

# THE WOOLSTONIAN

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## Contest 2008

by Sarah Hickman

Wow! – Another year, another contest. Being a spectator instead of a player this year made it even easier to see how unpredictable contesting can be, but Woolston can hold their heads high in the knowledge that everyone involved worked very hard and played fantastically well.

The band won the Own Choice, but did not place in the Hymn or Test. This added up to a 3rd equal overall. The band also won the Band of the Year Entertainment Competition and the Marching.

There were also many successes in the solo competition. Brent Hoy placed 2nd in the Amateur Cornet, and Rainor Martin won the Under 19 Cornet competition. Emma Powell won the Under 19 Percussion and went on to place 3rd in the Junior Champion of Champions. Roanna Cooper won the Open Percussion. Nigel Seaton won the Eb Bass and Phillip Johnston won, and Leigh Martin was runner-up in the Bb Bass solo competition.

The Invitation Slow Melody was also sewn-up with Phillip Johnston winning and Colin Clark placing 2nd.

Many of the band also played in an ensemble with Woolston quartets placing 1st and 3rd and Woolston ensembles placing 1st and 2nd. Nigel Seaton and Phillip Johnston also won the Open Duet competition.

The Woolston Concert Brass (formerly known as the Junior Band) competed in the C grade and from all accounts played wonderfully. It amazes me that, year after year, a band comprised of mostly young players can consistently perform at such a high level – a level unattainable for many bands full of experienced adults! Georgia Hoy also placed 3rd in the Under 15 Other Instrument competition. Well done!



## Woolston Succeed in Marching – against all odds!

by Sarah Hickman

The Woolston Brass bandroom is located in a suburban area, and the band rehearses marching up and down the street outside the bandroom. This sometimes means cars have to be dodged but it does create an interesting spectacle for the neighbourhood children.

Anyone who has played with Woolston around contest time will know the band members are all wildly enthusiastic about marching. Much to everyone's disappointment, many rehearsals were called off this year due to bad weather. This necessitated a rehearsal on the day of the competition.

On the Friday morning of the Street March, the band headed out on to the street with a warm glow in their hearts, knowing they were bringing a little joy to the neighbourhood – or so they thought!

One particular resident with a recent young addition to his family, was not so pleased to hear the dulcet tones of the Woolston juggernaut proceeding down Dampier Street. The gentleman exploded from his front door cursing and yelling. As you might imagine, this did not make much impression on the band playing *Ravenswood* at full blast. The next stage of his offensive involved throwing handfuls of gravel at the band while continuing the verbal assault.

Not surprisingly, this did effectively gain the attention of the band which had come to a halt directly outside the gentleman's house (while still concentrating on covering and dressing, of course). Luckily everyone managed to keep their cool. Public relations were left to Eugene Puohotau, who managed to calm the situation effectively.

One bystander is heard to have said... "It was shocking". Band members were surprised and saddened by the incident which left many of them badly shaken. However, they carried on regardless, flying the flag of marching even in the face of extreme adversity!

That they did by rounding off the day nicely with a first placing in the Street March competition, thanks to Drum Major Graeme Bremner and his off-sider Phillip Johnston.

Well done band!

### Contacts:

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## Events Calendar

### Wednesday 24 September *Annual General Meeting.*

The Woolston Brass AGM will be held at the bandroom in Dampier Street at 8.30pm.  
All welcome

### Saturday 27 September *CPBBA Brass Band Big Day Out*

Howard Taylor from Brisbane Excelsior is here for a day of music and friendship. For more details contact: davey.boyes@paradise.net.nz

### Saturday 27 September *Entertainment at rugby.*

A small group from within the band will be playing at the Canterbury Air New Zealand Cup rugby game at AMI Stadium. Come along and enjoy the music and the rugby

### Saturday 11 October *Beerfest*

The Woolston Beerfest Band will be playing a Beerfest in the RSA in Timaru. Come along for a cracking good night

**25 and 26 October FABB**  
Woolston will be competing in the inaugural Australasian Open in Cooloongatta, Queensland

### Sunday 9 November *Salvation Army combined concert*

Woolston Brass will combine forces with the Wellington Citadel Salvation Army Band and the Christchurch Salvation Army Band in a combined concert in the Citadel in Christchurch. Watch our website for details

