

# Canadian military drum and bugle corps

by Richard F. Allen

In 1867, Canada became a country separate from Great Britain and, although still maintaining strong ties to the powerful British Empire, it was beginning to develop into a strong nation standing on its own two feet.

The British influence was very evident, especially in the matters of the military and national defense. Everything was patterned after the British Army, from the types of uniforms worn to the weapons used. After all, the Canadian troops were still British subjects, "Soldiers of the Queen," sworn to defend Queen and country.

Many of the Officers and NCOs were ex-Imperial troops who had served with the British Army in Canada or had retired to Canada and were pressed into service to train the new fledgling Canadian Army. In actual fact, British troops were garrisoned in Canada many years after Confederation (1867).

Unlike our U.S. neighbours, where the drum corps activity started with the American Legion, VFW, clubs, Scouts, CYO, churches, etc., the

Canadian activity was vastly different. There were a few Boy Scout groups, the most famous being, of course, Preston Scout House.

The great Toronto Optimists evolved from a Scout Troop, but the real developers of the activity were the military. In Canada, we have militia or reserve units similar to the U.S. National Guard. Most of the Army units have ties to a parent regiment in Britain and would wear a uniform patterned after the British unit.

Many of these regiments had bands whether they were brass/reed, brass, pipes and drums, bugle and drum, drum and trumpet, fife and drum. Many of the larger regiments, like the 48th Highlanders of Canada, Queens Own Rifles of Canada and the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry, had two or even three bands.

They could play what is known as combination marches, for example, *Auld Lang Syne* and *Amazing Grace*, with a brass reed band and pipe band combination. They were very moving to hear. The bugle call *Sunset* is very effective with a brass reed band and a bugle

or buglers.

There were, however, a number of units that utilized the drum/bugle, drum/trumpet instrumentation. Infantry and rifle regiments used the term bugle band while cavalry and mounted units had trumpet bands. These terms related to the original valveless instruments used by these units.

### The early years

As most of us know, the drum, bugle, fife, etc. were used by the military in the early years as signaling devices to signal troops in the field and on board ship. It is interesting to note that the bugle was used as late as the 1950s by the Chinese to coordinate attacks during the Korean War. Marine Barracks, Washington, D.C., is the only U.S. military base where a "live" bugler still sounds the daily calls.

The daily routine of a soldier or sailor revolved around bugle calls and drum beats. The bugle told him when to get up, when to eat, when to go to bed, etc. The drum beats were similar, but the main function was to beat



RSCCC TEMERAIRIE, ONT (approx. 1955).  
Photo from the collection of Ron DaSilva.



HILL PARK SEA CADETS TRUMPET BAND, ONT (year unknown).  
Photo from the collection of Ron DaSilva.



48TH FIELD SQUADRON, ROYAL CANADIAN ENGINEERS, ONT (1960).  
Photo from the collection of Ron DaSilva.

cadence on the long, dusty marches.

In order for us to understand the military link present-day drum and bugle corps have with the activity, you must understand the structure of military music of the 18th century. The regiment or ship consisted of two very distinct organizations, the band and the drums.

### The band

The band was comprised of highly-trained, professional musicians whose chief duty was to provide music for social events at the fort or aboard ship. When engaged in battle, these musicians became stretcher bearers, medical orderlies, etc., a duty that kept them free and clear of the horror of battle, thus keeping the casualty rate of these valuable troops to a minimum.

It was very costly to import new musicians if any were killed or went AWOL, which many did in a new land.

However, the British did put their infantry bandmen in white tunics in 1828, doing away with the tradition of reversed colors, where non-royal regiments had band tunics in various shades of yellow, buff, green, blue and violet.

### The drums

The drums, or corps of drums as they were sometimes called, were set apart from the band. Each Battalion had a drummer/bugler/fifer/piper to sound the various calls. It was common practice to merge all the battalion drummers, buglers, fifers, etc. to form a corps of drums.

More often than not, they were unauthorized, but existed on the initiative of the commanding officer who realized that music was important to troop morale. The command staff usually looked the other way.

