



Colonial Forces Study Group (Queensland)

**Splendid little chaps:  
Fife and drum bands in Queensland's colonial military forces  
1860 to 1901**



*Charters Towers Cadet Band, circa 1890.*

*Source: SLQ*

## Introduction:

The story of the Queensland military organisation is also about the maintenance of a volunteer or militia force during peacetime. For almost forty years from when it was created in 1860, the force received varying levels of support from the colonial government. During this period, particularly in the first decade, its fortunes fluctuated wildly, effected by the economic prosperity, or rather poverty, of the colony. Attempts were made by its Officers and supporters to keep the force adequate for its prescribed task of defending the colony. It would appear, however, that always at the back of the minds of those with the power to disperse funds to the colonial military was the thought that ultimately Great Britain, or at least its Royal Navy, would rescue the Australian colonies if any real danger of foreign aggression were to manifest itself.

There were war scares over the years, and on occasions the colonial military aided the civil authorities, but generally there was little sense of pressing danger. Queensland soldiers never battled to defend their own shores against a foreign foe. The force was first called out to aid the civil powers during the so-called Bread Riots of September 1866. In 1878 when Great Britain appeared on the verge of war with Russia, and the Queensland Government feared a raiding force might suddenly descend on the capital or major provincial towns, the Force was mobilised. Again in 1885, fearing an imminent war with the Russian Empire, the Defence Force was called out for active service. In 1891, as a result of wide-spread civil disturbances in the western districts of Queensland, the Force was yet again mobilised on active service. This was the largest action undertaken by the military to that date, and like previous policing action, did not result in any bloodshed.

In the period 1885 to 1902, approximately 20,000 men are believed to have served in the force. This does not include those who volunteered for active service in South Africa during the war of 1899-1902.

This study examines just one small element of Queensland's defence history, that of military music, and within that category it touches on the subset of fife and drum bands. As it happens, civilian fife and drum bands in 19<sup>th</sup> century Queensland easily outnumbered those used by the armed services. Quite often the civilian bands were aligned with youth organisations, church bodies, benevolent or charitable societies, institutions, and schools. In a military context the fife and drum bands in Queensland were usually associated with infantry companies or naval brigades. They were also popular with young boys, and consequently often connected with cadet corps.

The purpose of establishing a fife and drum band within the defence force was usually to aid the companies in marching. In practice however a good band also provided entertainment, thus fulfilling an important social function particularly in regional townships. Queensland's defence forces established more than 20 fife and drum bands in 12 towns during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Band sizes appear to have been between 10 and 30, indicating a minimum 500 musicians played in these bands, though the actual number is likely to have been much

higher. Only in a few instances do names survive of band membership, so it is difficult to determine the socio-economic background of the participants or what impact playing in such a band may have had on their later life. Did many boys, for example, remain in the defence forces after turning 18? Was this an influence on those who may have later served in World War I? At this stage it is not possible to answer those questions, though the search for historical evidence does continue.

In most cases brass bands replaced fife and drum bands towards the later end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Few bands actually survived integration into the Commonwealth Military Forces. The popularity of fife and drum bands waned generally within the armed services, though the tradition was carried on by civilian bands well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly in the schools and church organisations.

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## Brisbane

### ***No 1 Company fife and drum band***

In August 1867, Captain Pring of No 1 Company, Brisbane Volunteer Rifles decided he would bear the cost of fitting out a fife and drum band<sup>i</sup> for his company, which had been formed in March of that year.<sup>ii</sup> This is the first military fife and drum band known in the colony. Pring purchased the instruments in Sydney for the cost of £30, his hope being it would enable his Company “...to learn slow and quick marching”. The process of forming the band was complex, particularly as Pring wanted an efficient band quickly. The management committee for the band consisting of Lieutenant J. Mc Donnell, Sergeant-Major E. Brady, Staff-Sergeant Joseph H. Adams, Private J. Paris, and Bugler John Hughes, took control of the instruments. At his own expense Pring engaged the services of the buglers of HM 50<sup>th</sup> Regiment stationed in Brisbane, and the buglers of No 1 Company to form the fife and drums. He also arranged for “...a lot of respectable young boys” to be trained by Bugler Hughes and drilled by Sergeant Major Brady so that they would be quickly able to take their place in the band.<sup>iii</sup> By October the first practice of the band had taken place, and fifteen boys had been enrolled, practicing three evenings a week.<sup>iv</sup> Statements at the AGM of No 1 Company held at the drill-room on 4 July 1868 revealed £1 was paid to Capner in October 1867, and £2-5-0 to Fletcher in February 1868 for the supply of fifes and drums for the Company.<sup>v</sup> By July 1868 the fife and drum band was taking part in Volunteer parades<sup>vi</sup> and march-pasts, sometimes with the Volunteer brass band.<sup>vii</sup>

On another occasion the Volunteer Fife and Drum Band was given permission to entertain children on the annual Anglican Sunday school picnic in January 1869. The children, and the band, were taken to Eagle Farm by the government steamer ‘Kate’ where they indulged in games, sports and an “abundance of cakes, fruit, and other delicate and tempting eatables”. The Fife and Drum band were a highlight of the day and were credited with ‘lively music’.<sup>viii</sup>

At its peak the band had 22 members.<sup>ix</sup> It performed throughout 1869 including an inspection by Colonel Sir Maurice O’Connell in September.<sup>x</sup> When Captain Pring resigned from the Company in December 1869 he was requested to transfer his trusteeship of the property of the fife and drum band to the new officer commanding. This hadn’t happened by February 1870<sup>xi</sup>, though two fifers and two drummers were present to play the national Anthem at the opening of Parliament in September 1870, the fifers were alleged to have each played in a different key. This may have been the last outing for the band and it is believed to have ceased playing around that time.<sup>xii</sup>

### ***No 3 Company fife and drum band***

It was some time before another fife and drum corps was formed within the Volunteer movement. Captain Snelling, who commanded No 3 Company in Brisbane, organised a fife and drum corps for his company around April 1873. It consisted of 24 members “fifteen of whom are fifers, seven drummers, one triangle, and also a large drum.” The cost of the instruments for this band was also born by the company’s officers.<sup>xiii</sup> At an inspection later in the year the band was considered very creditable and played a number of marches.<sup>xiv</sup> Its

instructor was the ubiquitous musician Andrew Seal, who was involved at one time or another in most Brisbane bands or orchestras.<sup>xv</sup>