**Thursday 20 November**  
*Woolston Brass Foundation Launch.* Woolston Brass will play in the Art Gallery at 5.30pm to celebrate the creation of the Woolston Brass Foundation

**Friday 21 November**  
Woolston Brass and quartet will play at a wedding and then a Masonic Lodge function

Visit our website:  
[www.woolstonbrass.org](http://www.woolstonbrass.org)  
for details of our exciting  
*Christmas performances...*

## Old and Bold at "Pre-Contest Rehearsal"

Honorary Member Mel Smith is 88 years of age and he played in the band during the Estall era. Denis Dewe and Colin Tregurtha are Life Members and Vice Patrons. Kevin Jarrett is an Honorary Member who played in the band in the 1960s and 1970s. Tony Lewis is a Life Member and, of course, the incumbent President. His Uncle, Tom Clements, played soprano in the 1940s and 1950s, in particular during Woolston's 'Grand Slam' of 1950. Much later, Tom founded the 50s-Up Band. Ray McDonald played just one contest for Woolston. He was solo euphonium for Kaikorai for many years, perhaps especially during their 'golden era' of success in the 1950s.

Just out of this photo is Dave Christensen (82) who was sitting on Kevin Jarrett's left. Dave, a former conductor, was Principal Cornet for years during the Estall era.



Front from left: Mel Smith, Denis Dewe, Colin Tregurtha, Kevin Jarrett.  
At rear from left: Tony Lewis, Tom Clements, Unknown and Ray McDonald.



A small group of familiar faces entertain spectators at a recent Canterbury Air New Zealand Cup rugby game at AMI Stadium — completely dedicated to the cause!

## Another Successful "Black Tie Ball"



Special thanks are due to Bev and Ken Loader for helping us organise another *Black Tie Ball*. A splendid time was had by all in the wonderful Ark.

This ball is a great fundraiser for the band, largely due to the generosity of the Loaders who give so freely of their time and energy. We are very grateful.

It was also pleasing to see other local bands-people supporting this event, particularly our friends from Addington Brass.

# Contest Resumé 2008

by Denis Dewe

## 2008: The 'Own Choice' and Band of The Year -

The Own Choice got away to a cracking start with St Kilda playing Herbert Howells' *Pageantry*. One of my favourites, with which we won in Edinburgh in 1975. Somehow, the Saints gave it a rather uninspiring rendition, I thought. Choosing to play this magnificent suite was no doubt a calculated risk; in terms of complexity it hardly compared with later compositions written specifically for contesting purposes. *Dances and Allelujahs* from Brisbane Brass followed, from a band trying hard but inevitably outclassed in this field.

Ascot Park from Invercargill next, with a performance of Gregson's *Dances and Arias* directed with aplomb by David Gallaher and well played by the southerners. North Shore Brass then, with Sparke's *Year of the Dragon*, this composition a celebration of all things Welsh. Alas, they tried to blow the judge out of the hall, and their bass drummer's massive 'thwacks' reminded me of the late Jack Elliott on the parade ground at Burnham.

North Shore's performance was ideal for Woolston to follow. Sparke's *Music for the Spheres* which I heard for the first time at the 'oldies' open rehearsal a week before, sparkled! The playing was intensely musical throughout and definitely extra-terrestrial in content, technically complex and directed by Graham Hickman in a manner which from the outset showed that he was very much master of his forces. No matter the slight hiccup; who noticed, or knew it occurred? That 'wow!' factor was evident throughout.

The 'Trusts' then in American idiom with Sparke's *Music for Battle Creek*. Well, it didn't seem to gel – too American, perhaps, for an audience brought up in the British tradition of brass music, despite its illustrious composer. Their marks reflected that, whatever the judge thought about the playing. I missed Marlborough's performance – met fellow Life Member Ron Harris on the mezzanine and after a yarn over a couple of stubbies we were too late.

The 'big guns', Brisbane Excelsior. Well, if I hadn't seen them, they could have been our own band. Philip Sparke's *Harmony Music*, brilliantly played of course, but thankfully earning a point behind Woolston. So much has been said and written about Howard Taylor that it would be futile to comment further. What a band he has under his baton... Moreland City from Melbourne next, outclassed before they came on stage to play, followed by Canterbury Brass in the final performance that evening, both playing *Elgar Variations* - the music unfamiliar to me but I couldn't help thinking that both bands were outclassed. Then the A Grade results – a disappointing overall outcome for Woolstonians in aggregate points, but that's contesting!