As well, the corps of drums was funded by regimental or ship funds (usually from the officers, sargeant's mess or wardroom in the Navy) at no cost to the government.

The members were sometimes young sons of soldiers or young orphans with no home. They would be taught to play an instrument by either the drum major, bugle major, fife major or pipe major, depending on what type of corps of drums was being used at the time.

The most common in the British Army was the infantry fife and drum corps with the drummers or fifers doubling as buglers. These musicians were classed as semi-professional. Some later trained to become bandmen, but many of them joined the ranks as soldiers when



The 3rd Battalion Royal Canadian Regiment Bugle and Drum Corps at an inspection of the 1st Battalion Royal Canadian Regiment in Toc Chon, Korea on March 28, 1953. (Photo by George Whittaker, Public Archives of Canada, from the collection of Ron DaSilva)

they became of age.

The average age of a member of a corps of drums was between 12 and 16 years, truly "boys learning music."

When the regiment or ship went into battle, these young musicians were responsible for the signal system from the command to the troops. This took place over the roar and confusion of a full-blown battle! They took very high casualty rates as they were prime targets for enemy snipers who took pride in disrupting enemy signals.

The buglers had to memorize dozens of bugle calls in order to know what to play when ordered. Disaster might take place if the wrong call was sounded by the bugler! The troops also had to memorize the calls in order to know what to do on the battle field. If you had a "tin ear," you could really be in trouble.

On major ceremonial occasions, it was sometimes common to merge the drums with the regimental band. There were special marches composed for this type of setup.

An excellent opportunity to see a 19th Century military corps of drums in action today is of the Fort Henry Guard from Kingston, ONT. It is an excellent re-creation of music of the 1867 period. They have a superb corps of drums as part of the re-creation of life in a British garrison in Canada at that time.

The extensive use of the machine gun in

WWI brought to an end the formal warfare of opposing armies. Regiments and ships became smaller. There was also a shortage of musicians willing to take part in the military, making bands expensive to maintain.

During WWII, many regiments maintained small corps of drums and/or bands, as did the Navy. The commanding officers realized -- as did their predecessors -- that music was good for troop morale and again the command staff looked the other way, but did wholly approve of the setup.

There were official bands stationed at all the major bases. They were there to provide musical support to the base and troops, public relations for the military and a very important issue of morale. Many of these bands played for not only the troops, but the civilians as well. Many a Saturday night the band would be playing for dances on the base or in the town nearby.

There were also numerous "volunteer" corps of drums, bugle bands, trumpet bands, pipe bands, etc.

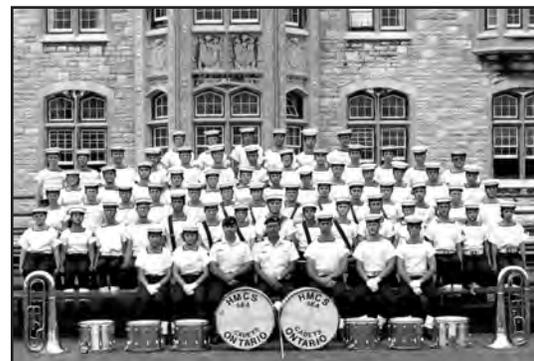
These were staffed by servicemen and women who wished to play in a musical unit. Many had played previously in a cadet band, town band, scout band, etc. More often than not, this was the only musical unit on the base or in the area and was kept busy with various engagements, both on and off the base, much



COMBINED 11TH AND 44TH FIELD REGIMENT, Guelph, ONT (1957). Photo from the collection of Ron DaSilva.



TORONTO SIGNALS TRUMPET BAND, Toronto, ONT (approx. 1985). Photo from the collection of Ron DaSilva.



HMCS SEA CADETS, ONT (1985). Photo from the collection of Ron DaSilva.

to the delight of the members, as it got them out of the regular mundane duty.

This was also the norm during the Korean Conflict. Many units involved brought over corps of drums, drum corps, etc. They were a great source of pride to the respective units.

### Post war development

After WWII, when the troops returned and settled down to home life again, many of the veterans groups formed bands of different types. Many before going overseas had been members of militia units that had bugle bands or trumpet bands. These were very popular in Canada and easy to start up.

