgrenade exercise. There is a fitting memorial to him in the bandroom and this will be on display during the weekend.

Most bands of course have memorabilia of which they are justly proud. Masterton District Brass is no exception, however not many bands can boast a musical "note" as such. Through the talent and inspiration of Ben Rickards the band has "little quaver" amongst the cups and trophies that are part of its display.

Little Quaver is a cartoon character who has the happy knack of



commenting on, or turning up in the most unexpected places. In later years, of course, Ben's cartoons have become part of the life of the band. As you can see throughout this booklet either little quaver or one of the cartoons tell a particular story of victories won or lost on or off the contest field.

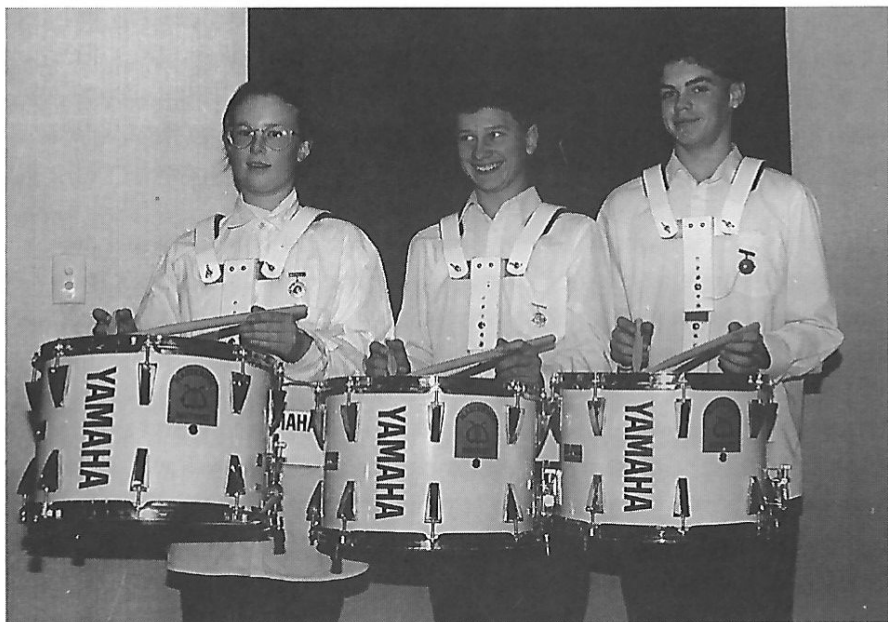
Lots of us can look back to our time in the band when it was not accepted to have a sense of humour as music and its interpretation was far too serious a subject to be laced with levity! Times have changed and it would seem for the best.

Discipline is still an essential part of the art of banding and this is apparent when contesting time comes around. Murray Paris, father of Ted and Kelvin, always used to say that contesting is the life blood of the band. Over the last twentyfive years and indeed before that the band was always at its best when it was in contesting mode.

A modern addition to the band has been the drummers and the work that has been put in by Frank Bain as he has worked to build a new dimension to the percussion part of the marching and contesting that has had a marked effect on the band's appearance.

Most bands never had a front rank of drummers and the writer can recall the Royal New Zealand Air Force Band during the Second World War with a front rank of drummers that were the pride and joy of not only Gladstone Hill, its Musical Director, but also of the public who saw them in action. The idea of a front rank of drummers appealed to many of the young people and soon the ranks were filled with bandspersons who were to become worthy members of the total life of the band. Of course all this was to cost a considerable amount of money and here once again the worth of the Trust Lands Trust and other worthy agencies were to come into play.

The people of the town and district quickly acknowledged this novel improvement to the band as it marched through the streets. I men-



The Drum Corp.

tioned the tireless work of the older members of the band and it would be correct to state that without their vision and perseverance then we might not be celebrating this special event in the life of the band.

