

Ponsonby Boys Brass Band 1916-1968

Gavin Holman, 28 April 2020



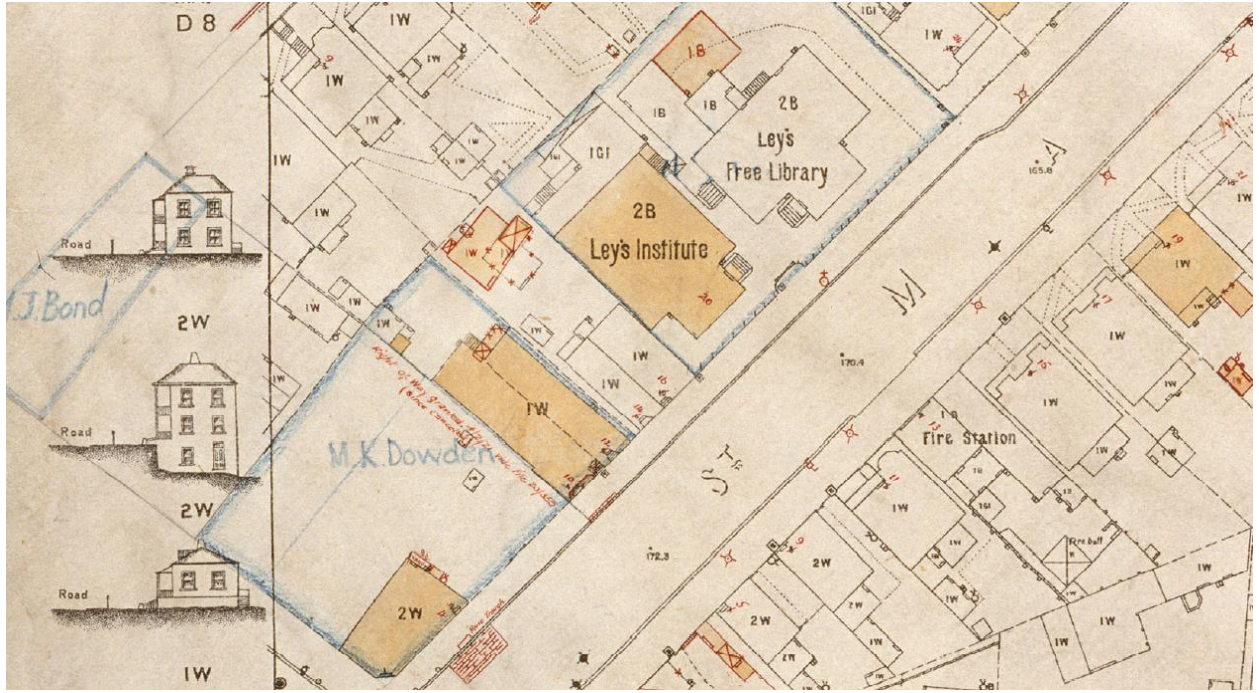
Ponsonby Boys Brass Band – unknown date

February 1910

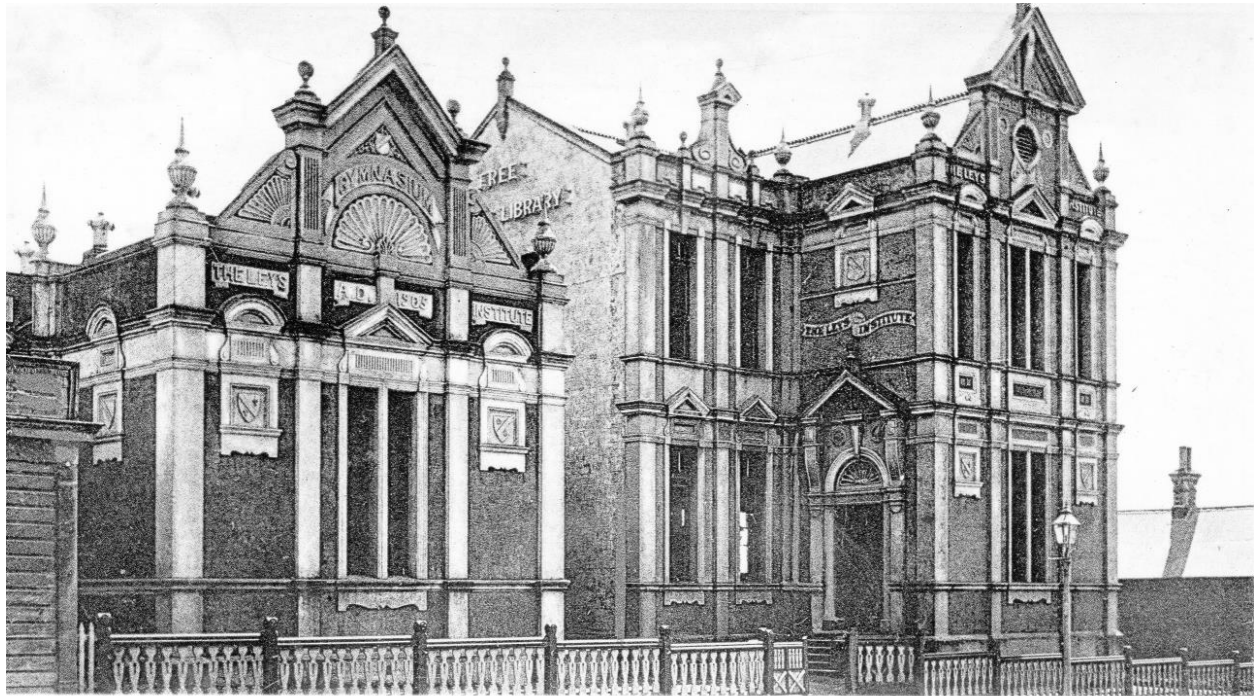
The Ponsonby Boys' Drum and Fife Band was founded at Auckland, New Zealand, in February 1910 as part of the Ponsonby Boy Scouts Association. Dr Thomson W. Leys was a major sponsor of the band(s) and built the Leys Institute. He was the Chancellor of Auckland University College and financially supported the Boys' Brigade, the Ponsonby Boys' Band and the Boy Scouts. He was editor/co-owner of the Auckland Star and the first President of the Leys Institute.



Ponsonby Drum & Fife Band



The Leys Institute, St Mary's Road, Auckland



Ley's Institute, Ponsonby, Auckland. N.Z.

February 1912

The half-yearly meeting in connection with the Ponsonby Boys' Drum and Fife Band was held at the Leys institute last evening. Mr. W. Leys was in the chair, and there was a good attendance, about 50 members of the band being present, in addition to a number of parents and others interested.



December 1916

In late 1916, the Ponsonby Boys' Brass Band was formed, by 'friends who love boys'. Its lofty goal was to work for the boys' 'musical betterment', and its motto was: 'We exalt our Masters, Pupils and our Glorious Empire; our work and profit are centred on one example.'

Auckland Star 9 December 1916

"A public meeting of residents of Ponsonby was held at the Leys Institute last night for the purpose of electing officers and committee for the recently formed Ponsonby Boys' Brass Band. In opening the meeting, Mr C. Hoffman explained that the band was formed last October, and a provisional committee set up. Mr A. Norris was bandmaster, and started with three boys. Now they had fifteen members. The committee considered the time had now arrived when the brass band should be put on a sound financial basis. They would require assistance from the public. They were prepared to train boys who would come to the conductor. One aim was to keep lads from wandering aimlessly round the streets at nights.