Many high schools in Ontario had cadet corps with bugle bands. A number of the men returned to the military by joining militia units, some of which they had served with during the war. These were the "golden years" of military bands in Canada.

The Regiments that had bands pre-war carried on with their programs. There were a number of excellent bugle bands and trumpet bands in Ontario that flourished in the late 1940s and early- to mid-1950s.

During the late 1940s early 1950s, the bugle and trumpet bands were becoming quite proficient. Many had switched from the old style "straight" or valveless infantry bugle or cavalry trumpet to the piston horn that was popular in the U.S. and had been for a number of years.

Although the piston bugle was introduced in Canada in 1939 and used by the 2nd Signals Band of Toronto, they were not accepted at the time. These new style horns were all the rage and most regiments bought them out of regimental funds as they realized the importance of maintaining a good band and the members also didn't want to play the old-style bugle anymore.

There was better music available as some of the noted bandmasters and band arrangers realized there was a need for proper arrangements. Waterloo Music Company printed a number of arrangements for drum and bugle bands and was a leader in the field.

The operation of these regimental trumpet and bugle bands was quite relaxed. The band had to ensure that the regiment's musical needs were met and this usually meant two to three ceremonial parades a year, annual inspection, church parades as well as monthly regimental inspections and weekly parade nights.

Bandsmen were trained as drivers and first aid personnel, but your trade in the military was as a drummer, bugler, piper, etc. If these obligations were met, the band was left to operate on its own.

### The Canadian military gets involved

The Department of National Defense (DND) decided finally to get involved and officially recognize the existence of trumpet and bugle bands. Prior there was some bad blood between the two factions. DND always stated that the bugle was NOT a "recognized" musical instrument!

In spite of the fact that most units had already purchased drums, bugles, etc., DND placed a huge order with Boosey-Hawkes of England, makers of most of DND band instruments, for equipment to outfit the bands. Each unit received four rope tension snare drums, two rope tension tenor drums, one rope tension bass drum, two bugle bells, eight G-D one-valve sopranos, four G-D one-valve tenors, four G-D one-valve baritones, all silver plated. This equipment looked nice, but was already outdated before it arrived. It was relegated to stores or given to a local cadet corps for use.

### Military tattoos (an evening military display of music and drill)

During the spring, usually in early June, there were military tattoos -- military band spectacles. There would be thousands in attendance to view the show and all the bands would look forward to taking part. Many of the bands would mass together and form one large band. This was always a hit with the crowd seeing the massed pipes and drums, massed bugle bands, massed military bands.

Some of the more popular tattoos were the Royal City Tattoo in Guelph and the Toronto Garrison Tattoo. In 1967, the Centennial Tattoo toured Canada as this was Canada's 100th birthday. In 1977, the Silver Jubilee Tattoo in Toronto marked HM Queen Elizabeth's 25 years on the throne.

Today there are two major tattoos in Canada -- the Nova Scotia International Tattoo held in Halifax and the Greater Hamilton Military Tattoo held in Hamilton, ONT.

### Competition

Competition is only natural when you have a number of bands, regardless of what type, you want to see who is the best. In Canada, there was just such a thing called the Waterloo Band Festival. This was the idea of "Professor"

Charles Thiele a noted bandmaster and owner of one of Canada's greatest music companies, Waterloo Music.

In a little town in southwestern Ontario, hundreds of bands from Canada and the United States would come to compete in various classes. There were also classes for every instrument imaginable. There were clinics put on by noted bandmasters, conductors and instructors of all instruments.

The highlight of the Festival was the Grand Parade. This was held at night. When a band was announced prior to stepping off, a skyrocket would be launched, showering all in attendance with lights. The parade would last for two to three hours, culminating with a massed band concert inside the stadium.

The actual competition for bugle bands and trumpet bands was unique. Both civilian and military bands competed against each other. Each band would be required to play a compulsory piece played by all bands taking part.

The judges would be in a tent not knowing which band was playing. They would mark them band #1, #2, etc. Only the drill judge would be on the field marking the drill caption.