At an evening skirmishing exercise held in late October at the Green Hills, the fife and drum band were also present. Despite the fact the the band had not yet received its uniform it was noted that it played excellent music.<sup>xvi</sup> A fortnight later the band appeared for the first time in uniform at a field exercise held at the Newstead residence of the Honourable George Harris. "The strains of the fife and drum corps, which has now attained a creditable proficiency, did much to enliven the proceedings. The company returned to town about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, a pleasant and instructive day having been spent."<sup>xvii</sup> The new uniform in which the fife and drum band appeared in November 1873 consisted of a blue tweed six-button tunic with a red collar and red braid ornamentation. Trousers were blue with a red stripe, and a blue forage cap with fore and aft peaks and a narrow red band was worn.<sup>xviii</sup>

Captain Snelling's fife and drum band, as it was often referred to, played at a range of functions including a catered Company picnic at Hamilton in November 1874<sup>xix</sup>, normal drill and monthly parades and even "...relieved the monotony of the proceedings by playing some of their inspiring tunes during the intervals between the races" at Eagle Farm Racecourse in May 1875.<sup>xx</sup>

When the band supported Blondin, the internationally-famous rope-walker, at his Brisbane performance in July 1874, the Brisbane Courier was moved to comment on its members' dedication to the cause. "... the lads have, on several occasions, placed their services gratuitously at the disposal of the Hospital and other charities, and the officers and members of the Company have, since their formation, borne every expense incurred in providing uniforms and instruments, besides the expenses of a professional teacher. The lads, who on all occasions conduct themselves in a praiseworthy manner, have, by constant practice and attention to their duties, reached a high state of proficiency, and in absence of a brigade band, their services on Volunteer parades fill a gap that would otherwise be much felt."<sup>xxi</sup> In August the Fife and Drum band played at a benefit concert at the Queensland Theatre, at which a major attraction was the launch of a large balloon.<sup>xxii</sup> They appeared again at a Volunteer gathering in Toowoomba in November 1874, and this may have been its last public performance.

It was around August 1874 that Snelling and his Officers organised the band's conversion to brass instruments, and the brass band performed for the first time on Boxing Day 1875. This brass band later became the Metropolitan Battalion Band and from the mid-1880s for the rest of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was known as Headquarters Band. Brisbane appears not to have had another military fife and drum band for almost a decade.

### ***Brisbane Volunteer Rifle Corps fife and drum band***

The Brisbane Rifle Volunteer Corps was formed in March 1885, and changed its name to Brisbane Volunteer Rifle Corps in October 1886. Its fife and drum band paraded for the first time in April 1886 as the Company was embarking for a training encampment at Lytton.<sup>xxiii</sup>

This band did not survive the year and by December 1886 a committee had been formed to establish a brass band for the corps.<sup>xxiv</sup>

### ***Brisbane Grammar School Cadet Corps fife and drum band***

As early as November 1878 Captain Roe, the Officer Commanding the Cadets at the Brisbane Grammar school, was calling for recruits to the fife and drum band. The band appears to have practised at the Grammar School armoury.<sup>xxv</sup> The fife and drum band was still performing in 1886, and in April of that year led the Brisbane Grammar School Cadet Corps into camp.<sup>xxvi</sup> No evidence has yet come to light for the band playing after that year and it may have ceased to operate at that time.

### ***No 1 Company Brisbane, Marine Defence Force fife and drums***

This Marine Defence Force company was formed in March 1885, and was commonly known as the 'Brisbane Naval Brigade' even though that was not its official designation. A local civilian band known as the 'Jolly Tars Fife and Drum Band' volunteered to lead the company through the streets on their way to their first encampment in March 1885.<sup>xxvii</sup> Evidence suggests that this band was not made up of enrolled members of the Naval Brigade.<sup>xxviii</sup> This band led the Brigade to parades and exercises throughout 1885. Irony was not beyond their scope either, and after hours waiting in the rain for a quarterly muster of the naval and military forces that was ultimately cancelled, the band led the men back to their drill sheds playing 'Wait till the clouds roll by'.<sup>xxix</sup>

When the Naval Brigade paraded at the Old Port Office in May 1886 however, it appears to have had its own enlisted fife and drum band, led by a Mr King.<sup>xxx</sup> This band paraded for most naval events and also played at Labor Day marches in Brisbane in 1888<sup>xxxi</sup> and again in 1889 and 1890. There is no evidence the band continued playing beyond March 1890 and it would seem reasonable to believe it collapsed and re-formed as the Naval Brigade brass band.<sup>xxxii</sup>

### ***Indooroopilly State School Cadet Corps fife and drum band***

The first company of this school based cadet corps was formed in September 1889, and an additional company was formed in 1891. A fife and drum band associated with the corps was established around December 1892.<sup>xxxiii</sup> There are indications that the band continued, as a fund-raising concert in its aid was conducted in March 1895.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Unfortunately the Indooroopilly cadet corps was disbanded in December 1896.

### ***State School Cadet Corps Band***

The State School cadet movement was established under the supervision of the Queensland Teachers Volunteer Corps during 1898, and spread across a number of schools in the late 1890s. As early as July 1898 steps were being taken to form a drum and fife band within the Brisbane Cadets, however it took a little longer to organise.<sup>xxxv</sup> A circular, presumably issued by the Cadet Corps hierarchy, noted that the Government capitation allowance (a small sum paid to the company for each individual member who completed a pre-determined number

of drills or attendances) would almost meet the costs of the band once it was established. Donations were also sought to cover the costs of the instruments which were to consist of twenty fifes, six side drums, one bass drum, one pair cymbals, and one triangle.<sup>xxxvi</sup> In August 1898, as the result of recommendations by the QDF Commandant, a fife and drum band of thirty members was finally established for the Corps.<sup>xxxvii</sup> The Cadet Corps numbered around 240 at the time, excluding the band numbers.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