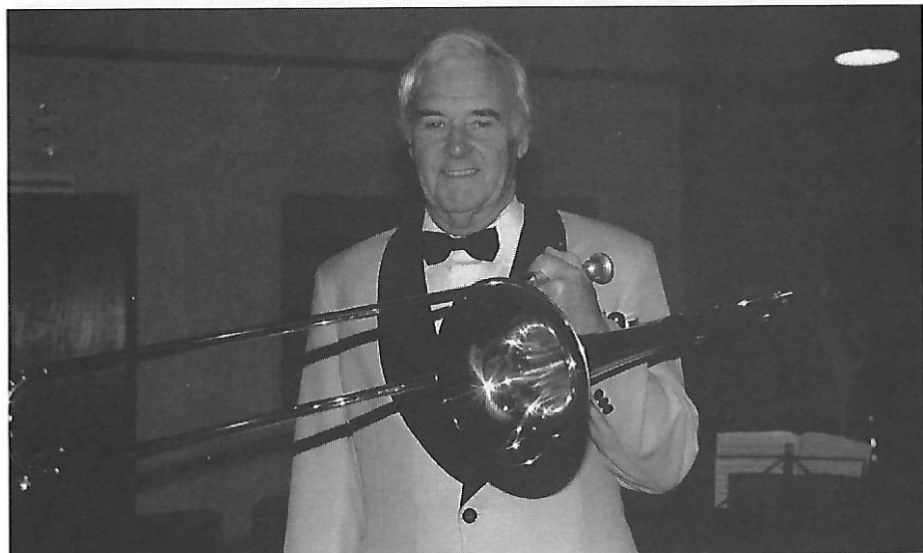
Over the last twentyfive years it has not been easy to establish a settled conductor for the band and in fact in my research this fact is not peculiar to this band alone. This has meant that senior members of the band have had to take over the role of conductor as an interim measure. However, it is to the credit of dedicated men who have risen to the challenge that the band has managed to not only carry out its civic duties but been able to contest and to teach the young people who have wished to join its ranks.

The lure of the brass band then leads in lots of cases to a bond that strengthens over the years into a love of music that is hard to describe. The combined years of service of say, Ted Paris and brother Kelvin along with Darcy Christiansen and Ian Hodge, to mention but a few must just about be a record for any band to be justly proud.

In this volume we salute their efforts and the work of all who seek to see the brass band movement extended in this part of rural New Zealand.



From left: I. Hodge, D. Christiansen, K. Paris, E. Paris and N. Henderson.



Darcy Christiansen

Darcy, for example, started his brass band career at the age of 10 playing a baritone at the 1938 Anzac service at Patea. He was in the "J" force band during a spell of duty in Japan. He now of course is recognised for his ability as a trombone player who is still in keen demand in the orchestras of local school and amateur productions.

Special mention should be made at this stage to the efforts of Ted Paris, another player of great merit who, when the band looked as if it would have to close, set to, along with brother Kelvin, and other vintage players on a course of training learners who today are now part of the ranks of the band.

Kelvin, recently, won for the third successive year the Wellington District Veteran Solo Competition scoring 94 points out of 100 to take out the Shaef Trophy. He was also placed second in the open melody section.

Originally a cornet player of merit his change to the Euponium in no way dimmed his ability with brass playing. The ability of the band



Ted and Kelvin Paris



From left: Rebecca Davison, Abbie Winslade, Todd Miller and Kylie Pringle.

however has not just been confined to the older players as a quartet of younger players consisting of Rebecca Davison, Abbey Winslade, Todd Miller and Kylie Pringle were placed second in the Junior Section at the District Contest.

Pride of place for the longest serving member of the band must go to Ben Rickards, whom the writer recalls learning his musical skills under the baton of the late George Hutchinson and the late Stan Pearson. Ben's dad was a bass player when I first joined the band and this probably gave Ben the incentive to stick to it and so become not only a capable musician but also a dedicated bandsman.

The present state of the band can be fairly placed at the feet of the older members who rose to the challenge of not letting the tradition of years of banding be lost forever in this district.

The challenge of preparing for playouts or contests is still with the modern bandsperson and with this comes the pace of life that has changed considerably since the first band met for practice at the "top



Kelvin Paris with learners.

house pub” in upper Queen Street. Bandspersons now live in an age where it requires real effort to be able to attend practice.