The more popular part of the competition was what was known as "fancy drill" or, as we know it today, M&M. This allowed the respective bands to show off and do a different style of marching as well as playing popular music, not just marches.

This was the "nationals" of the time period. It didn't make any sense to some to hold a contest at the beginning of the season, but it remained the same for many years.

Over the years, many winners of the fancy drill and overall competitions were, in fact, military bands. The Queens Own Rifles of the Canada Bugle Band and the RCAF Trenton Trumpet Band were constant winners at Waterloo.

Other military bands such as the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry Bugle Band, 2nd Division Royal Canadian Corps of Signals Trumpet Band also had success at Waterloo.

### Times are a changin' or drum corps comes to Canada!

The drum and bugle corps activity as we know it had not yet reached Canada in the 1950s. There were drum and bugle bands, drum and trumpet bands in the scouts, military and veterans associations.



QUEENS OWN RIFLES BUGLE BAND, Toronto, ONT (1956).  
Photo from the collection of Ron DaSilva.



330TH AIR CADET TRUMPET BAND, Danforth Tech School, ONT (1953).  
Photo from the collection of Ron DaSilva.



VISCOUNTS, Hamilton, ONT (1959).  
Photo from the collection of Ron DaSilva.

The military bugle and trumpet bands were popular at U.S. drum corps shows where they appeared as an exhibition unit. The U.S. crowds liked the military bearing and uniforms of the Canadian bands. The Canadians, on the other hand, saw what could be done with drums and bugles due to the exposure in the U.S. and were eager to try it out.

The first Canadian military band to "switch over" was the 2nd Divisional Signal Regiment. They discarded the heavy wool tunic and replaced it with a white satin shirt and took the name Canada's Marching Ambassadors and were highly competitive and successful.

As a result, other military units jumped on the "corps wagon." The Army Service Corps went wild. They purchased clown costumes in a dispute with the local musicians union over an appearance at a football game and became the Jolly Jesters.

The Regiment of Hull-Ottawa became Les Troubadours with a French-Canadian theme and wore gold satin shirts.

The 11th Field Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery became the Guelph Royalaires with the "love" theme and all-white uniforms.

The Royal Hamilton Light Infantry became the Viscounts and wore a military style uniform retaining the red, white, blue of the RHLI Bugle Band.

This was the true age of professional drum corps in Canada. The members being militia members or reserve Army were given meals, transport and paid for their time at government expense.

As these bands -- or corps as they liked to be called -- now became more independent and drifted away from the parent military unit. They didn't want to take part in the mandatory military training, parades, etc. and just wanted to concentrate on the drum corps activity.

This resulted in many unit commanding officers becoming alienated and resentful of their music programs. They wanted their bands to remain military focused and not to engage in this new "drum corps thing." Playing *Jezebel* or *Cherry Blossom Pink* while on a military church parade just didn't work.

All good things must end they say. In 1961, just prior to the Toronto International Drum and Bugle Band Contest, the commanding officer of the 2nd Signals Band -- aka The Ambassadors Drum Corps -- deactivated the band and called in the regiment-owned

instruments. All band members were ordered to report for general Army training.

The military community made a major mistake and underestimated the resolve of these musicians. They rallied and financed the purchase of equipment and uniforms, some by mortgaging their own homes. They were then able to attend the contest as a self-sponsored civilian drum corps.

This had a shock wave throughout the DND. All unit commanding officers were ordered to suspend their music programs (drum and bugle bands only) and have the members report for training. A revolution was started as the members -- much to the shock of the military -- left the units en masse and formed civilian drum corps.

As a result, the trumpet and bugle band activity in the military never did recover. The result of all this had one good outcome. Cadet corps were able to use the equipment left by the departing bands.

On the other hand, not all military bands made the switch. The prestigious Queens Own Rifles, Brockville Rifles Bugle Band, Elgin Regiment Trumpet Band and others remained with the military and, although competed in street parades as senior corps, did not enter the world of drum corps competition as we know it.

