

A Week with David King

by Kevin and Sarah Hickman



Professor David King was a guest of the Canterbury Provincial Brass Band Association (CPBBA) and Woolston Brass for the week of the 10th of August. The goals of the week were for the professor to rehearse Woolston in preparation for a concert, run a conductors' seminar for up-and-coming Canterbury conductors, conduct a compilation of players from around Canterbury in the *Brass Band Big Day Out*, run a players' master-class, and teach some players one-on-one. If they were the goals of the week, then David King chewed them up and spat them out in the first couple of days. It would be fair to say the week exceeded expectations.

Well, where to start? From these players' perspective David King was like a high octane whirlwind blowing through the Woolston Brass Band. Never has the bandroom sung with such a positive vibe (despite a Friday night rehearsal). That is not to say of course that the Woolston bandroom does not usually hum with positivity and fantastic leadership. We should mention the foresight of Graham Hickman in inviting Professor King, and seeing the potential educational value of such a week – not something many conductors would have had the confidence to do.

David began the week with a side-splitting rehearsal regaling the band with his stories, experiences, and unique phrases.

'Throw a grey blanket over Hogarth' (Letting the Eb basses know how to deal with Richard Hogarth).

'You've been everybody's dog for too long' (to the long-suffering Kevin Hickman).

'Spread it through the section like peanut butter' (Eb horns).

'I need lots of oestrogen' (Euphos)

'We've got a choice. We can either walk the dog, or walk with God' (stylistic guidance for Goff Richard's arrangement of *'I'll Walk With God'*).

With a positive atmosphere and attitude the band moved on to a week of musically fulfilling rehearsals. The Professor's feel and knowledge for the music simply oozed out of him with every subtle movement of his hands or body. The band would agree that the Professor was indeed a very tactile person - always keen to stroke a nearby head or hold a hand. This unconventional approach seemed to get under the guard of even the staunchest Woolstonian, it gained our rapt attention and total concentration. It was like we were putty in his hands.

The players' master-class was similarly inspiring. The Professor's tutorage ebbed and flowed along the lines of a motivational lesson that drew on his theological and philosophical background. The conductors' seminar was an eye-opener for band members and conductors alike. The Professor was able to relate to conductors of all abilities and the conductors were all deeply challenged at

some point during their lesson. We are sure they all gained a great deal from the experience.

The week culminated in the Woolston Brass concert at the Aurora Centre. See Denis Dewe's review (right) for a detailed account, but we will make a few comments here. Firstly, thanks to Shane Foster (soprano), Vicki Price (percussion), Tyme Marsters (cornet) and Nicholas Johnson (trombone) who helped out for the concert. As band members it was fantastic to see the growth in the conducting of Graham Hickman during the week, and the first half went well considering limited preparation. The highlight of the first half would have to have been the dulcet tones of Professor King on cornet. Surely the most beautiful cornet playing that has been heard in these parts for some time. When the Professor took the stage in the second half it was as if each player had their parts played by two people – themselves and the Professor. We were struck by the Professor's unwavering belief in the members of the band to perform to his expectations – so we did.

We believe the week was so cathartic as to have resounding repercussions through the band (and hopefully the whole brass band movement) for some time to come. Thank you, Professor King.

Events Calendar

Saturday September 12

Festival of Brass Provincial Contest

This year the Canterbury Provincial Band Festival will be held at the Ngaio Marsh Theatre. Come along to here Canterbury's top bands perform.

Saturday October 17 7.30 pm

Spring Fever Christchurch Town Hall

Say farewell to the dark days of winter. Celebrate new beginnings with a joyful concert of music for springtime. Hear lively choral works by Halley and Holman, and enjoy the sparkling sound of the world class Woolston Brass. The Choir welcomes to this concert the young singers who are their 2009 student scholars. Tickets: \$49, \$43, \$32, \$21. Book at Ticketek Ph 3778499



Who said that brass bands are old fashioned? Not the almost capacity audience who heard Woolston Brass at the Aurora Centre on Saturday evening 15th August 2009, for sure. This concert marked the culmination of intensive rehearsals with guest conductor Professor David King of Manchester's Salford University, cornet virtuoso and conductor supreme. (King was in Christchurch for the Canterbury Provincial Brass Bands Association's week of seminars, workshops and tutorials.)