Equipping the band still took time and was not until April that many of the instruments were acquired.<sup>xxxix</sup> At the annual inspection of the Queensland Teachers Volunteer Corps and the State School Cadet Corps held in June 1899, twenty-eight members of the newly-formed Drum and Fife Band appeared in plain clothes, their uniforms not having arrived.<sup>xl</sup> Officially the band paraded publically for the first time in November 1889, the Brisbane Courier suggested "The band played well, and gave evidence of much preparation, and a deep Interest in the work; while the effect on the marching of the cadets was very apparent."<sup>xli</sup> In December 1899 Bandmaster CE Daniels, who led the fife and drums, was presented by the cadet band with an inscribed baton in an appreciation of his efforts.<sup>xlii</sup>

As an example of the community connection this band had, it was selected to aid William Anderson's Dramatic Company in the production of a play entitled "Two Little Drummer Boys." The full band of the Cadet Corps performed during the play.<sup>xliii</sup> A few weeks later the fifes and drums joined other military bands at a fete to raise funds for the Indian Famine Fund.<sup>xliv</sup> The band also visited the Children's Hospital in November, performing for the patients.<sup>xlv</sup>

By September 1901 Major Halstead, the officer commanding the Teachers' and Cadets was able to reveal that there were eight companies of State School Cadets and two thirty-member bands totalling 720 cadets.<sup>xlvi</sup> The other cadet band was located in ? The Cadet Corps Fife and Drum band also took part in the Military Tattoo that was held in Warwick in January 1902<sup>xlvii</sup> and in the Peace Celebrations in Brisbane in June to mark the end of the South African War. Prophetically the reporter described the band and cadets as "the splendid little chaps who ten years hence will form so important a part in the defence of the country."<sup>xlviii</sup>

## Rockhampton

### ***Rockhampton Volunteer fife and drum band***

Although a Volunteer company had formed in Rockhampton in 1860, its progress was erratic, and often fraught with in-fighting. When Charles Melbourne was elected Officer Commanding in September 1868, he instituted a number of arrangements to keep the Volunteer movement attractive to locals. One was to organise a fife and drum band for his company, and he advertised in the local newspaper for youths to join the band. Practice was initially two nights a week<sup>xlix</sup>. A fife and drum band instructor was also sought.<sup>l</sup> Unofficially the fife and drums were considered to be cadets, being generally too young to be recruited

in the volunteers. By January 1869 the Volunteer Fife and Drum Band was able to parade through the streets of Rockhampton with 26 members "...discoursing sweet music for the public benefit. It must be confessed by the most prejudiced mortal that the fife and drum music is preferable to that extracted from bullock bells and kerosene tins, and therefore public gratitude is due to the youthful musicians for their late change of front."<sup>ii</sup>

The Volunteer Company, which had been re-numbered as No 4 Company, also had a brass band by 1877.<sup>liiii</sup> The fife and drums continued playing at most if not all of the functions associated with the Volunteers, including the annual Volunteer Ball and Church Parades in the early part of the year.<sup>liv</sup> Evidence suggests that the fife and drum band faded soon afterwards.

### ***'A' Company fife and drum band***

It was Captain Melbourne in March 1885 who again sought a competent fife and drum instructor for A Company.<sup>lv</sup> Under the new *Defence Act, 1884*, the volunteers had recently converted to a militia company of the Queensland Defence Force. Two companies existed in Rockhampton at that time, 'A' and 'B' Companies, and the fife and drum band was recruited to be shared between both. Although initially only nine men and boys offered their services, twelve fifes were ordered from Sydney.<sup>lvi</sup> The fifers were able to play for a Church Parade in August 1885,<sup>lvii</sup> but numbers appear to have fallen by the end of the year. Those leaving the band tended to take the instruments with them, prompting Lieutenant Koch to threaten legal action if band items were not returned by 19 December.<sup>lviii</sup> By February 1886 the band was being reorganised, had drums in its possession, but still sought musicians.<sup>lix</sup>

An advertisement in the local newspapers in May 1886 resulted in thirty boys applying for positions in the band. It was expected at the time that the band would have a maximum 25 members playing eighteen fifes, four side drums, one big drum, a cymbal and a triangle.<sup>lx</sup> The band, or part of it at least, was still playing in March 1887. The Small Debts Court was in session in Rockhampton when "...the proceedings were interrupted by the booming of a big drum and two or three shrill pipes. The sounds proceeded from the Drill Shed, and as it was impossible to hear what was said, Mr. Lukin turned to the constable in charge of the Court, and said "Take them my compliments, and ask them, if it will not interfere with any very important military movement, whether they will postpone the music for a little while." The constable did so, and presently returned with the information that it was a hand practising up to welcome Colonel French."<sup>lxi</sup> The band does not appear to have survived till year's end.

Captain Koch of A Company was trying to recruit boys aged 14 to 18 into a new fife and drum band by December 1887.<sup>lxii</sup> Koch formed a fife and drum band committee and they interviewed 18 youths whom they accepted. Fourteen were allocated fifes, two the bass drum, and two on kettle drum. Mr. Bickle, who was conductor of the town band agreed to become bandmaster of the fife and drums.<sup>lxiii</sup> Fifteen members of the fife and drums paraded through the streets of Rockhampton, perhaps for the first time, in March 1888. "The way in which the Juveniles played was very creditable" the *Morning Bulletin* noted, "and we hope they will persevere to perfection."<sup>lxiv</sup> Despite their musical progress the band

was still seeking 'a few steady boys' months later.<sup>lxv</sup> It is not known how long the band continued.

### ***Naval Defence Force Band***

The Rockhampton Naval Volunteer Corps was recruited in 1885 and the Rockhampton Naval Artillery Volunteers in early 1886. Both formed part of the Queensland Marine Defence Force. The companies attempted to find a bandmaster, ranking as a 1st Class Petty Officer, for a combined fife and drum band in November 1886<sup>lxvi</sup> but were apparently unsuccessful.