Most things in life come full circle. The first bands to leave the military returned. The Royal Hamilton Light Infantry Bugle Band was reformed in 1960 even though the Viscounts Drum Corps was still in operation.

Former members of the 2nd Signals reformed the trumpet band and it is still one of the premier bands in any parade in Canada. They are all volunteers and use the name Toronto Signals Trumpet Band and are attached to 709 Communication Regiment Toronto.

They are celebrating their 75th Anniversary this year (2002). The Queens Own Rifles Bugle Band continued to operate as a senior parade corps until the early 1980s when it was absorbed by the regimental band as a corps of bugles similar to the British rifle regiments.

#### Cutbacks kill military bands

During the mid-1960s into the 1970s, there were a number of cutbacks in the Canadian military. During 1968 there was an end to the three respective branches of the service -- Army, Navy, Air Force -- as they were all grouped together into the new Canadian Forces. All members, regardless of branch, wore the same

colour uniform --dark green.

For those who don't really understand traditions, it was decided to cut the military band programs across Canada. Not only were regular force bands cut, but the reserve/militia bands were cut to the bone. A large number of these were the drum and bugle bands which took a big hit.

Many commanding officers voiced their disapproval, but it fell on deaf ears. Luckily many of the bandsmen felt loyal to their regiments and volunteer bands were established by using musicians who wished to remain and play, but without being paid.

Afterall, the instruments and uniforms were already there. Further cuts happened in the 1980s and 1990s with the closing of the Canadian Forces School of Music and yet again more bands.

#### The activity today

An activity once flush with bands has now withered away. There are only three military drum and bugle bands active in Ontario. All are on volunteer status. The Toronto Signals Trumpet Band is most famous. The Brockville Rifles Bugle Band is active as a local parade corps, as is the Elgin Regiment Trumpet Band.

The rest are history, may their sweet sounds remain ever in our minds and hearts.

#### Canadian military trumpet/bugle bands of the past

- Royal Hamilton Light Infantry Bugle Band \*
- Royal Canadian Army Service Corps Trumpet Band \*
- Royal Canadian Army Service Corps Apprentice School Trumpet Band
- Royal Canadian Corps of Signals 2 Div. Trumpet Band \*
- Royal Canadian Corps of Signals 8 Div. Trumpet Band
- Royal Canadian Corps of Signals Apprentice School Trumpet Band
- Royal Canadian Corps of Engineers Trumpet Band 48th Squadron \*
- Royal Canadian Corps of Engineers Trumpet Band 31st Squadron \*
- Royal Canadian Artillery 11th F.R. Trumpet Band \*
- Royal Canadian Artillery 44th F.R. Trumpet Band \*
- Royal Canadian Artillery 30th F.R. Trumpet Band \*
- Royal Canadian Artillery 8th F.R. Trumpet Band
- Royal Canadian Artillery 56th F.R. Trumpet Band
- Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps Trumpet Band
- Royal Canadian Artillery 7th F.R. Trumpet Band
- Royal Canadian Elect & Mech Engineers Trumpet Band
- Royal Canadian Regiment Bugle Band
- Royal Regiment of Canada Bugle Band



PRINCESS PATRICIA'S CANADIAN LIGHT INFANTRY BUGLE BAND, ONT (1966). Photo from the collection of Ron DaSilva.



HAMILTON FIREFIGHTERS, Hamilton, ONT (approx. 1985). Photo by Rick Allen.



ROYAL HAMILTON LIGHT INFANTRY BUGLE BAND, ONT (1962). Photo from the collection of Ron DaSilva.