Woolston Brass was at top form under maestro Graham Hickman, and opened the programme with Lovatt-Cooper's *When Eagles Sing*, with a contrasting *Fantasia on Tico Tico* to follow, before David King came on stage to play, with band accompaniment, Harry James' *Concerto for Trumpet* (arr. Howarth) with considerable *brio*, then Howard Davies' *More Than I Deserve*. This man had been keeping his lip in, for sure. The band then, with Peter Graham's *Cat's Tales*. Graham Hickman's programming was as always just right. David King returned to play Farr's arrangement of that chestnut *Over The Rainbow*, with eloquent phrasing and consummate musicianship, before the band ended the first half of the programme with Lovatt-Cooper's tremendous *Vitae Aeternum*, a stirring performance indeed.

We repaired to the foyer for a brief discussion of this phenomenal band and guest soloist with a collection of gun players of yesteryear and other authorities on brass (!), before regaining our seats for our band to play the second half under Professor King. Dare I say that under King the band's performance then went up a notch? Well, it does happen in the best of musical circles.

After interval, then. Firstly the Prelude to Grieg's *Holberg Suite*, enthusiastic but controlled playing throughout, then

after some eloquence from maestro King, Turrin's *Hymn to Diana*, reviving memories of that 1997 drama. Appropriate then to King's origins of course, Percy Grainger's *Molly On The Shore*, announced with pride by that expatriate Australian. We were sorry to learn from him of Goff Richards' illness, reflecting with sadness as the band played *I'll Walk With God* (Brodsky arr. Richards).

A Voyage of Discovery followed, surely a *tour de force* of Goff Richards' masterpiece. It certainly was, for those of us who weren't familiar with this brass band classic. The band's principal euphonium player Davey Boyes shone then in Philip Sparke's *Summer Iles*. Well played, Mr Boyes! The band's deputy conductor Philip Johnston, tuba virtuoso and aspiring baton, took the band through Howard Snell's arrangement of Johann Strauss' *Czardas* in fine fashion, before the *piece de resistance*, Peter Graham's arrangement of Wagner's *Procession to the Minster*, culmination of a terrific programme by our magnificent band.

This concert was a landmark for the band, with guest baton one of Britain's finest brass band conductors and academics, and honoured with the presence of Adrienne, Lady Stewart, Christchurch philanthropist and patron of the arts, together with John Bartlett, CEO of the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra and Canterbury Opera - and a former National Bandsman. The programme had something for everyone – light music, brass band classics and a touch of the serious. Is that arrangement of *Procession to the Minster* becoming rather worn? Perhaps. Whatever may be thought of it overall, we went away with the feeling of having been royally entertained and privileged to have been at the Aurora Centre that evening.

Denis Dewe, August 2009

Thomas Eves

The National Band 2009 recently travelled to Kerkrade in Holland to compete in the World Brass Band Championships. Woolston Brass was well represented with eleven of its members in the band: Colin Clark, Kevin Hickman, myself, Graham Hickman, Byron Newton, David Bremner, Phil Johnston, Leigh Martin, Todd Turner and Roanna Cooper.

The band started off with an intense rehearsal weekend starting Friday night and leading up to our only NZ concert at the Salvation Army Citadel on the Sunday afternoon. As I was a "rookie" and the youngest member, I was very nervous, but playing under the baton of Howard Taylor was an amazing experience and he certainly got the band up and running on the same page very quickly! The Sunday programme consisted of all the pieces we were to play on stage in Kerkrade. These were:

Harrison's Dream (Test) *Music of the Spheres* (Own Choice)
Letters from Home, *Gethsemane* (Soprano Cornet Solo), *Galaxies*

The concert was far from perfect but was great stage experience leading up to the championships. We resumed practice that night and the following morning before leaving on the mammoth journey to the Netherlands.

