

Bands of the Broch – the civilian and military brass band musicians of Fraserburgh

Gavin Holman, 7 August 2021

Fraserburgh is a town on the east coast of Scotland, north of Aberdeen, which benefited greatly from the growth of the herring fishing industry in the 19th century, with over 1,000 boats using the harbour at its peak.



Fraserburgh Harbour, c. 1900

Fraserburgh Brass Band (1) [c. 1850 - 1863]

The first appearance of a brass band is on 1 January 1851, when the Fraserburgh Brass Band played the National Anthem at a soir e arranged by the Abstinence Committee at the Town Hall.¹ The Band next performed various selected airs during the preparation for the launch of the clipper barque “*Eliza*”, built by John Webster in Fraserburgh, length 109 ft, registering 246 tons, on 16 April 1851. This was the largest vessel built at the port to that date.² A few years pass until the Band is recorded again, leading a procession of tenants and villagers of Pitsligo celebrating the marriage of Miss Forbes of Pitsligo to Charles Henry Rolle Trefusis on Thursday 29 July 1858.³

The temperance movement was growing at this time, and a new Total Abstinence Society was established at Cairnbulg and Inverallochy. Their first festive soir e was held on 4 January 1859, at Inverallochy, with the Fraserburgh Brass Band leading a procession and providing musical entertainment for the various addresses.⁴ A similar event, this time a lecture on ‘Patriotism’ at the Mechanics Institution, was enlivened by the Band’s musical contributions, on 23 December 1859.⁵

¹ Aberdeen Press and Journal, 8 January 1851

² Banffshire Journal and General Advertiser, 22 April 1851

³ Banffshire Journal and General Advertiser, 3 August 1858

⁴ Banffshire Journal and General Advertiser, 11 January 1859

⁵ Banffshire Journal and General Advertiser, 27 December 1859

The marriage of the Prince of Wales (the future King Edward VII), on 10 March 1863, was celebrated throughout the country. In Fraserburgh there was a large procession and celebration, with the Brass Band seated in a brake, all decorated with evergreens, leading the parade of the various professions and townsfolk through the town to the Castle Park.⁶

This first brass band disbanded some time before 1865.

Fraserburgh Artillery Volunteer Band (Band of the 5th Aberdeenshire Artillery Volunteers) [c. 1863 - 1909]

In 1860, when the army Volunteer Force was established in Britain, some of the rifle and artillery companies formed brass bands (and drum & fife bands) to accompany their parades. Occasionally, local civilian bands were "co-opted" or enrolled for a time to serve with the detachments. The 5th Aberdeenshire Artillery Volunteers were raised in Fraserburgh, on Wednesday 18 January 1860, consisting of one Captain, one 1st Lieutenant, one 2nd Lieutenant, and eighty men of all ranks.⁷



Unknown Scottish Rifle Volunteers Band, c. 1870

This Volunteer company soon established a small band. It first appears at a temperance demonstration at the nearby village of St Combs on 5 January 1864:

“In the village of St Combs the Abstinence cause is a complete triumph, and on Tuesday last they had a grand demonstration, and everything being favourable thereinto, it became a complete success. The proceedings began with a procession in the following order: First the fathers, two men deep; 2nd, the grown-up sons; 3rd, the Fraserburgh Volunteer band in full uniform, under the efficient management