Royal Canadian Dragoons Trumpet Band  
 Royal 22nd Regiment Bugle Band  
 Royal Canadian Air Force Trenton Trumpet Band  
 Royal Canadian Air Force Goose Bay Trumpet Band  
 Royal Canadian Air Force Portage la Prairie Trumpet Band  
 Royal Canadian Air Force 419 Sqn Trumpet Band  
 Royal Canadian Air Force 119 Sqn Trumpet Band  
 Royal Canadian Air Force Winnipeg Trumpet Band  
 Royal Canadian Air Reserve Wing 400 Squadron Trumpet Band  
 Royal Canadian Air Force Borden Station Trumpet Band  
 Royal Canadian Air Force #1 Supply Depot Trumpet Band  
 Governor Generals Horse Guards Trumpet Band  
 Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment Trumpet Band\*  
 The Elgin Regiment Trumpet Band  
 Queens Own Rifles of Canada Bugle Band  
 Queens Own Rifles of Canada Bugle Band Regular Army  
 Brockville Rifles Bugle Band  
 Victoria Rifles Bugle Band \*  
 Haldimand Rifles Bugle Band  
 Wellington Rifles Bugle Band  
 Dufferin Rifles Bugle Band  
 Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry Bugle Band 1st Battalion  
 Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry Bugle Band 2nd Battalion  
 Princess of Wales Own Regiment Trumpet Band \*  
 Simcoe, Grey Foresters Regiment Trumpet Band  
 Lincoln and Welland Regiment Bugle Band \*  
 Regiment de Hull Bugle Band \*  
 Fusiliers de Mont Royal Bugle Band \*  
 Queens York Rangers 1st Americans Bugle Band  
 F.R. = Field Regiment

#### Royal Canadian Legion Bands

Port Credit Legion Trumpet Band \*  
 Coburg Legion Trumpet Band\*  
 Mt. Denis Legion Bugle Band  
 Montgomery Legion Bugle Band  
 Waterdown Legion Bugle Band  
 \* Denotes that this group became a drum corps, see below

#### Drum and bugle corps

Royal Hamilton Light Infantry  
 Viscounts Drum and Bugle Corps  
 Royal Canadian Army Service Corps  
 Jolly Jesters Drum and Bugle Corps  
 Note: These two corps merged in 1964 to become the Canadian Commanders Drum and Bugle Corps.  
 2nd Division Signals  
 Ambassadors Drum and Bugle Corps  
 48th Royal Canadian Engineers  
 Flying Dutchman Drum and Bugle Corps  
 31st Royal Canadian Engineers  
 Sarnia Imperials Drum and Bugle Corps  
 11th Royal Canadian Artillery

Guelph Royalaires Drum and Bugle Corps  
 44th Royal Canadian Artillery  
 Merritton Grenadiers Drum and Bugle Corps  
 Hastings & Prince Edward Regiment  
 Kawartha-Lindsay Cavaliers Drum and Bugle Corps  
 The Victoria Rifles  
 Montreal Vics Drum and Bugle Corps  
 Regiment de Hull  
 Les Troubadours Drum and Bugle Corps  
 Lincoln and Welland  
 Port Dalhousie Guardsmen Drum and Bugle Corps  
 Princess of Wales Regiment  
 Kingston Grenadiers Drum and Bugle Corps  
 Port Credit Legion  
 The Saints Drum and Bugle Corps  
 The author welcomes any addition to this list.

#### The Cadet music activity

In Canada we have always had military cadet corps. These organizations were set up to give young men discipline, self-esteem and basic military skills, as a stepping stone to the military if they so desired. There were cadet corps in most high schools, usually sponsored by a local regiment.

One of the activities of these corps was music. A military group must have a band. Depending on the whim of the commanding officer, a band was formed whether it was a military band, pipe band or bugle band. In most cases, bugle bands were formed. Why? Because they were easy to form and cheap to outfit.

If you have ever watched the movie "The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz" starring Richard Dreyfuss, you will see a high school cadet corps and bugle band in the opening scene playing *When the Saints Go Marching In*. This was a typical cadet band of the late 1950s and early 1960s in Canada. The bands, like those in the services, gave musical support to the corps and took part in local parades.

Three of Canada's greatest junior drum corps evolved out of cadet corps. De La Salle Oaklands -- aka Oakland Crusaders of Toronto -- were a cadet bugle band at the De La Salle Catholic Boys High School where the band played a major role in the school.

La Salle Cadets of Ottawa was another Catholic High School Bugle Band.

The Toronto Optimists started as a Scout band, then became an Air Cadet trumpet band, then became a drum corps in 1958.