Almost a year later a public subscription list was established to fund the formation of a fife and drum band.<sup>lxvii</sup> Lieutenant Drake, R.N., as the officer in charge of Queensland's naval brigades, promised to supply the uniforms for the band.<sup>lxviii</sup> The band was formed to service both the naval artillery and the naval brigade companies, and first met in January 1888.<sup>lxix</sup> It was not until August 1888 however that the *Morning Bulletin* was able to announce the arrival of the band's instruments, noting that "those members sufficiently qualified are being measured for uniforms, so that the sound of the "vile squeaking of the wry-neck'd fife" will probably soon be as familiar in the town as the "pipes" of our Scottish friends."<sup>lxx</sup> The instruments that arrived were considered to be the best in Rockhampton. Two piccolos, twelve B flat flutes, two F flat flutes, three side drums, and one bass drum were delivered. The side-drums were rod-tensioned with nickel-plated rods. The bass drum was painted with an ensign and crown above and Maltese cross in blue, or Union Jack on white ground, and the letters QN.B. on ribbon. The side drums were similarly painted with ensign, crown and Maltese cross.<sup>lxxi</sup>

The Naval Artillery and the Naval Brigade held a Church Parade in December 1888 at which twenty-three members of the fife and drum band were present.<sup>lxxii</sup> The band continued to operate over the next few years,<sup>lxxiii</sup> including the 1890 annual training camp at which it is recorded that the reveille was sounded by fife and drum.<sup>lxxiv</sup> The band may have collapsed soon after 1890.

## **Warwick**

### ***No 5 Company fife and drum band***

No 5 Company was established in Warwick in late 1870, however it was another four years before the officer commanding, Captain Skinner, was able to form a band within the ranks. After a Saturday afternoon spent at skirmishing drill in September 1874 "...the corps, headed by their fife and drum band, marched through the streets, and the Warwick air was disturbed by the sounds of martial music for the first time."<sup>lxxv</sup> The band was still playing a year later when it escorted a procession of Good Templars to the Town Hall, though there is no record of it after 1875.<sup>lxxvi</sup>

Later, when a cadet corps was formed in Warwick in September 1876, plans were put in place to immediately form an associated fife and drum band.<sup>lxxvii</sup> The cadet corps however did not get official government sanction and it is unlikely the band was formed.

Another attempt is known to have been made in Warwick in October 1886 to form a fife and drum band there,<sup>lxxviii</sup> but that also seems not to have got off the ground.

### ***Warwick Fife and Drum Band***

By mid-1888 a new fife and drum band was formed in association with the local infantry company. A management committee guided the juvenile bands affairs, and in August the *Warwick Examiner* thought the band was 'in a good state of advancement'.<sup>lxxix</sup> Donations to equip the band were eagerly sought and an advertisement appeared in a Warwick newspaper containing the following piece of doggerel:

"Come forward, my friend,  
And give him your hand,  
To encourage the boys,  
In the Drum and File band."<sup>lxxx</sup>

A month after he began instruction Mr Dowsett took the opportunity of a Philharmonic Concert in Warwick to parade his new band in public. A correspondent to a local newspaper noted that although the playing was not first class, it wasn't bad given Dowsett had only been the instructor for a month and that the boys had only been learning for five months." The newspaper agreed that the band was progressing but needed volunteers as much as it needed funds.<sup>lxxxi</sup>

The organising committee of the band had met in August, unhappy with the band's progress. Over the next few months the committee was increased so that the necessary tasks might be done. These include increased fund-raising and replacement of the fifes.<sup>lxxxii</sup> "The Warwick Fife and Drum Band have acquitted themselves very creditably on two or three nights during the past week. They have marched down the town playing lively airs, and on Saturday afternoon last they enlivened the proceedings at the cricket match in the Queen's Park. They are making good strides in proficiency, and we would advise them especially to march in time with their music, an end to which they are aiming well. The progress made is creditable to the youngsters and to the teacher, Mr. Dowsett."<sup>lxxxiii</sup> Despite the optimistic outlook for the band, there is no evidence to suggest that it survived past 1888, and the reasons for its demise are unknown.

In 1896 an attempt to form a Warwick cadet corps, with its own fife and drum band, was not successful.<sup>lxxxiv</sup>

### ***'L' Company fife and drum band***

'L' Company of the Queensland Rifles was established in Warwick at the end of 1898. The Queensland Rifles were a part of the Volunteer Branch of the Queensland Defence Force. Most of its companies were in the metropolitan areas and this was one of the first to be established in a regional town.

The fife and drum band which formed part of 'L' Company was formed around April 1899. The band was planned to be 15-strong, and the instruments consisted of piccolos, side and kettle drums, and cymbals. Local firm, Messrs. Holden and Co. ordered the piccolos, which were of a special make and key, from Melbourne and they arrived in early May.

Company member Private Sydney E Hill was responsible for much of the organisation of the band, and Mr C. F. H. Martin, volunteered his services as band instructor.<sup>lxxxv</sup> Drums were considered to be one of the more expensive items for the band, and Lieutenant DeConlay wrote to the Warwick Council asking if drums in the Councils possession could be lent to the band. In 1883 Warwick Council had acquired a bass drum, two side drums and several brass instruments for a town band that no longer existed. The instruments were lying idle and after some discussion on the ownership of the instruments the Council agreed to lend the three drums to L Company.<sup>lxxxvi</sup> The first band practice was held in early June 1899.<sup>lxxxvii</sup>

In August the band met at to adopt Hon. A. Morgan, M.L.A. as a patron, and to unanimously elect Sydney Hill as the bandmaster. Band practice was held every Thursday evening and marching practice on Monday evenings. Public subscription paid for the purchase of music.<sup>lxxxviii</sup>

In their role of community entertainers, the fife and drum band accepted an engagement to play at the Sandy Creek Hotel on the condition that the publican provided transport to and from the venue. On the return trip from the hotel an accident occurred resulting in the dislocation of Hill's shoulder and destruction of his clothes and musical instruments.<sup>lxxxix</sup> The band was due to appear at the L Company church parade the following day, but were unable to do so.<sup>xc</sup> Hill later sued the hotelier for damages but after a detailed assessment of the case by the Police Magistrate a non-suit was declared and the costs were awarded against Hill.<sup>xc</sup> Soon afterwards Hill left Warwick to join the 1<sup>st</sup> Queensland Contingent sailing for the war in South Africa.<sup>xcii</sup>

The fife and drum band survived without Hill until Christmas eve 1899, when it paraded parts of the town past midnight.<sup>xciii</sup> There is no further record of the band, and by April 1900 'L' Company had two bagpipers to escort them through the streets.<sup>xciv</sup>

## **Toowoomba**

### ***Toowoomba Light Infantry Company fife and drum band***

The Toowoomba Light Infantry Company was established in that town in May 1876. A fife and drum band was formed almost immediately, an instructor being advertised for in the local newspaper.<sup>xcv</sup> As far as is known the band played in Toowoomba for only a year or so, heading civil parades like that for the Church of England Sunday School in April 1877<sup>xcvi</sup>, and for the arrival of His Excellency the Governor to the town in May 1877.<sup>xcvii</sup> A Light Infantry Brass Band was operating by 1877 and appears to have become the favoured band.