⁶ Buchan Observer and East Aberdeenshire Advertiser, 13 March 1863

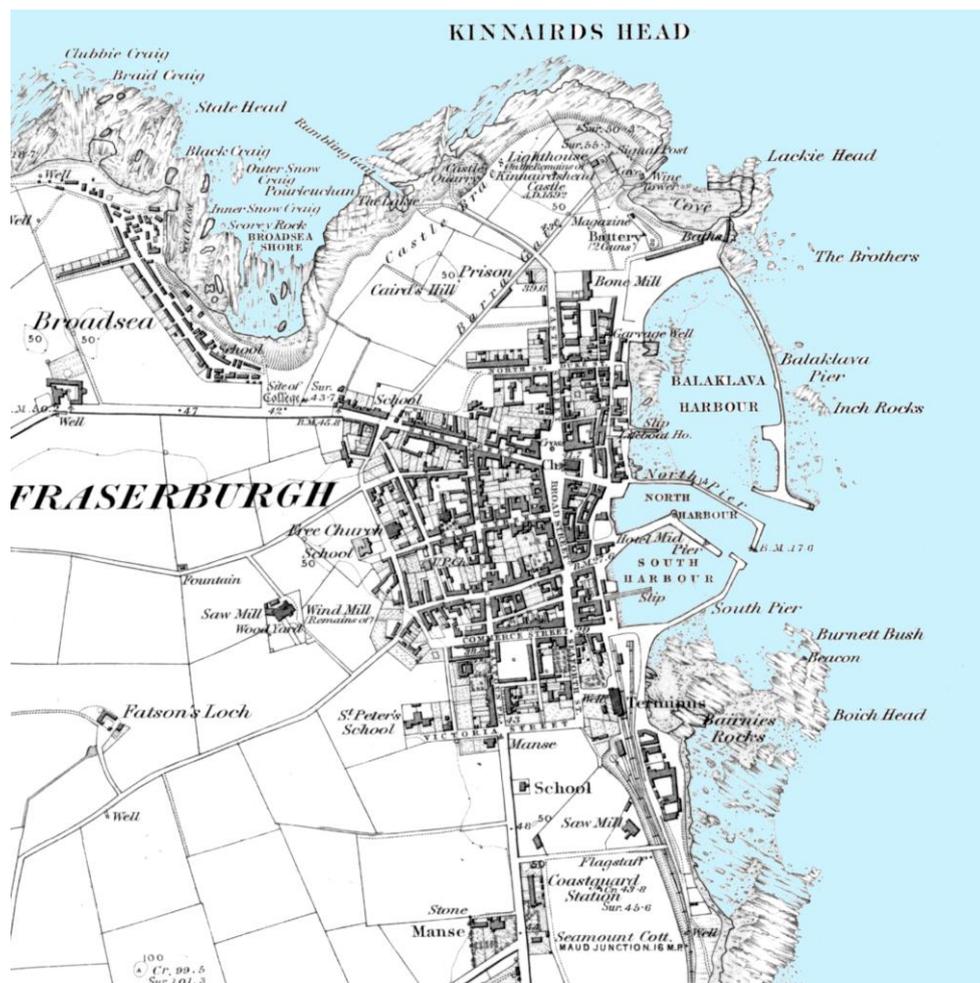
⁷ Aberdeen Press and Journal, 25 January 1860

of Mr J.S. Batchan consisting of 4 flutes, 1 bass drum, and 3 tenor do., and one triangle; 4th, the grown-up daughters; 5th, young boys; and 6th, the young girls. This line of procession, adorned with banners bearing devices, marched inland by Gowan-hill, and then down upon the villages of Cairnbulg and Inverallochy, through which they passed, and drew forth the admiration of every one in them young and old.”⁸

This temperance procession, led by the Volunteer Band, was repeated the following year, on 5 January 1865. The Band was, in these early days, also known as Fraserburgh Flute Band.

The next year the band added brass instruments to its line-up, with the effect that they could perform concert selections of music as well as providing marching accompaniments. The band made its debut in this form on Wednesday 16th May 1866, consisting "*wholly of amateurs, representing native talent only*".⁹

A wedding was celebrated with a procession led by the Band – this time that of Bailie Milne, of Roseheart – through the streets at the head of the working men of the town and parish, on Thursday 15 April 1869.¹⁰



Fraserburgh, 1874

⁸ Buchan Observer and East Aberdeenshire Advertiser, 8 January 1864

⁹ Peterhead Sentinel and General Advertiser for Buchan District, 6 April 1866

¹⁰ Banffshire Journal and General Advertiser, 20 April 1869

The Band made a visit to Banff on 8 July 1876:

“The Fraserburgh Artillery Volunteer Band left home at five in the morning, being driven in couple of ‘busses. After looking through the town, the visitors went by Duff House Grounds to the bridge of Alvah. At intervals they performed selections of music. Mr Hutchison of the Free Arms Hotel provided a sumptuous dinner to the party. The day was fine, the bandsmen were very much pleased with their trip. They left about 7 p.m., having played several tunes in front of the hotel before their departure.”¹¹

James Campbell (1855-1923) was the bandmaster of the Artillery Band from around 1877 to 1882.