Ponsonby Boys' Brass Band - 1918

"Mr T.W. Leys was then asked to preside. He said the object of the meeting was to put the band on a proper footing. The first business would be to decide the name of the band and elect officers and committee. That did not necessarily mean letting the provisional committee drop out. It would also be necessary to elect trustees. The secretary (Mr Foster) said Mr Norris had seven boys of his own and, starting with these, originated the idea of forming a brass band. Owing to the war members of the adult bands were enlisting, and it was felt that it would be well to train boys to fill the vacancies. As funds were needed to purchase instruments and music, it was decided to call a public meeting to enlist public sympathy with the objects of the movement. All services, including the bandmaster, were purely honorary. They had the opportunity of purchasing a set of instruments at very reasonable terms, and money was required to secure

them. Motions were then adopted, "That it is desirable to form a boys' brass band," also that it be called Ponsonby Boys' Brass Band.

"The following officials were next elected: Trustees: Messrs T. Vivian, P. Hunt, C. Hoffman, and W. McMath; bandmaster: Mr A. Norris; secretary: Mr T. Foster; and treasurer, Mr R. Francis; committee: Messrs T. Vivian, J.L. Francis, S. Hunt, P.T. Bint, A. Norris, T. Foster, A. Barton, C. Hoffman, G. Stewart and W. McMath: five to form a quorum. The committee was empowered to elect a chairman and draft rules for the guidance of the band. A vote of thanks was accorded the chairman for presiding."

In the early 1920's the band carried out several tours around New Zealand, lasting two or three weeks, performing in various towns and cities.



Ponsonby Boys' Brass Band – 1920/21

GRAND TOUR.

New Year, 1921.

TOWNS VISITED.

Arrival and Departure.

Jan. 1.	PATAMAHOE	
" 2.	PUKEKOHE	
" 3.	HAMILTON	2 p.m. 9.9 M.
" 4.	TE KUITI	12.15 6.20 T.
" 4.	TAUMARUNUI	One Hour.
" 5.	OHAKUNE	2.35 7.30 W.
" 6.	TAIHAPE	11.32 7.5 Th.
" 7.	PALMERSTON	9.50 10.20 F.
" 8.	NAPIER	3.21 6.45 S.
" 10.	HASTINGS	2.8 9.28 M.
" 11.	WAIPAWA	10.7 9.19 T.
" 12.	ORMONVILLE	10.23 9.28 W.
" 12.	DANNEVIRKE	11.25 4.5
" 13.	WOODVILLE	5.15 9.6 Th.
" 13.	PALMERSTON	9.51 2.15
" 13.	FEILDING	3.20 3.57
" 14.	TAIHAPE	4.22 7.41 F.
" 14.	OHAKUNE	12.38 5.30
" 15.	AUCKLAND	8.35 5.8 S.
		2.55

Ponsonby Boys' Brass Band

(Incorporated).

THIS BAND was started five years ago for the musical betterment of the district boys, they receive TUITION, INSTRUMENTS, and UNIFORM FREE.

The Band is administered by a Committee of ten members, and financially supported by FRIENDS WHO LOVE BOYS.

President: T. W. Leys, Esq.; Conductor: Fred. Lawn; Committee: A. Brown (Secretary), R. Brown, T. Foster, R. Francis, Dr. Lapraik, W. McMath (Chairman), J. MacPhee, W. Saxon, W. Skinner, Tom Vivian (Manager).

Touring Officials: Messrs. Francis, Lawn, Skinner, Vivian.

BAND TOURING BOYS (left to right): Top Row: J. Saxon, Gisby, Taylor, Young (drum major), A. Hoffman, R. Saxon, Middleton, Budin.

Second Row: Johnson, Pritchard, Charlton, Burgoyne, Derrick, Knutzen, R. Sinton, Wilson.

Third Row: Knight, Francis, G. Sinton, Conductor, Gussy, Hills, Allen.

Fourth Row: Ward, H. Hoffman, Brewer, Brown.

Absent: Stephens, Tupp, Webb.

Photos, 1/- each.

GRAND TOUR.

1921-1922.