## Maryborough

### ***Maryborough Volunteer Fife and Drum Band***

Maryborough was one of the few towns that heard the call to arms early in 1861, though it failed to keep the volunteer movement going until No 6 Company was established in 1877. By late 1880 there were plans to raise a fife and drum band for the Company<sup>xcviii</sup>, and a Volunteer concert was organised to support it in December.<sup>xcix</sup> It is likely this was the band that accompanied the Maryborough and Gympie contingents to the Easter Encampment at Fort Lytton in 1885<sup>c</sup>. At the formal march-past all the infantry companies were preceded by the Headquarters brass band, and a fife and drum band which the *Brisbane Courier* considered "...should have at least a score instead of one kettle drum..."<sup>ci</sup>

Following the reorganisation of the defence forces in early 1885, the Company converted to a militia unit known as 'A' Company, Maryborough. The band was 19 members strong by the time of the 1886 training encampment at Fort Lytton.<sup>cii</sup> There, after waiting on the wharf for several hours, they played into camp a tired and weary company of Roma volunteers who arrived by steamer at 2am in the morning.<sup>ciii</sup>

### ***Wide Bay and Burnett Regiment fife and drums***

In October 1886 the Band of the newly-established Wide Bay and Burnett Regiment was created with a strength of seventeen, made up of one sergeant, one corporal and 15 privates. The recognition of the fife and drums as a regimental band is significant, as the musicians could be enlisted separately and were no longer held on strength of the 'A' Company, Maryborough. It is most likely the bandsmen of the 'A' Company's former fifes and drums made up the number of the Regimental band. It was the first and only time fife and drums officially formed a Regimental band in Queensland.<sup>civ</sup>

Wide Bay Regiment's fife and drum band played at the formal march-past at the 1887 Lytton encampment.<sup>cv</sup> It appeared again at Lytton in March 1888.<sup>cvi</sup> In September 1888 the Defence Force officers in Maryborough set about raising funds for a brass band, ultimately sounding the death knell of the fife and drums.<sup>cvi</sup>

### ***Maryborough Naval Brigade fife and drum band***

When the Maryborough Company of the Marine Defence Force (commonly known as the Naval Brigade) was established in 1886, they also put together a fife and drum band. The band was active by at least November of that year when it attended a church parade with the Company.<sup>cviii</sup> Little else is known of this band.

## Gympie

### ***'B' Company, Gympie fife and drum band***

Information is particularly scarce on this band. A Volunteer Company was originally established in Gympie in 1883, and it converted to a militia company in February 1885. The formation date for the fife and drum band is presently unknown, however it had a strength of 17 fifiers and drummers when it attended the Easter Encampment held at Lytton in 1886.<sup>cxix</sup>

## Charters Towers

### ***'A' Company, Charters Towers fife and drum band***

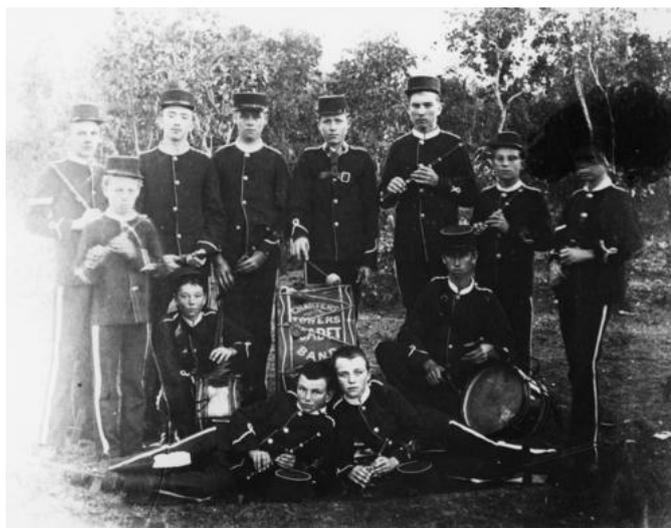
'A' Company, Charters Towers was formed in February 1885 on the establishment of the Queensland Defence Force, and the movement from all-volunteer to largely a militia force. Recruits were being sought by Captain Haldane for a fife and drum band in March 1885,<sup>cx</sup> and it is recorded as playing the Company from Queenton Station into the town on its return from a training camp at Cluden Park in May 1885.<sup>cxii</sup>

In July a grand military concert was held at the Charters Towers School of Arts to raise funds for the drum and fife band.<sup>cxiii</sup> Instruction apparently cost the band about £2 a week. Complaints were levelled against the band a few months later that it did not attend drill parades with the rest of the company.<sup>cxiii</sup>

A second infantry company was formed in Charters Towers in July 1885 and with it a brass band.<sup>cxiv</sup> Within a matter of months the brass band was receiving considerable attention. When the drum and fife band made a come-back, appearing in the town one night in October, it was praised for its rapid improvement and ability to play well together.<sup>cxv</sup> Its days however were numbered, and it appears to have folded soon after.

### ***Charters Towers Cadet Band***

In April 1888 a concert and dance was held to raise funds for the new uniforms of the Charters Towers Cadet Corps. The Cadet's own Fife and Drum Band was scheduled to make its first appearance using instruments presented to them by H. Ross and J. McDonald.<sup>cxvi</sup> A year later they were able to play the cadets into camp at the Townsville encampment,<sup>cxvii</sup> and were present at drills.<sup>cxviii</sup> The Cadet band also took part in the parade to welcome the Governor to the town in April 1890.<sup>cxix</sup> This is the last known public appearance of the band.