With the advent of all the social changes in the country over the last few years we now face a situation whereby many of the members of the band are required to work Saturdays and Sundays thus making the task of attending a practice or playout no easy one. Coupled with all this is the fact that the practice time at home, never a great strength of the writer! is not easily found in the busy life of a family today.

Conductors through the years must have had, and need today the patience of a saint as they try to bring the band up to an acceptable standard. Brian Anderson and Ian Hodge, for example, have often worked in tandem in the preparation of the band for a contest. In a perfect world it would be great to see a resident conductor as in the days gone by, but I fear this will not be the case until there is a major economic upturn in the life of our country.

Enough of that, however, for we are here to celebrate an achievement that must be the domain of very few NZ bands. Masterton District Band has an amazing record of not only old photos but also of music. The library would be the envy of many such bands of our calibre in the country. This of course takes a great deal of work and the committee and its librarians from the past to the present need our thanks.

At a recent afternoon concert of the band it was great to see in the ranks ten new players and to hear from the conductor that there were more learners waiting to take their place in the ranks. To highlight the new life that there is in the band we were told that twenty of the young bandpersons were to attend a band camp the next weekend and that eighteen of the bandspersons were to be in the Wellington District Contest in August 1998.

The past twentyfive years then, have not been without their problems in certain aspects of the life of the band but over and above it all is



From left; Anna White, Melanie Johansen and Jonathan Zyzalo.

the will to see that the "poor man's orchestra" as bands are often called is surviving and providing pleasure for all to see and hear.

Talking with two of the older bandsmen from previous years - B T Elliot and Allan Billington who were present it was encouraging to hear them comment on the calibre of not only the music but also the presentation.

The band still turns out for the Anzac Day parades, starting before dawn and completing the day after a time in Carterton. This of course gives a chance for people in the lower Valley to see and hear the band. Lately the Carterton District Council has introduced a daffodil day and this has afforded the opportunity for the band to be exposed to a larger audience as people arrive by special train from Wellington not only to pick Daffodils but also to listen to the band. The visitors are marched down the street from the station by the band and so the atmosphere is set for the springtime event. One must ruminate in some respect as to how cheaply the band does such a playout when it is considered that the Wellington Sinfonia cost \$26,000 for its Concert in the Park recently!

Funding of the band has always been a source of concern for the committee and over the last twenty five years there have been some worthwhile initiatives. The erection and dismantling of the staging for the Golden Shears in February of each year has been one such source, this of course means a lot of manual work for all concerned over a three day period.

A venture that I thought would have caught on was the effort by the band to revive dances in the Town Hall over the winter months. The band tried very hard with this idea but alas the Public just did not seem to see the need for such a project.

Christmas carolling is still an integral part of the band's effort at not only fund raising but of also bringing a bit of the spirit of the season

to people around the town. The band tends nowadays to operate in smaller units in the hotels and on the street corners in the run up to Christmas. There develops a real spirit amongst the band folk as they meet and work with each other at a totally different level from that of players within the ranks.

Walter Burns, an older bandsman who now lives away from the town, made an indelible impact on the band with not only his efforts with the Golden Shears but also his masterminding the erection of the new bandroom. His tireless manner in the task he undertook has been an inspiration to all who worked beside him. I still can see him driving the other bandspersons as staging was being assembled in the stadium and organising all to work on the raised seating that was a requirement for the show. Then the collecting and setting up of hundreds of seats in neat rows ready for the now world renowned event.

The band has through the years had one or two little quirks you might call them that are peculiar to the organisation. A delightful story is told by one of the band wives who on talking with her then fiancé was told that he was not available to go out with her on a Sunday morning as the band always held "Sunday School". It did not take her long to ascertain the fact that this particular religious training was in fact a few beers at the bandroom on a Sunday morning.

I hope the reader has noted that the tradition will be back in place following the Saturday night dinner and speeches. I have heard, however, that it will be a bit more sedate but certainly not watered down!