Next afternoon the Pelorus Trust Wellington band opened with an audio-visual performance which seemed to me to have everything required in an entertainment event – it was carefully choreographed, thoughtfully put together with excellent presentation and well played. The opening *Intrada Ein Feste Burg* was totally convincing, and the varied programme which followed showed the band off in a way which neither of the other two bands emulated.

Canterbury Brass next, with their soprano soloist playing *On with the Motley* a feature. *Granada* then, with compere Ian Lester providing supporting banter, then Grainger's *Irish Tune from County Derry*. So far, so good, but what always seems to be a long-winded rendition of Graham's *Gaelforce* became tedious without those Irish dancers.

Woolston's *excerpt from Tchaikowsky's Swan Lake* was a *tour de force*. There was more to come. After the *Swiss Folk Song*, Phil Johnston was announced as 'One of the finest bass players in the world'. He undoubtedly is, and his playing of Monti's *Czardas* conceded nothing to Fritz Kreisler. The Shostakovich *Scherzo* from the 10th Symphony was electrifying and absolutely magnificent, the Woolston sound filling every corner of the auditorium. In complete contrast, David Fiu singing *Minnie the Moocher* with the band then a final *Comedy Tonight* brought to a close the most enjoyable Band of the Year I've heard. The result was inevitable!

## A Look Back by Merton Tapp

Having been attending National Brass Band Championships since 1963, Sarah Hickman thought I might be the person to make a few comments about contesting now as opposed to yesteryear.

My very first thought is about the comparative standards of the musical demands made of the players; far more demanding now than previously. I can recall major works from only twenty or thirty years ago being put in front of the current band with a view to playing them at concerts or maybe a Provincial Contest, and the current crop of players romping through them with the greatest of ease.

Another thought is about the modern instruments: triggers on every slide, 4-valves for the better class of Basses, Euphoniums, Baritones and even Tenor Horns. Intonation problems almost eradicated in one fell swoop! Mouth-pieces are all scientifically selected from a given range (usually Wick or Bach), even the old peashooter Trombones are a thing of the past, giving way to the B-flat-F inventions, with all their specialised plumbing trickery. All this weaponry seems to have worked its way down to the lower grade bands as well.

There is also evidence now of the younger players having been taught the correct playing techniques, right from day one. Aspects like holding the instrument, breathing correctly and good centered embouchure all seem to have been mastered by the younger players who generally are now taught by suitably qualified teachers, in various Polytechnics, University Music Schools, and even Junior Bands like our own!

I have spent considerable time listening to solos and party events as well. Although the numbers in each event were no larger than in previous years, man alive, the standard of playing was far in advance! The Cornet Championship with our very own Kevin Hickman and Anthony Smith, the Flugel Solo with Thomas Eves and the Tenor Horn Solo where Mike Ford, Andy Williams and Bill Vail (all Ex-Woolston) narrowly headed-off Roseanna Dale, Dave Suttie, and Michael Stone, were all fantastic sections. I would go so far as to say that Mike Ford produced the best brass solo playing I have ever heard – quite sensational. While we are talking solos, what a privilege it was to hear Phil Johnston and Colin Clark in the Slow Melody Competition, and didn't they do well! (The notion of having a Brass Choir accompanying Roseanna and Colin was excellent!)

And now the band events. How the Woolston Band can play a hymn as well as we did and get 2nd or 3rd to last, simply defies gravity, and our paltry placing in the test gob-smacked me as well. I heard the winning test performance, and it sounded for all money, just like Woolston, so there you are! The own choice is now history. I thought we might take that one, even with the little hiccup in its midst, and we did, sure enough. So there you have it. Sometimes, you do when maybe you shouldn't, and other times you don't, when perhaps you should've. That's Contesting!

I've been in Woolston now since 1969, with a 3 year break from 1998 -1991, and can say quite confidently that the band has never been in better shape. It is full of extremely competent young players, has a very well organised, competent and able Conductor, and a stable, imaginative and hardworking infrastructure working efficiently behind the scenes. This can lead only to a bright future.