*Charters Towers Cadet Band, ca. 1890* <http://trove.nla.gov.au/work/36921948>

## Townsville

Captain Henry of the Townsville Garrison Battery called a meeting in October 1885 to consider forming a fife and drum band. A sum of £28 was already in bond for that purpose, and Captain Henry planned to communicate with the commandant on the subject.<sup>cxx</sup> There is no evidence the band was actually formed.

### ***Townsville Naval Brigade fife and drum band***

The Townsville Naval Brigade and the Townsville Volunteer Naval Artillery companies joined together to form a fife and drum band in April 1886. Lieutenant Benwell select 16 youths from 50 applicants for the band. Bandmaster Smallwood took charge of their instruction.<sup>cxxi</sup> On Friday the Drum and Fife Band, belonging to the Naval Brigade (under Mr. Small wood) made its first appearance in camp, and, for its short time in existence, discoursed very passable marching music.<sup>cxxii</sup>

At the 1887 training camp in that town, the band attracted the irreverent comments of the *Queensland Figaro*: "Of course, the blue jackets were the most popular with the crowd of visitors ; and particularly proud of themselves they looked, as they ran their six pounders about the field. They reminded one forcibly of " Mary and the little lamb," for wherever the brigade went the gun was sure to go." Their fife-and-drum band was quite a feature in the entertainment; but being a class of music that, like olives and bagpipes, requires an acquired taste, it was generally relegated for practice to the distant bush, whence issued plaintive whistlings, and spasmodic drum-thumpings, no doubt, appropriate to the daily funeral of the murdered 'Girl I left behind me'. A military brass band is a wonderful thing to make a fellow sit up, and think he can do things but a fife-and-drum band kind of withers one up, and makes one feel cold. However, the players are a fine lot of young fellows, and it is not their fault that the man who invented a fife-and-drum band was not hanged."<sup>cxxiii</sup> Despite such detractors, the Naval Fife and Drum band was still playing in Townsville in February 1900<sup>cxxiv</sup>, making it one of the most long-lived fife and drum bands in the colony.

## Southport

### ***Southport Volunteer Fife and Drum band***

By July 1885, the proposed drum and fife band associated with the newly formed Southport Volunteer Rifle Corps had raised sufficient funds to order instruments for its twelve young members. The Southport correspondent for the Brisbane Courier predicted that "it will not be long ere the echoes of Southport will resound to the piercing notes of the fife, mingled with the rattle of the spirit-stirring drum."<sup>cxxv</sup> The band is likely to have worn the Company's blue serge uniform with white facings.<sup>cxxvi</sup> In mid-December 1885 an amateur performance evening was held to raise additional funds for the Band. The main performance was a nautical drama "H.M.S. Spitfire", in which the ship's guncrew were composed of the boys of the Fife and Drum Band.<sup>cxxvii</sup>

## Ipswich

### ***Ipswich Rifle Volunteer fife and drum band***

The fife and drum band associated with the F Company, Ipswich, part of the metropolitan-based Moreton Regiment, first appears in records around New Years Day 1886. The band paraded in Ipswich with the Western Star Lodge of the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows, as part of the latter's celebrations.<sup>cxxviii</sup> Shortly thereafter it was also present at the turning of the sod for the Fassisfern railway extension at Harrisville in January 1886 where it played a few airs.<sup>cxxix</sup>

There is mention of it assisting the local fire brigade at a fund-raising event in April,<sup>cxxx</sup> and days later accompanied F Company to the annual training encampment at Fort Lytton.<sup>cxxxi</sup> No further information is known of the band and it likely ceased operation in that year.

## Cairns

### ***Cairns Naval Brigade fife and drum band***

The recruitment for a fife and drum band associated with the Cairns Naval Brigade made the news in January 1892. Having decided to form a band and advertise for an instructor, the Brigade sought "... suitable boys to join from amongst the youth of Cairns, who are requested to attend at the Drill Shed, Lake-street, at 4 p.m., on Monday the 25th inst. We feel confident there will be a good muster on that date, as an opportunity of joining a corps like our Naval Brigade does not occur every day. The boys will be provided with a complete outfit, consisting of two suits of the British Naval uniform, &c, and will also be provided with the necessary musical instruments and music. In addition they will be taught the Drill of the Naval Brigade, viz.. cutlass drill and rifle exercises, squad and company drill and gunnery. All youths wishing to join can obtain the necessary particulars from Mr. Instructor Mudford, under whose care parents need not fear for the safety of their boys, either morally or physically. We are also given to understand that the proposed band will be at the service of our town and district, whenever required on public occasions, and also on any general turn out of the local Defence Force".<sup>cxxxii</sup>