Arrival and Departure

Dec. 26.	AUCKLAND	7.40	M
" 27.	MARTON	8.45 1.46	T
	NEW PLYMOUTH	8.10 7.50	Th
" 29.	INGLEWOOD	9.6 1.58	
	STRATFORD	2.50 10.18	F
" 30.	ELTHAM	10.40 3.24	
	HAWERA	3.57 7.0	S
" 31.	PATEA	8.0 1.37	
	WANGANUI	4.50 7.0	T
Jan. 3.	PALMERSTON	11.0 6.40	W
" 4.	WOODVILLE	7.40 2.30	
	DANNEVIRKE	3.35 1.33	Th
" 5.	WAIPIKURAU	3.55 7.15	F
" 6.	HASTINGS	9.17 1.30	S
" 7.	NAPIER	2.7 8.45	M
" 9.	PALMERSTON	1.52 7.10	T
" 10.	TAIHAPE	12.38 5.40	W
" 11.	MANUNUI	1.20	
	TAUMARUNUI	4.0	
	TE KUITI	7.41 10.17	Th
" 12.	AUCKLAND	4.58	

SOUVENIR PHOTOS, 1/-

Ponsonby Boys' Brass Band.

(Incorporated)

This Band was started six years ago for the musical betterment of the district boys; we have a membership of seventy, all of whom are as keen as mustard on music; they receive TUITION, INSTRUMENTS, and UNIFORM FREE.

The Band is administered by a Committee of ten members, and financially supported by FRIENDS WHO LOVE BOYS.

President: Dr. T. W. Leys; Conductor, Fred Lawn; Committee: J. Annan, A. Brown (Secretary), R. Brown, T. Foster, R. Francis (Chairman), W. Jackson, B. Lawn, W. Saxon, W. Skinner, T. Vivian (Manager).

Touring Officials: Messrs. Annan, R. Brown, Francis, Jackson, B. Lawn.

BAND BOYS are equipped with a fully instrumentated set of Besson's A Grade Silver Instruments, valued over £1,000.

Top Row (right to left) — Stephens, Stephenson, Ward, Young (drum-major), Middleton, Lawn.

Second Row—Madden, J. Saxon, Hills, Doidge, Gisby, Francis, Brewer, R. Saxon.

Third Row—Estall, Knutzen, Hill, A. Hoffman — Allen, Wilson.

Fourth Row.—Derrick, Budin, E. Webb, Conductor, Crawford, Charlton, Knight.

Fifth Row.—H. Hoffman, V. Webb, Pritchard, Gussy.

Absent—Smith.



Ponsonby Boys' Brass Band – 1921/22



Ponsonby Boys' Brass Band – 1922/23

January 1923

Members of the Ponsonby Boys' Band, who are at present visiting Wellington in continuation of their tour throughout New Zealand, will give a sacred concert at the Basin Reserve at 3 o'clock tomorrow. The opportunity of hearing these boys is one that should not be missed, as the organisation is probably one of the best of its kind that has yet visited Wellington. The boys, who are leaving on Monday morning for Masterton, Pahiatua, and Palmerston North, desire to extend their thanks to the members of the Rotary Club and the Commercial Travellers' Club for their assistance during their visit to the city.