About twenty members of the Band held their annual outing on 14 June 1879:

“They started in a couple of brakes for Turriff about five o'clock in the morning, and reached Turriff about ten o'clock. The day was spent in a very enjoyable manner, and dinner was partaken of in the Black Bull Hotel. The band reached Fraserburgh again about eleven o'clock in the evening.”¹²

1881 saw the Artillery Band performing at the Lonmay flower show in August, followed by the Auchnagatt Games in August 1882, where the band played for dancing. The Band's activities were sparsely recorded over the subsequent years. Archibald Robb (1835-1914) had been bandmaster of the Band for many years during the 1860's and 1870's.



The Argyll and Bute Artillery Volunteers Band, c. 1895

¹¹ Banffshire Journal and General Advertiser, 11 July 1876

¹² Buchan Observer and East Aberdeenshire Advertiser, 20 June 1879

On 10th May, 1882, a change took place - the Banffshire, Peterhead and Fraserburgh artillery batteries were dissociated from Aberdeen, and the 1st Banffshire Artillery Volunteer Corps were established, with the Fraserburgh corps being designated No. 7 Battery. There was no apparent change to the make-up of the Fraserburgh corps or their band.

The next mention of the Band is at the Ellon Highland Games, and the Garmond Games, in July 1887, where they entertained the crowds. A garden party at Rathen Manse, in August 1892, with the Band playing for the dancing, was next to be recorded. It headed the annual parade of the Artillery Volunteers from the Drill Hall in Fraserburgh to the Parish Church in October 1893; accompanied the procession of school children in the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations in the town in June 1897; joined forces with the Peterhead Artillery Band to parade the streets of Fraserburgh in April 1898, led by Bandmaster Ritchie; gave a concert at the Artillery Smoker, conducted by Herr Jonas, in December 1898; provided musical entertainment at the opening cricket match of the season in April 1899 (courtesy of the Artillery commander, Major Reiach); travelled to Gardenstown to play at their Artillery company's annual inspection, in May 1899; gave a Smoking Concert at the Drill Hall, Fraserburgh, in June 1899 – where the bandmaster, Herr Jonas received a framed photograph of the Band; and entertained the guests at a garden party hosted by Lord and Lady Saltoun at Philorth, in August 1899, conducted by Corporal Charles Wemyss.



Philorth House, Fraserburgh

In January 1903, James Campbell was once again appointed bandmaster of the Artillery Band, having spent the previous twenty years as bandmaster at the Cumberland Industrial School for Boys, in Cockermouth.¹³ Under his baton the Band led the Fraserburgh Boys' Brigade in their parade to their annual inspection, on 16 May 1903, and they followed this with a concert in Saltoun Square, Fraserburgh, on 30 May 1903, consisting of: quick march "*Beautiful Days of the Past*", waltz "*Lobelia*", selection "*Mary of Argyle*", schottische "*Water Lily*", cornet solo "*The Song that Reached my Heart*", waltz "*Moss Rose*", selection "*Killarney*", selection "*Bonnie*

¹³ Fraserburgh Herald and Northern Counties' Advertiser, 24 February 1903

Scotland”, “*God Save the King*”.¹⁴ A second concert was given in the square on 20 June 1903. The Cuminestown Fancy Dress Cycle Carnival, on 27 June 1903, held a parade of all the attendees, led by the Fraserburgh Artillery Band. Of note is the fact that some ‘*cinematogram films*’ were made of the procession by Robert Calder of Aberdeen.¹⁵ The Band went on to play on the Links at Fraserburgh on 27 July 1903. William Malcolm Cowie (1871-1940?), the bandmaster prior to James Campbell, emigrated to Canada in autumn 1903, where he took up the position of bandmaster of the Bolton Town Band in Ontario.¹⁶