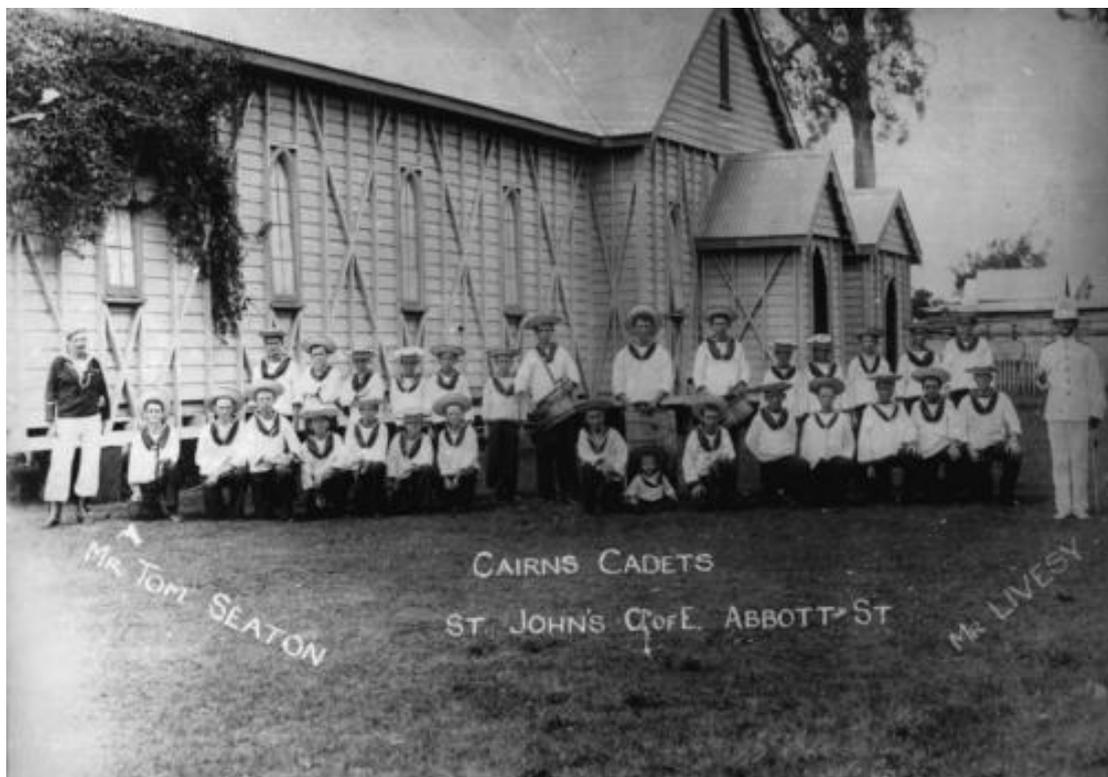
In April 1892 Mr Mars, the fife and drum instructor, was praised for "the very creditable show made by the newly enrolled Fife and Drum Band."<sup>cxxxiii</sup> Hard work and lots of practice obviously paid off and by August the band were able to not only play martial music but also played dance quadrilles for the sailors of the Brigade.<sup>cxxxiv</sup> Reports began to appear in late 1892 that the band was in difficulties, and it collapsed soon after October of that year.<sup>cxxxv</sup>

### ***Church Lads Fife and Drum band***

Reverend Maitland Woods, the incumbent of St John's Anglican Church in Cairns was reputedly a man of considerable energy. In early 1897 the reverend gentleman established a fife and drum band for boys, which consisted of which consists of fifteen fifes, side drum,

big drum, and triangle. In October the boys were marched through the town “playing air after air with confidence and correctness.” The *Cairns Post* revealed their incentive. “The lads, under the personal conductorship of the Reverend instructor, who proudly marches at their head, are working hard in anticipation of a visit from Captain Drake, R.N. who has promised that if they satisfy him that they can play and march well he will provide them with uniforms and attach them to the Cairns Naval Brigade.” The boys were already instructed in drill by Warrant-Officer Mudford of the Naval Brigade.<sup>cxxxvi</sup>

By the end of the month the band had a six tune repertoire consisting of ‘Swannie River,’ ‘Conquering Hero,’ ‘Sailor’s Wife,’ ‘British Grenadiers,’ ‘O’ Johnny don’t you go to sea,’ and - ‘To be there.’ The *Cairns Post* suggested that “the ‘Oh Johnny’ business is not altogether a success yet, and a long suffering population deeply regrets that Johnny didn’t get to sea long before a protest in fife and drum music had time to be written.” Warrant Office Mudford was much assisted by Able Seaman Tom Seaton of the Naval Brigade, who took a close interest in the band for many years.



*Cairns Church Lads, c1906*

<http://trove.nla.gov.au/work/153934093>

Within a short time the Church Lads Brigade has being referred to as the Naval Cadet Corps, and it began to follow the normal activities of a cadet unit rather than a band. Even a musketry course was laid in for its members. In 1900 Instructor Toombs gave a frank appraisal of the unit, regretting “that the fife and drum band, which was once so strong a feature of the cadets, has almost fallen through. The boys seem to think that it is inferior to tootle on a fife when there are rifles to be shouldered and sword bayonets to be worn.”<sup>cxxxvii</sup> Despite the pessimism the band survived into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## Roma

### ***Roma Cadet Corps fife and drum band***

Suggestions were made around March 1886 that, based on the success of the new Volunteer company in Roma, a cadet corps with fife and drum should be formed.<sup>cxxxviii</sup> The idea was popular, and the Roma Cadet Corps was gazetted in April 1886. 52 boys had joined by May and 19 had put their names forward to join a drum and fife band.<sup>cxxxix</sup> The bandmaster of the Roma band, G Chaytor, advertised that he would give free tuition to any boys who wanted to be in a fife and drum band, though the expected cost of an instrument would be around six shillings and sixpence, though the band Committee apparently offered good terms on purchasing the instruments.<sup>cxl</sup> 12 fifes for the band had been received by mid-May and another dozen ordered.<sup>cxli</sup>

The parochial *Western Star* recorded the details of what was probably the first public appearance of the fife and drum band in August 1886: "Our boys who form the fife and drum band in Roma went through a practice parade on Saturday last, under the direction of George Chaytor, the instructor. They marched from the State School along Wyndham St, up McDowall St to near the Court House, and down again to the school. Mr Chaytor led the playing of youngsters with his cornopean, the big drum was there, and the kettle drum assisted in making the music lively. The tunes played were "There is no luck about the house" and "Auld lang Syne". The parade made quite a sensation, everybody turning out on the line of route to witness it, while the little boys accompanied the band throughout the route. The lads vary in age from 15 to 9, and have only been under Mr Chaytor's tuition for a few weeks, but the manner in which they have acquitted themselves shows that they are in able hands, and we hope that the fife and drum band will become a permanent institution in Roma. Fifes only have yet been issued, but it is intended to get up a supply of kettle drums as soon as possible." <sup>cxlii</sup>

George Chaytor appears to have moved to Brisbane around this time, and despite the shipment of band instruments, this began the decline of the fife and drums. There is no further mention of the band after August 1886.