## Woolston Concert Brass – Tristan Mitchell

Woolston Concert Brass have had a very busy last few months with lots of hard work going into preparing for National and Provincial Contests.

After the much appreciated name change from *Woolston Junior Band* to *Woolston Concert Brass*, work began on preparing for the National Contest in Christchurch with all in the band eagerly awaiting the opportunity to play at national level and for some this would be the first time.

As the band only practices one night a week for an hour and a half, time is of the essence to have all music prepared for the C grade Championship. The test piece was *Inspiration* and the band chose *Seven Wonders* for the Own Choice; both being very descriptive works that the band has played before. The C grade is always a strong field with nine bands competing and the band just held onto 8th place, but this now establishes a platform for improvement or as the adjudicator put it 'a band that has a lot of potential'. Many players are young within the band and commented on the experience they gained: all keen to compete again at national level. Strangely enough, they all want more marching practice.

After the National Contest the band took a couple of weeks off before returning to prepare for the Provincial Contest. As time was of the essence yet again the band worked hard in preparing *Seven Wonders* and a 30 minute entertainment programme. Six bands took part in the contest with Concert Brass winning the C Grade Section and also the Open Entertainment Section. Just the usual comments again by the adjudicator 'a band that has lots of potential'.

Social events are now on the calendar with the band getting together to have fun away from the music, but Conductor Tristan Mitchell, along with appreciated assistance from Deputy Conductor Jill Pears and parents, will be working together on improving Woolston Concert Brass for now and into the future.

Our next engagement is the Selwyn House School *Twilight Carnivale* on the 2nd of November.

## Woolston Junior Band News – Jill Pears

At the end of Term 2 Woolston Junior farewelled their conductor Bill Vail. Luckily, Bill has not gone very far. His two daughters are still members, and Bill keeps himself busy out the back providing tuition and support.

I am the new conductor, and our first gig was the Kidfest Concert at Cashmere High School. We performed a twenty-minute programme. Congratulations are due to all members of the band. Many members of the audience commented on their enthusiasm and the quality of the playing.

Term 3 saw a number of new members – both children and adults. A keyboard and tuned percussion section has been added and the cornet section is swelling. As well as revisiting their old favourites, the band is rehearsing a number of new works. Their next concert is the Selwyn House School *Twilight Carnivale* on the 2nd of November.

## Sir Hamish Hay Honoured

On Thursday the 11th of September the band played at the funeral of Sir Hamish Hay. Sir Hamish was Christchurch's longest-serving Mayor and a keen supporter of the arts. As a past Vice-Patron of the band, he remained greatly interested in our welfare. It was a sad day for all, but an honour to play at the funeral of a man who cared so much for the band.



## Band Dinner and Canterbury Provincial Contest

Two other important events on the Woolston Brass calendar were the Band Dinner and the Canterbury Provincial Contest.

The Band Dinner was held at the Seventy-Seven Restaurant and Bar where all enjoyed the fantastic food, beverages and service. The much-coveted Annual "Woolly" Awards were also announced. The recipients being:

**Roseanna Dale** – Most Improved Player. **Hamish Liddy** and **Rainor Martin** mentioned as showing much improvement **Euphoniums** – Section of the Year. **Dave Johnstone** – Woolstonian Trophy. For his selflessness in hip-hopping from cornet to flugel as required by the band! **Gary Pinker** – Bandsman of the Year

The Canterbury Provincial Contest was a good chance to get on stage and enjoy the music. Woolston did just that, winning the Hymn, Own Choice, and Entertainment Competition. Many thanks to Colin Clark for making the trek from Auckland for the contest and to David Fui for once again providing the band with a wonderful voice to play along with.

## Woolston Personnel Changes

Since June there has only been one change within the ranks of the band. Cameron Lee is welcomed to the percussion section. Cameron has risen through the Woolston education system coming to us via Woolston Concert Brass. We look forward to hearing great things from him.

## Next Issue Information

The next Woolstonian will be released in December 2008. To receive your copy via email, or if you have any contributions, please phone Sarah Hickman on 366 1566 or email her at: [hickman.sarah@gmail.com](mailto:hickman.sarah@gmail.com)