The Band helped the town celebrated New Year’s Day, 1904, with a parade of the Free Gardeners and Oddfellows’ lodges through the town. The Fraserburgh Oddfellows (Caledonian Order of United Oddfellows) marked their fifth anniversary with a parade in the town, led by the Artillery Band, in April 1904. Further engagements for the Artillery Band that year included leading a joint parade of the Artillery Volunteers and the Scottish Horse to the Parish Church, and leading the Volunteers to their camp at Budden, in May; entertained the crowds at the Garmond Highland Games at Monquhitter in July; led the procession for the funeral of John Birnie, Balaclava Inn, to Kirton Cemetery, and led a procession of fishermen and schoolchildren to the laying of the foundation stone for the new West Pier in the harbour at Pennan, in August. They completed the year’s work by touring the town on Christmas Eve, playing appropriate music at various halts at the residences of prominent townspeople.

The Band took part in the grand parade for the Fraserburgh Lifeboat Demonstration on 2 January 1905, raising funds for the institution, with the lifeboat itself, the *Anna Maria Lee*, central to the procession.¹⁷ In May the Band led the church parade of the Artillery Battery, together with the Scottish Horse, to the Parish Church. June saw the Band entertaining over 2,000 visitors to the town – operatives and families of the Great North of Scotland Railway – who arrived on three special trains, and were each paraded to the Dalrymple Hall by the Band, where it also supplied music for dancing; and a subsequent concert in Saltoun Square the following week, led at least one appreciative listener to suggest the town build a bandstand to accommodate twice-weekly concerts. The Band provided concerts at the Links on Monday evenings during



¹⁴ Fraserburgh Herald and Northern Counties' Advertiser, 26 May 1903

¹⁵ Buchan Observer and East Aberdeenshire Advertiser, 30 June 1903

¹⁶ Fraserburgh Herald and Northern Counties' Advertiser, 25 October 1904

¹⁷ Fraserburgh Herald and Northern Counties' Advertiser, 3 January 1905 – Fraserburgh has had a lifeboat stationed at the town since 1831, with the R.N.L.I. operating it from 1858 to today. Photo shows a rescue by the Fraserburgh Lifeboat on 30 June 1909.

the summer; played at a cattle show at Memsie in July; and entertained the visitors to the Roseheart Highland Games at Pitsligo Castle, in August 1905.

1906 started with the New Year's Day parade of the local friendly and temperance societies, and horses, led by the Artillery Band, raising funds for the Thomas Walker Hospital. Further appearances were at the Garmond Games, and the Friendly Societies' Highland Games at Fraserburgh in July. 1907 again started with the New Year's Day procession, and the Band provided music for the 'at home' of the New Pitsligo Rifle Volunteers, in January. The last appearance of the Fraserburgh Artillery Band was at the Garmond Highland Games in July 1909.



Herring gutters in Fraserburgh

Fraserburgh Union Brass Band [1877 - 1878]

This band appeared for a short period in 1877. It is not known what its origin was or what the term 'Union' referred to. The Union Brass Band gave a concert in the Harbour Hall, Fraserburgh, on Wednesday 14 November 1877, together with some 'gifted' local amateurs, in aid of the fund for the widows and orphans of the Blantyre colliery disaster.¹⁸ The Union Brass Band lasted until the end of the year, when it led the procession of the Freemasons through the streets of Fraserburgh on New Year's Day, 1878.

Fraserburgh Brass Band (2) [1879 - 1886]

This new, civilian brass band was founded in the autumn of 1879 with eleven members.

The Band led the Forbes Lodge, no. 67, of the Freemasons in their annual procession through Roseheart, on 7 January 1880. The Band held a picnic at Strichen House on 16 June 1880, with the attendees travelling to Strichen by train and being led to the grounds of the House by the Band. The success of this led others to engage the Band for similar picnics – the Fraserburgh Public Schools travelled by train to Philorth for

¹⁸ Banffshire Journal and General Advertiser, 11 November 1877

their picnic on 9 July 1880, having paraded through the streets of Fraserburgh led by the Brass Band. Further engagements for the Band in 1880 included providing music during the day and for dancing in the evening at the Buchan North-Eastern Horticultural Society's show at Lonmay, in August; and celebrating the wedding of one of their members, George Ironside, parading the streets of the town under their conductors James Campbell and A. Robb, in September – at which time the Band's secretary was James J. Calder. The Band held its annual meeting on 9 November 1880:

“Mr James Simpson presiding. There was a full attendance of members. A financial statement of how the band stood was submitted by Mr James Calder, secretary, from which it appeared that they were, so far as funds were concerned, in a highly satisfactory and prosperous position, there being a good balance on the right aide. Arrangements were made for the winter practice and also for a supper and dance at the New Year, which would be open to the public and friends of the members of the band. After settling some minor business, the band adjourned.”¹⁹



Herring packers, Fraserburgh, c. 1895

In May 1881 the Band bought themselves some new uniforms, made of blue cloth with yellow facings. The employees of the builders, Messrs Duguid and Wilson, who were building the Dalrymple Hall and the new Public Schools in Fraserburgh, held a picnic in July 1881 which the Band attended. Later that month the Band entertained the visitors to a bazaar at Gamrie to raise funds to improve the parish church there. The Auchnagatt Games engaged the Band in August to entertain the crowds and provide music for dancing. Their second annual meeting was held on 27 September 1881:

“All the members were present. A statement of the finances was laid before the meeting by the treasurer, which showed that they were at present in a highly satisfactory position, a very handsome balance being left in the hands of the treasurer, after defraying all expenses and the debt remaining on the instruments

¹⁹ Buchan Observer and East Aberdeenshire Advertiser, 12 November 1880

and uniforms. It will be remembered that the band was organised about two years ago with eleven members, and now the number on the roll is 23. It was agreed to advertise soliciting a few new members, then being still about a dozen instruments presently vacant. The office-bearers were elected for the ensuing year, vis: Band-sergeant, Mr James Simpson; leader, Mr James Campbell; secretary, Mr James J. Calder; treasurer, Mr Thomas Mitchell; committee, Messrs George Campbell, James Murdoch, William McGregor, and Charles Wemyss.”²⁰

To conclude the year, the Band gave a series of afternoon outdoor musical entertainments, weekly at the Cross, in Fraserburgh, during December; provided music for dancing at the ball of the Pitsligo Horticultural Society, and held their own benefit concert, which raised upwards of £12.

1882 started with the New Year celebrations in the town, with the Solomon Lodge of the Freemasons parading the streets led by the Band. On 24 January the Band held its annual conversazione and ball in the Artillery Drill Hall in Mid Street:

“The members of the band, together with a few friends, to the number of about 100, met at eight o'clock, and dancing was immediately commenced. Two hours later the whole company sat down to supper, the chairman and croupier on the occasion being Mr William Pirie and Mr James Calder, jun., respectively. Dancing was thereafter resumed to the excellent music of a Quadrille band, under the leadership of Mr James Campbell, and was kept up with unflagging spirit until three o'clock on the following morning, when the company broke up, highly delighted with the night's entertainment. In the course of a few remarks by the secretary of the band, Mr J. Calder, he stated that during the past season the band had fulfilled as many as 25 engagements in the town and district, and that the utmost cordiality and good feeling prevailed among them.”²¹

Further engagements in 1882 were: playing selections at a Juvenile Concert in the School Street Hall, on 13 February; playing selections at a Dramatic Entertainment in aid of the poor in the School Street Hall, on 21 February; gave a presentation of a silver lever watch and a purse of sovereigns to their conductor, James Campbell, on 1 April, on his departure to Cockermouth; paraded the streets of the town to attract visitors to the United Presbyterian bazaar, on 7 April, conducted by Thomas Grant; and made a similar parade and concert for the Evangelical Union Church's bazaar on 21 July 1882, conducted by Charles Wemyss.

January 1884 saw the Band lead the procession of villagers at New Pitsligo, celebrating the coming-of-age of Charles Trefusis, heir to the estate of Fettercairn and Pitsligo

The Ellon Highland Games, on 18 July 1885, organised by the local Court 'Ythan' Ancient Order of Foresters, engaged the Band to lead the Foresters in procession to the Well Park, for the Games, and to play for dancing thereafter.