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<sup>i</sup> Brisbane Courier, 29 August 1867

<sup>ii</sup> Rough, BG, Lines of Defence, CFSG(Q), 2<sup>nd</sup> Edn, 2009

<sup>iii</sup> Brisbane Courier, 7 October 1867

<sup>iv</sup> Brisbane Courier, 10 October 1867

<sup>v</sup> Queenslander, 11 July 1868

<sup>vi</sup> Queenslander, 25 July 1868

<sup>vii</sup> Queenslander, 24 October 1868

<sup>viii</sup> Queenslander, 9 January 1869

<sup>ix</sup> Qld Votes & Proceedings, 1882, p561

<sup>x</sup> Queenslander, 25 September 1869

<sup>xi</sup> Brisbane Courier, 24 February 1870

<sup>xii</sup> CFSG(Q), A Most Promising Corps, Brisbane, 2010, p42

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- xiii Brisbane Courier, 23 April 1873
- xiv Brisbane Courier, 15 July 1873
- xv F J Ericson, 'Bands and orchestras of colonial Brisbane, UQ Thesis, 1987
- xvi Queenslander, 1 November 1873
- xvii Brisbane Courier, 11 November 1873
- xviii Rough, BG 'Brilliant, imposing and outrageously loyal', draft manuscript, 2012
- xix Brisbane Courier, 16 November 1874
- xx Brisbane Courier, 25 May 1875
- xxi Brisbane Courier, 10 July 1874
- xxii Brisbane Courier, 23 August 1875
- xxiii Brisbane Courier, 23 April 1886
- xxiv Brisbane Courier, 18 December 1886
- xxv Brisbane Courier, 20 November 1878
- xxvi Brisbane Courier, 23 April 1886
- xxvii Brisbane Courier, 26 March 1885
- xxviii Brisbane Courier, 2 November 1885
- xxix Brisbane Courier, 7 December 1885
- xxx Brisbane Courier, 19 May 1886
- xxxi Queensland Figaro and Punch, 10 March 1888
- xxxii F J Ericson, 'Bands and orchestras of colonial Brisbane, UQ Thesis, 1987
- xxxiii Brisbane Courier, 1 December 1892
- xxxiv Brisbane Courier, 18 March 1895
- xxxv Brisbane Courier, 27 July 1898
- xxxvi Brisbane Courier, 27 July 1898
- xxxvii Brisbane Courier, 15 September 1898
- xxxviii Brisbane Courier, 26 September 1898
- xxxix Brisbane Courier, 24 April 1899
- xl Brisbane Courier, 5 June 1899
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- xlii Brisbane Courier, 22 December 1899
- xliiii Brisbane Courier, 31 March 1900
- xliiv Brisbane Courier, 19 April 1900
- xlv Brisbane Courier, 20 November 1900
- xlvi Brisbane Courier, 30 September 1901
- xlvii Brisbane Courier, 6 January 1902
- xlviii Brisbane Courier, 28 June 1902
- lix Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser, 26 September 1868
- <sup>l</sup> Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser, 3 November 1868
- li Rockhampton Bulletin, 16 January 1877
- lii Rockhampton Bulletin, 7 April 1877
- liii Rockhampton Bulletin, 6 April 1877
- liv Rockhampton Bulletin, 29 June 1877
- lv Morning Bulletin, 10 March 1885
- lvi Morning Bulletin, 11 June 1885
- lvii Morning Bulletin, 24 August 1885
- lviii Morning Bulletin, 19 December 1885
- lix Morning Bulletin, 23 February 1886
- lx Morning Bulletin, 10 May 1886
- lxi Morning Bulletin, 4 March 1887
- lxii Morning Bulletin, 14 December 1887
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- lxiv Morning Bulletin, 3 March 1888
- lxv Morning Bulletin, 4 July 1888
- lxvi Morning Bulletin, 11 November 1886
- lxvii Morning Bulletin, 23 July 1887
- lxviii Morning Bulletin, 24 December 1887
- lxix Capricornian, 31 December 1887
- lxx Morning Bulletin, 4 August 1888
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- lxxii Morning Bulletin, 17 December 1888
- lxxiii Morning Bulletin, 23 July 1889
- lxxiv Capricornian, 12 April 1890
- lxxv Brisbane Courier, 26 September 1874
- lxxvi Warwick Examiner and Times, 18 September 1875
- lxxvii Queenslander, 16 September 1876
- lxxviii Warwick Argus, 5 October 1886
- lxxix Warwick Examiner and Times, 4 August 1888
- lxxx Warwick Argus, 13 October 1888
- lxxxi Warwick Examiner, 17 October 1888
- lxxxii Warwick Examiner, 27 October 1888
- lxxxiii Warwick Examiner and Times, 31 October 1888
- lxxxiv Warwick Argus, 18 April 1896
- lxxxv Warwick Examiner, 26 April 1899
- lxxxvi Warwick Argus, 6 May 1899
- lxxxvii Warwick Examiner, 27 May 1899
- lxxxviii Warwick Examiner, 9 August 1899
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- xc Warwick Argus, 12 September 1899
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- xcii Murray, PL "Official records of the Australian Military Contingents to the war in South Africa", p451
- xciii Warwick Argus, 30 December 1899
- xciv Warwick Examiner and Times, 28 March 1900.
- xcv Darling Downs Gazette and General Advertiser, 31 May 1876
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- xcviii Brisbane Courier, 11 August 1880
- xcix Brisbane Courier, 14 December 1880
- c Queenslander, 11 April 1885
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- civ Queensland Government Gazette, 30 October 1886
- cv Brisbane Courier, 25 June 1887
- cvi Brisbane Courier, 30 March 1888
- cvi Queensland Figaro and Punch, 15 September 1888
- cvi Brisbane Courier, 23 November 1886
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- cxii Northern Miner, 4 July 1885
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cxvi Northern Miner, 27 April 1888  
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cxx Brisbane Courier, 23 October 1885  
cxxi Brisbane Courier, 20 April 1886  
cxxii Queensland Figaro and Punch, 26 June 1886  
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cxxiv North Queensland Register, 19 February 1900  
cxxv Brisbane Courier, 10 July 1885  
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cxxxiii Cairns Post, 16 April 1892  
cxxxiv Cairns Post, 17 August 1892  
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cxxxvi Morning Post, 14 October 1897  
cxxxvii Morning Post, 3 February 1900  
cxxxviii Western Star, 6 March 1888  
cxxxix Brisbane Courier, 14 May 1886  
cxl Western Star, 1 May 1886  
cxli Western Star, 12 May 1886  
cxlii Western Star, 4 August 1886