The Sudbury Mining & Technical School Cadet Band became the Blue Saints, Dennis Morris High School became the Majestics --

later known as the Chessmen. Other cadet corps made the switch, but were not as successful.

There were summer camps for the cadets to attend at major military bases in Canada where they could go for intensive training. Many had a band camp where music was taught.

Today there are hundreds of cadet bands in Canada of all types. It is interesting to note that most of the "B" class or drum and bugle bands are located in Ontario. Why? The drum corps activity was Ontario-Quebec based in the early years. Many corps retained the drum and bugle tradition over the years in the respective corps.

Out of 28 Sea Cadet bands currently in Ontario (2002), 16 are drum and bugle. The RCAF was a big supporter of trumpet bands in the Air Force. This was evident in the number of Air Cadet trumpet bands past and presently in operation.

One of the oldest Air Cadet trumpet bands today, the 180 Mosquito Squadron, is still in existence and is a highly-successful band. This group became the York Lions Drum Corps in the mid-1960s before reforming as a Cadet unit.

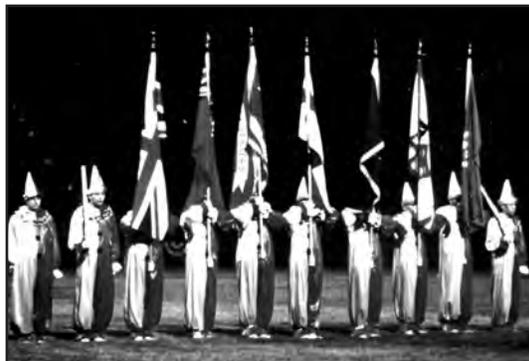
The Sea Cadet and Navy League Cadet systems have always been big supporters of the activity. In the early years, corps like RCSS Ajax, Renown, Lion, Temeraire, Vanguard, as well as 180 Air Cadets, 330 Air Cadets used to compete against junior B corps and do quite well.

The cadet band program today has a series of competitions that bands can take part in. They are similar to the old Waterloo Festival format where each band plays two compulsory numbers -- a quick and slow march -- set to a prescribed drill pattern using wheels, counter marches, etc. The bands are then allowed to do a 10-minute "freestyle" show (M&M). Some of these bands are on par with the area drum corps and do excellent drill shows.

#### HMCS Ontario Trumpet Band

HMCS Ontario is Canada's only cadet music camp for drum and bugle musicians. It was formed in 1983 with the purpose of giving Sea Cadets formal training for those who play in drum and bugle bands at their home corps. It is a highly successful camp with an excellent music program. This program is for Sea Cadets only. There is no similar course for Army or Air Cadet units because of lack of bands.

The former director and commanding



JOLLY JESTERS, Toronto, ONT (1957).  
 Photo by Walter Ermel from the collection of Ron DaSilva.



LA SALLE CADETS, Ottawa, ONT (1967).  
 Photo from the collection of Ron DaSilva.



Officer of the course, LCdr Robert J. Peters, was the force behind the band for over 15 years. His dedication to the cadets and music excellence was evident in the hundreds of awards the band won in competition over the years.

Because of LCdr Peters' hard work and devotion, many Sea Cadet corps band programs improved as he sent back better trained musicians to the various corps as well as supplied the corps with quality musical arrangements.

LCdr Peters is no stranger to the drum corps world as he is a former member of the Princess of Wales Own Regiment Trumpet Band, a founding member of the Kingston Grenadiers drum corps, as well as a former member of the Rochester Crusaders.

He also was a member of the U.S. Navy Drum Corps at Great Lakes Naval Training Center and a writer for *Drum Corps News* in the 1970s.

(Left) A Fort Henry Guardsmen with a copper B-flat infantry bugle at Old Fort Henry, Kingston, ONT. (Photo by Ron DaSilva)

(Below) The Toronto Signals at the DCA Championships in Syracuse, NY (2001). (Photo by Moe Knox)



ROYAL HAMILTON LIGHT INFANTRY, Hamilton, ONT (1947). Photo from the collection of Ron DaSilva.



HMCS SEA CADETS, ONT (1985). Photo by Ron DaSilva from the collection of Drum Corps World.