Over the last few years there has developed at the new bandroom the opportunities for a barbeque and Darcy and the boys are the chief cooks and bottle washers at these pleasant events. Since the printing of the "First Hundred Years of the Municipal Silver Band" we of course have lost some older bandsmen and it would be remiss of me

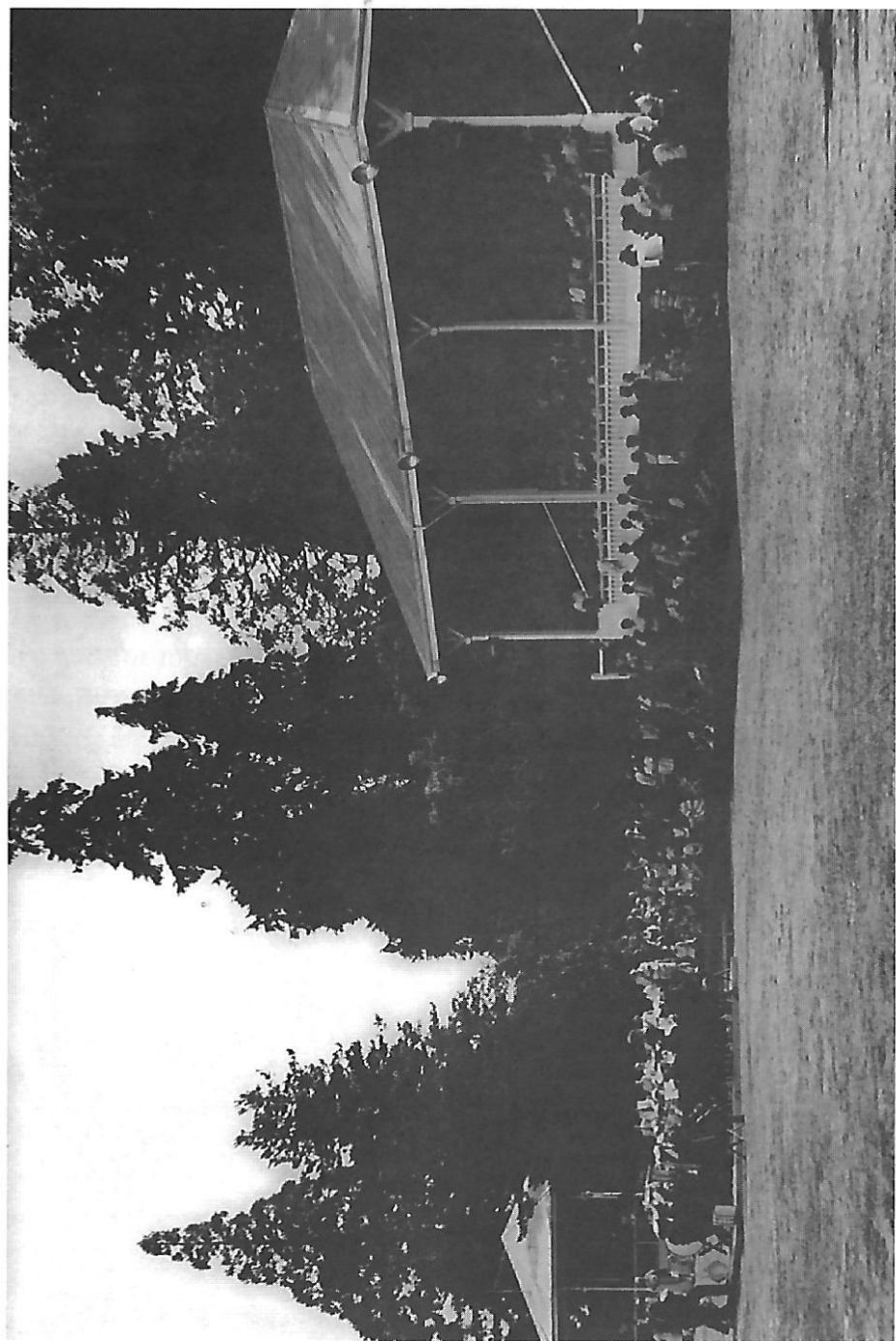


Thomas Clark.

to enter into a list for fear of missing names, but I think it would be right to record the passing of Stan Pearson a conductor of long standing within the era following the Second World War. At Stan's funeral it was fitting that members of the band turned out and played in the Church as part of the service. Stan, along with many others, is now gone but their contribution will not be forgotten as they made up the tradition of the band that is important today.

