

8. Bands.

Around October 22, 1881, it was announced that Thames was sending a contingent of Volunteers to join the troops around the Maori model village of Parihaka, in the shadow of Mount Egmont. On October 29, 150 Thames Volunteers, including 70 Navals, went off to the scene of possible action in Taranaki. They arrived to join the 2,000 or so troops milling around. Te Whiti spoke of the rifle as "the Crown Grant of the pakeha to the land," and decided resistance was useless. The Thames Volunteers took a prominent part in the surrounding of Parihaka and the peaceful arrest of Te Whiti and his chief lieutenants on November 5, 1881.

"At the time of the Parihaka scare, the Volunteer movement was booming in and around Thames. Companies were the Naval Brigade, Nos. 1 and 2 Scottish, Nos. 1 and 2 Natives, Rifle Rangers, Hauraki Rifles (with their fine band under Bandmaster Williams), Hauraki Rifle Engineers, and Naval Cadets and Scottish Cadets," wrote the Thames Star of December 7, 1917. (The boom would soon fade.)

For the New Year of 1882, both the Tararu ^{and Parawai} Gardens were centres of attraction, the latter having the horse racing. There was the usual band music.

Which would soon lose a principal band. After Parihaka, fears of a "native threat" had died away, while with the advance of the Long Depression Government retrenchment began to bite deeper. The Hon. John Bryce, "Native and Defence Minister," a fire-eater during Parihaka, became a penny-pincher afterwards.

On August 28, 1882, the band of the Thames Scottish Volunteers played its last through the town that evening. The "Thames Scottish" were winding up. Bryce was blamed for the economy. On September 17 he was burned in effigy in Thames, after the effigy had been paraded through the streets on a white horse, amid hooting plus the Dead March in Saul played in ultra slow time on a tin whistle. Bryce had paid the Thames Volunteers only one month instead of two for Parihaka. Many of those who took part were from the dissolved Scottish, who had no love of Bryce.

With retrenchment of Volunteers, the Prince of Wales Birthday celebrations towards mid November in Thames were "shorn of their former glories." No longer were there big and colourful parades. Except the Thames Navals still put on a 21 big gunfire salute. And the Navals still had their band.

There was still at least an echo of the band of the Thames Scottish at the end of November, 1882. James Jobe, while in the Scottish Volunteers, being a drummer, had a fine uniform with a high feather bonnet and leopard skin apron. When the Scottish were disbanded he kept the uniform, the men being allowed to keep their uniforms, which some disgustingly wore out in the mines, but not James Jobe. Legal action was brought to make Jobe give up his uniform, but as nobody had said everyone could keep their uniforms but him when matters were being discussed at dissolution, he won the case and kept the fine uniform, leopard skin and all.

Early in December the disbanded Scottish Volunteers had a meeting and passed a resolution giving power to sue, and volunteers to keep only ordinary uniform, of cost, trousers and helmet. That was obviously directed against Jobe, with his special headgear and leopard skin. (Nothing more was heard, a disbanded formation having no power. As for band instruments, the Government would have taken those.)

Meanwhile, there had been a revival of martial spirit with British victories against Egypt in September, and Arabi Pasha exiled in December. On December 30 Thames had a big fireworks display.

However, the 1883 New Year celebrations were muted, with the Long Depression deepening and Government retrenching. They consisted mainly of steamer excursions, while 150 turned up at the Tararu Gardens to hear a Methodist choir.

On January 29, 1883, the Evening Star recorded the annual Sunday School demonstration at the Parawai and Tararu Gardens, with processions, a banner for each school, and numbers of the children carrying flags and streamers, "HEADED BY THE NAVAL BAND." Numbers were possibly down somewhat, the figures for various Sunday Schools adding up to 730, but with adults, the Tararu Gardens alone had "nearly 1,000 people."

Next day, January 30, with more retrenching, the Star recorded that the Naval CADET Minstrels gave a farewell performance at the Academy of Music.