GRAND TOUR		SOUVENIR PHOTOS 1/-.
CONCERTS 1922-1923.		Ponsonby Boys' Brass Band (Incorporated).
December—		
25	AUCKLAND 7.40.	This Band was started six years ago for the musical betterment of the district boys; we have a membership of seventy all of whom are as keen as mustard on music, they receive TUITION, INSTRUMENTS, and UNIFORM FREE. The Band is administered by a Committee of ten members, and financially supported by FRIENDS WHO LOVE BOYS. President: Dr. T. W. Leys; Conductor: Fred Lawn; Committee: J. Annon, A. Brown (Secretary), R. Brown, R. Francis (Chairman), W. Jackson, B. Lawn, W. Lusty, W. Saxon, W. Skinner, T. Vivian (Manager). Touring Officials: Messrs. Annon, A. Brown, Jackson, B. Lawn, Lusty, Vivian. BAND BOYS are equipped with a fully instrumented set of Besson's A Grade Silver Instruments. Top Row (left to right)—Sergt J. Saxon, A. Mayall, G. Gisby, A. Hills, (Drum-Major) F. Gwilliam, A. Hoffmann, R. Middleton, W. Pritchard, R. Sharp. Fourth Row: Corp. H. Hoffmann, Corp. J. Gussy, H. Crawford, R. Francis, R. Shannon, R. Hill, Corp. R. Saxon. Third Row: R. Knutzen, A. Budin, A. Christianson, W. Charlton, W. Faulkner, O. Rabbidge, R. Allen. Second Row: H. Wilson, J. Estall, C. Vercoe, (Conductor) F. G. Lawn, O. Randell, L. Lees, D. Derrick, G. Knight. Front Row: N. Oram, D. Lusty, R. Stites, H. Lawn. (Absent G. Doidge.)
26	WELLINGTON. Front Town Hall 8 p.m.	
27	Island Bay 10 a.m. Lyell Bay, 2.30.	
28	CHRISTCHURCH. Street Parade 10.0.	
	ASHBURTON. Street Parade 3.0. Rotunda 8 p.m.	
29	GAMARU. Street Parade 3.0. Rotunda 8 p.m.	
30	DUNEDIN. Street Parade 3.0. Anzac Square 8.0.	
31	Hospital 11 a.m. Gardens 3 p.m. Cargill's 8.15 p.m.	
January—		
1	TIMARU. Caroline Bay 3.15. Caroline Bay 8.0.	
2	TEMUKA 10 a.m.	
2	CHRISTCHURCH. Victoria Sq., 8.0.	
3	Sumner 3 p.m.	
4	Sydenham 8 p.m. Brighton 10 a.m. Cathedral Sq., 2.30.	
5	WELLINGTON. Newtown Park 3.0. Parliament Gds. 8.0	
6	Day's Bay 2.30. Petone 7.30 p.m.	
7	Hospital 11 a.m. Basin Reserve 3.0. Oriental Bay 8.15.	
	MASTERTON. Street Parade 3.0. Rotunda 8 p.m.	
9	PAHIATUA 12.15.	
	PALMERSTON. Rotunda 8 p.m.	
10	TAUMARUNUI. Rail Reserve 8.30.	
11	AUCKLAND. Arrive 4.10 p.m.	

April 1923

Hutchinson, A.J. - Ponsonby Boys' Brass Band Tour, in: Rotary in New Zealand: How the Rotary Clubs of Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch cooperated in a boys-work activity - The Rotarian - Volume 22 (4), April 1923, pp. 237

PONSONBY BOYS' BRASS BAND'S TOUR:

This was supported by the Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch Rotary Clubs. Anything that is written or said about the Ponsonby Boys' Brass Band that did not include special mention of Tom Vivian would be a very poor article. Tom Vivian is no longer young; on the other hand, he will never grow old. When his day comes, be it this year, next year, ten, twenty or thirty years hence, Tom will still be young in mind and heart because he lives with and for the boys, especially the boys of his Band, the Ponsonby Boys' Brass Band.

It was Tom (he is not a Rotarian, but has the Rotary spirit) who conceived the idea of taking the band through New Zealand with the aim and object of

demonstrating what could be, and what has been done by music to hold the boys together, to brighten their lives and the lives of others.

There are seventy members of the band and over a hundred on the waiting list for admission. Of this seventy, thirty were selected to form the touring party. To transport thirty boys, plus their management, etc., from Auckland to Dunedin - a distance of about 900 miles by steam and rail, was no small undertaking; and to arrange a program at this particular season of the year - Christmas and New Year (the only available time for these boys, who are workingmen's sons) that would not clash with other features, was a troublesome job. So Tom called on the secretary of the Auckland Rotary Club; the matter was brought before the directors, and permission was given to the secretary to go ahead and give the band the support of the Rotary Club, at the same time advising the Wellington and Christchurch clubs in the activity. When the idea behind the tour was fully explained they answered the call in fine style.