To those who are still here and indeed still interested in the work of the band we thank them for their sharing of their loved ones with the fellowship of the band and its supporters. I pointed out at the start of this booklet that perhaps the most important aspect to look back over the last twenty five years would in fact be the erection of the new bandroom. But having stated that fact it soon becomes obvious as we look back over the events so far that this is really not so. In no way does this belittle the work of those who set-to and undertook the task working on it right through to the completion in most cases but they too would agree that maintaining the good name and enhancing that name throughout not only the people of the Wairarapa but also to the greater band world around New Zealand was a major achievement.

The Masterton District Council and the Masterton Trust Lands Trust acknowledge this work with annual grants to see that the band is able to continue and to keep up with the other bands throughout NZ we surely must be unique, as no other band that the writer knows of can



in fact appeal to two bodies who care for the teaching and capabilities of the band.

Indeed, in 1900, the then fledgling Trust gave \$228 for the purchase of the Band's first full uniform. Recently they celebrated their 125th year and with this in mind it would be fitting for the band to thank them for all they have done to help promote the band and music in the town of Masterton. The District Council, too, have made significant contributions to the band by way of grants, etc.

As has been pointed out it is not always easy to provide all that is necessary for the running of a band but when time is taken to look back over the years we indeed have been fortunate to be recognised as part of the cultural life of the town and district. It is good to recognise the gifts from individuals and families who have donated to the band items and music that will take their place alongside the greater gifts visible in the bandroom.

Contesting has always been part of the ongoing concern of the members of the committee and over the last twenty five years they have not only attended national contests but also hosted the Wellington District contest on a couple of occasions. Whilst hosting the District Contest the band at the same time has played in these same events - no mean feat when it is realised how much work must go into planning the contest without the added burden of playing as well.

This tradition of contesting goes back to 1903 when Masterton hosted a National Contest over one week that was a marked success. Back from those bygone days the writer would like to think that Henry von Keisenberg, an outstanding musician of his day and a keen supporter of the band should have his name placed amongst the life members of our band as indeed history records that he was the first life member appointed yet his name does not appear on the Life Members Board. Relatives of this

fine old bandsman are still in the town and in fact one or two are still involved in the arts of the Wairarapa.

I pointed out that the present band is always on the lookout for ways of raising monies and as I was researching for this book I found a reference to the band approaching the Masterton Licencing Trust with the idea that they might like to sponser a Beer Festival once a month, this approach was twentyfive years ago. It did not get off the ground, I wonder why?

Pride is an essential part of the Masterton District Brass Band and for this we can be very grateful. Often the band has been taken rather cheaply by some organisations that should know better but they have responded because they feel that the band is a civic facility.

The recorded history of Brass Bands goes back to the 18th Century and for most people the history has been very positive. The Masterton and District Brass Band, as can be seen, has such an



The Masterton Brass Band Clubrooms.

ongoing history that the writer feels sure will see it well into the new millenium and beyond.

This confidence for the future stems from the fact that all down the line of the Band's history there has been strong family involvement and this coupled with the fact that any community that encourages such a musical organisation is looking not only to the present but also on into the future.

Twenty five years have gone by since the Centennial and yes, things have changed. Certainly the whole structure of society has taken on a whole new meaning for many.

The apparent devolution of services in the rural area will have a marked effect on the band's future as well as the communities. The abiding factor that must be borne in mind is the advent of so many young people into the ranks and their keenness to learn and so promote the banding world to others.

Memories of those no longer with us will be stirred, as we read again the centennial history and this supplement. Bandpersons stand in the shoes of those long gone but their memory is still a significant part of the total history. Waiting for the bell to ring before playing, waiting for the result after the event will always be the levelling part of the life of any member of the Masterton and District Brass Band.

G. Groombridge Q.S.M.