Thirty hours and four airports later we had arrived in Frankfurt. With yet another bus ride to get to Kerkrade, let's just say the band were rather tired! We were greeted in Kerkrade by a Borat look-alike saying "Der is one voom of 16 and another ov 14." We thought he was talking about the dining areas but boy, we were in for a shock!

They became known as "the cosy cots"! While some of us toughed out the challenging conditions, others decided to check into nearby hotels (even after inspiring team-building speeches as to why we should ALL stay... Graham)! Anyway, after a sleep we were on to Wednesday and the next two days were spent rehearsing. We had our first concert abroad on the Thursday night with the Peer Youth Wind Band in Belgium. For a band of around eighty kids, they did a splendid job. As for ourselves, we blew out a few more cobwebs in the concert and enjoyed the fine Belgian hospitality! We were lucky to be joined on stage by Russell Gray, a top cornet player and conductor from the UK. He gave the band some great advice and it was a pleasure sitting next to him on stage for this concert.

The band gave two very memorable performances on both the Saturday in the test piece and on Sunday with the own choice programme. These efforts earned the band a 4th placing, with the Cory Band taking out the World Championship.

We gave a combined concert on the Monday night with the Cory Band who were simply outstanding and both bands were well received by the locals who love their brass music.

The flights home were well timed so we had the Tuesday morning sleep in/recover/sightsee then off to the airport for the long journey home. Some went straight home and some from the Woolston contingent (Todd, Graham and myself) had a few days R&R/shopping/sightseeing in Dubai which is a truly amazing place.

All in all, the trip was an amazing experience and one I will remember for a long time. Practicing and performing on stage with NZ's finest brass musicians was an absolute buzz. The highlight of the trip for me had to be playing *Music of the Spheres*, the feeling coming off stage after playing it was truly amazing. I am sure I speak for the entire Woolston contingent in saying that our time abroad certainly helped our playing and we will bring this experience back to the Woolston bandroom.

Casey O'Sullivan

In the brass band world it doesn't come any bigger than going to the World Championships in Kerkrade Holland and representing your country on the world stage.

Today, almost every city in New Zealand has its own brass band. So it is perhaps not surprising that since its formation over fifty years ago, the National Band of New Zealand has won worldwide acclaim for its brilliant musicianship and technical virtuosity

The National Band of New Zealand is the pinnacle of any brass band musician's career and with only twenty-seven brass places available for this year's band, auditions were held up and down the country to find New Zealand's top players.

The World Music Contest, an international festival of music for wind and brass instruments, is held every four years. This year's contest ran from the 9th of July to the 2nd of August. Some of the best brass bands in the world competed, including the Cory Band from Wales, currently ranked number one in the world, and the defending WMC Champions from 2005, Brass Band Treize Etoiles from Switzerland.

With players coming from all over the country, the band only had eight days to prepare before performing at the World Music Contest. The band assembled under the musical direction of Howard Taylor in Christchurch on the 3rd of July for a few days of rehearsal before departing for Kerkrade on Monday the 6th of July.

After a 24hr flight, including stopovers, and a bus journey, the band arrived in Kerkrade. There was no time to get over the jet lag as we were straight into rehearsals the next day. Everyone in the band knew that with the time frame we had, this would not be a sight-seeing trip.

The band accepted an invitation to perform in Peer, Belgium with the Peer youth wind band on Thursday, 9th of July. The National Band was there for the last contest in 2005 and it was great for us to return to hear their outstanding band and also enjoy the top-class hospitality. It was also great to get out of our practice room and gave the band a chance to perform the pieces that we would play in two days time at the World Champs.

We had one day left to fine tune and put the finishing touches on our pieces then it was down to business. The brass band competition consists of a set test which all of the bands play and then, the following day, an "Own Choice" programme.

The band gave very strong performances on both days and we ended up being placed a creditable 4th overall out of 29 bands. Of course we were disappointed, as we went over there to win, but for a band that had been together for just over a week to even be competing at that level was an amazing achievement. Cory Band from Wales proved why they are ranked number 1 in the world and now have the WMC title to add to the European Champs and Great Britain Champs.