The result to date can only be described as a triumphal march through the country. Enthusiasm was intense - everywhere the Mayors and other town authorities vied with each other to help the boys, and the boys themselves were simply splendid, proud of their uniforms, proud of their silver instruments (the best that money could buy, costing nearly \$5,000), each boy entering into friendly competition with the other, every boy a well-trained, keen musician. Much good has been done. The program was carried through. It was a 19-day trip, out of which fully nine days were spent in travel, and thirty-four scheduled concerts - as well as many extra concerts - were given.

It is with much pleasure that I can report Rotary's help in this Boys' Work movement, and with every confidence I can say that enormous good will result from it. Among the boys, friendships have been formed that will last a lifetime. An idle, careless boy cannot be a good musician, cannot he a member of the Ponsonby Boys' Brass Band; it means study and hard work to get there, to wear that coveted uniform, to hold and to own for a term one of those coveted instruments. To receive the word of praise from Conductor Fred Lawn, to raise the sparkle of joy in Tom's eye, to hear his "Boy, I'm proud of you" - these cannot be had for the asking, they have to be won. There is no time left for roaming the streets - it is "get home quick after work, clean up: band practice tonight !"

This is not a money-making organization. The boys are ever ready to play free for any charity, to go to any public institution such as the hospitals, Blind Institute, orphan homes, or elsewhere any evening, Saturday afternoons, or Sundays. Their music has inspired them with our Rotary motto, "Service Above Self."

The Ponsonby Boys Brass Band 1926-1927 tour included the conductor Fred G. Lawn and J. Taylor, A. Hills, R.J. Mortenson, H. Hoffmann, S. Hills, F. McIndoe, J. Clarcken, L. Smyth, A. McNamara, N. Chitty, N. Oram, M. Vercoe, M. Hurfit, C. Vercoe, H. Dear, A. Kean, K. Spragg, T. Greenwood, T. Whitfield, F. Smyth, W. Greenwood, C. Jamieson, K. Hatley, L. Lees, W. De Blois, W. Fullerton, F. White, J. Evans, N. Goldie, S. Fullerton, and W. Dennison.

The band also toured in 1925-1926.

December 1932

Y.A.L. Bandsmen Reach New Zealand - Auckland, December 20 1932

The Young Atarrana League bandsmen arrived today by the Marama. The lads were played ashore by the Ponsonby boys' band. The two bands then marched to the Town Hall, where the visitors were accorded a civic reception. A round of outings has been arranged.



Ponsonby Boys' Brass Band – 1948

In 1937, the Auckland Star got a bit carried away in describing the band as the first to form in New Zealand.

Auckland Star 2 October 1937

"The twenty-first anniversary of the Ponsonby Boys' Brass Band will be celebrated with a children's fancy dress carnival in the Band Hall, Jervois Road, Ponsonby. next Thursday night.

"The first boys band to be formed in New Zealand, the Ponsonby Band was organised in October 1916, by a committee consisting of Messrs T Foster, C Hoffman, A Norris (bandmaster) and R Francis. Mr Francis is the present chairman of the committee. Over 600 boys have received their training in the band, and many of them are earning their living through their musical ability. From the date of its inception the band has given many performances at public hospitals and institutions, not only in Auckland, but throughout New Zealand. During the war it turned out to play the reinforcements away, and for 13 years, it acted as senior cadet band of Auckland."



Ponsonby Boys' Brass Band – 1957

The band incorporated at some point before the 1940's, changed the name to the Ponsonby and Districts Silver Band Inc c. 1967, but disbanded in 1968 due to lack of members. Remaining equipment was given to the Boystown Police and Citizens Club which was at that time forming a new band. A foundation member of the Boys' Band, R. H. Francis, whose father founded the band, was present when the keys, instruments, uniforms and furniture were handed over.

In 1984, at a function to open refurbished meeting room at the Leys Institute, the Mayor of Auckland at the time, Catherine Tizard, made reference to the band, and how "a

revival of the Ponsonby Boys' Brass Band could be a way to keep young people off the streets,” echoing what C. Hoffman had said in a different society 68 years before.



Ponsonby Boys' Brass Band – unknown date

For more information on the band, see various articles in the New Zealand press, available via **Papers Past** - <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/>