Although the competition part of the trip was over we had one final combined gala concert with the Cory Band. It was a massive highlight to end the tour playing in concert with Cory and the crowd turned out in huge numbers for the final night.

As a first time National Bandsman, I will never forget playing on the world stage as a representative of New Zealand. It was a huge honour to be surrounded by the best musicians and playing against the best bands in Europe, and one I will never forget.

New Instruments for Brass Academy



Not exactly hot off the press, but worthy of inclusion here is our acknowledgement of a \$7,200 grant from the Keith Laugesen Charitable Trust. This grant secured the purchase of four cornets and four trombones – all ‘Getzens’, all brand-spanking new, and all for our own Woolston Brass Academy!

*Pictured above are the Music Director of Woolston Concert Brass **Tristan Mitchell**, Woolston Brass President **Tony Lewis**, MD of the Woolston Junior Band **Jill Pears** and **Steve Parr** – Trustee of the Keith Laugesen Charitable Trust.*

Below are some of the delighted recipients with their new toys at an official event held to celebrate the occasion on 21st July.



Woolston Brass' programme for the Canterbury Provincial Contest, Saturday 12th September June 2009.

Prelude to the Holberg Suite Grieg arr. Woodfield

I'll Walk with God Brodsky arr. Richards

Connotations Edward Gregson

Over the Rainbow Arlen arr. Farr

Molly on the Shore Grainger arr. Snell

It's Only a Paper Moon Harold Arlen

Procession to the Cathedral Wagner arr. Graham

spring fever

Saturday 17 October, 7.30pm Christchurch Town Hall

Say farewell to the dark days of winter. Celebrate new beginnings with a joyful concert of music for springtime. Hear lively choral works by Halley and Holman, and enjoy the sparkling sound of the world class Woolston Brass. The Choir welcomes to this concert the young singers who are their 2009 student scholars.

Tickets: \$49, \$43, \$32, \$21. Book at Ticketek Ph 377 8499.

Christchurch City Choir Woolston Brass Brian Law - Conductor

WOOLSTON-BRASS
Woolston Brass
CHRISTCHURCH CITY CHOIR
Music Director: Brian Law

*Pre-Street March haircut
Hamish Upton playing
marimba.*



Hamish the Hammerman

One time Woolston percussionist Hamish Upton is currently in Singapore on a four-year scholarship with the University of Singapore's music conservatory.

Although Hamish moved to Christchurch with his family two years ago, he was born and brought up in Nelson where he learned drumming with Chris Pierson at the Nelson School of Music. He did his first percussion gig with the Nelson Symphony Orchestra when he was 15 and went to the Provincials with Nelson City Brass.

After the move to Christchurch, Hamish attended Burnside High School where he joined as many different musical groups as possible including a male voice choir, the school orchestra, the Burnside Brass Band and the percussion ensemble.

He was a member of the 2007-08 New Zealand Secondary Students' Choir which toured to Brazil and Argentina. He also performed with a chamber group (comprising two piano players and two percussionists) which performed a George Crumb work at the New Zealand Secondary Schools' Chamber Music Finals in Auckland last year.

At the end of his time at Burnside High School, he was awarded the Peter Rowe trophy for musician of the year.

He spent much of last summer preparing his audition for Singapore University. This consisted of him performing nine pieces of music on which he played snare drums, keyboards, percussion and timpani. He compiled this on to a DVD and sent a separate DVD on which he put his introductory speech.

Not only was he accepted to attend the university for the next four years but he won an international Yong Siew Toh conservatory student scholarship which means his fees, accommodation and living allowances will be paid for.

Once he finishes studying in Singapore, Hamish's ambition is to tour the world with an orchestra.

Kevin Hickman's surprise 40th birthday party was held at The Twisted Hop in Poplar Lane on August 28. The venue was just right, and there was a terrific atmosphere in the enclave set aside for us. While Kevin's 15 year top-seat tenure commands our respect, the warmth and affection that filled the room reaffirmed Kevin's standing among us, not only as a high calibre player, but as a mate. The words of Robbie Burns come to mind, 'The rank is but the guinea's stamp, The man's the gowd (gold) for a' that'. Happy Birthday Kevin!

Catherine Neil's Player Profile – Garth Coffey

This issue I interviewed Garth Coffey, a Tenor Horn player who rejoined Woolston Band earlier this year in time for the National Contest in April. He has slotted easily into his seat and has brought many attributes to the band, both musically and socially.

Q: When did you start playing a brass instrument and why did you start?

A: I started at the age of 8 playing on the cornet. As a member of a Salvation Army family with a strong brass band involvement there wasn't really an option not to. To date I've never regretted it.

Q: Why the tenor horn? Have you played any other instruments in the past?

A: I think the Tenor Horn, when played properly, has one of the most beautiful sounds in a brass band. Also, what other part has so many off beats to play? Other instruments have been limited to cornet and flugel horn.

Q: Who have you played with in the past?

A: Numerous Salvation Army bands including the SA National Youth Band, RNZAF Base Auckland Band, RNZA Artillery Band, North Shore Brass, Waitakere Brass, and Dalewool Brass.

Q: Why do you like being a part of Woolston? What does it mean to you to be a Woolstonian?

A: I've already found that they are a great bunch of talented musicians with a gifted musical director which makes playing enjoyable and never tedious. I'm also learning that there is a strong sense of tradition and that it is a privilege to be a member of such a successful group.

Q: Favourite piece of music and why?

A: As ironic as it may seem my favourite pieces are Paganini Variations and Dreams. Paganini was one of the reasons why I returned to playing after a 6 year break. It's a classic piece. Dreams was just fantastic to play.

Q: Highlight of your musical career so far?

A: One that immediately springs to mind is a joint concert featuring Waitakere Brass, then under Howard Taylor, and the NZSO at the Aotea Centre in Auckland where together we played The Pines of Rome. The standing ovation afterwards went on for ages. It was very special.

Q: What are some of the things that you like doing in your spare time?

A: I'm a bit of a motor rally fan. Having competed in the Dunlop Targa race a few years ago increased my desire to find some time and money to get into more racing. I also conduct one of the local Salvation Army bands here in Christchurch, although I wouldn't class that as a hobby.

Q: Where do you see yourself in 5 years time with life/brass bands?

A: Being 5 years closer to retirement and hopefully still honking out off beats.

Q: Piece of advice for the next generation of brass players?

A: Don't brush your teeth before playing, it dries your mouth out, and never eat spicy food before a concert.



Readers with Internet access may be beware that much of the band's available news is being chronicled and updated weekly – and possibly even embellished (!) via Dave Johnstone's newly launched 'Blog' (web-log). (www.woolstonian.wordpress.com)

Titled '*Bander's Blog – News and Views of a Woolston Lifer*' the journal supplements the band's official web site (and this print publication!) with a fresh, lively account of 'how the band's doing', – from Dave's own, personal, point of view.

In addition to the blog's weekly (sometimes daily) journal entries, there are also permanent pages carrying information about the Woolston Academy, Woolston Foundation, the band's history, coming events, CD recordings and video clips. The site also features links to other relevant sites, and a photo archive is also accessible.

Woolston Personnel Changes

The front row cornet rank has been bolstered by *Ross Yorkstone* who moved from Invercargill last year to join the NZ Army Band. We would also like to warmly welcome *Todd Turner* on percussion along with his partner, cornetist *Caroline Blackmore*. Welcome. It's great to have you in our band.

Save the Planet!

While we will continue to deliver hard-copy (printed) versions of this newsletter, we strongly urge those who can to supply us with an email address so that a digital version can be delivered instead. Unlike hard copy, the digital version is in full colour and costs considerably less to produce or post, saving planet earth and band alike!

Next Issue Information

The next Woolstonian will be released in December 2009. To receive your copy via email, or if you have any contributions, please phone Sarah Hickman on 366 1566 or email: hickman.sarah@gmail.com

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