The New Year of 1886 was seen in by the townsfolk of Fraserburgh with the usual lights and fireworks, also with the Fraserburgh Brass Band playing suitable tunes for the assembled audience. This is the last recorded engagement for the Band. In March

²⁰ Weekly Free Press and Aberdeen Herald, 1 October 1881

²¹ Aberdeen Evening Express, 26 January 1882

1887, the Band's instruments were sold off, for a total of £6, the largest amount being realised for the bombardon, which was bought by a member of the Rifle Band for £4.²²

Broadsea Temperance Flute Band [c. 1880 - 1881]

This band was active around 1881. Broadsea is a small village next to Fraserburgh on the coast.



Broadsea Temperance Flute Band, 1881

Fraserburgh Rifles Brass Band [1880 - 1903]

The 24th Aberdeenshire Rifle Corps was established at Fraserburgh in late 1875, under Captain Andrew Tarras, a local solicitor. The Lieutenants were William McConnachie, shipbroker, and George Walker, sailmaker, and Alexander Melvin, tinsmith, was the Quarter Master Sergeant, and John Blackhall, fish curer, was the Colour Sergeant. Under the reorganisation of the Volunteer Force in 1880 they became 3rd Aberdeenshire Rifle Volunteers (G Company), also known as the Buchan Battalion or the 3rd Volunteer Battalion Gordon Highlanders. Cassell's *Gazetteer* for 1895 noted that '*the Wine Tower, on a crag overlooking the sea, had a cave under it which serves as a Volunteer armoury and store*'. The Drill Hall for the Rifle Corps was in Gratton Place, Fraserburgh.

A band associated with the Rifle Corps was formed some time in 1877. The cost of the initial instruments was borne by Captain Tarras, and the Rifles Band rehearsed in the Market Hall, which was open from end to end. The first bandmaster was Bugle-Major McManus, a Crimean War veteran, who raised the standard of the Band to the extent that there was envy from the Artillery Band and there was a rivalry between the two

²² Peterhead Sentinel and General Adviser for Buchan District, 9 March 1887

bands, occasionally leading to rows.²³ The Band's first march out was from the Drill Hall to a fish curing yard in Barrasgate Road, where the company was put through the manual and marching exercises.

Bugle-Major Fraser took over the Band around 1879, who was a clarinet player. At that time the Band consisted of 2 circular Eb bombardons, 1 Bb euphonium, 3 baritones, 1 slide trombone, 2 valve trombones, 2 tenor saxhorns, 8 cornets, 1 soprano cornet, 1 flugel horn, bass drum, 2 side drums, cymbals, and a triangle (played by Willie Melvin). Fraser was succeeded by Bandmaster Cooke in 1880, who was also the conductor of the Fraserburgh Choral Society.

Some of the marches that the Band played in those early days included "*The Anglo-Saxon*", "*The Minstrel Boy*", "*Irish Washerwoman*", and "*Men of Harlech*". For the march past they played "*Gaudie Rins*" and "*Come under my Plaidie*", while for the double march they played "*The Keel Row*".

The Band's uniform was dark green, with braid across the chests. The crest on their glengarry was a Scotch Thistle with a scroll of "*Buchan Rifles*" underneath.



The Invernessshire Rifle Volunteers Band, c. 1870

The Fraserburgh Rifles Band appeared, conducted by Bugle Major Cooke, at the official opening of the Dalrymple Café on 31 July 1882, providing music for the public luncheon which was held in the hall. It had, however, been mentioned earlier – James T. Blackhall, a young clothier on the High Street, died in February 1881, he had been an '*enthusiastic member of the Fraserburgh Rifle Band*'.²⁴ The Rifles bandmaster, Robert Arkley Cooke (1840-1912) had served in India with the Army in the 1870's before returning to Scotland as a full-time bandmaster.

²³ Fraserburgh Herald and Northern Counties' Advertiser, 22 June 1937

²⁴ Banffshire Journal and General Advertiser, 8 February 1881

For the next fifteen years or so, the Rifles Band played a small part in the musical life of the town with sporadic recorded appearances: it led the parade of the St Andrew Lodge, No. 518 of the Masons, on 1 January 1884; Bandmaster Robert Cooke departed for the Isle of Wight in March 1885, and the members of the Band presented him with a valuable walnut inkstand; the Band and their friends held a picnic at Forglen, Turriff, on 14 May 1887, driving there in a five-horse 'bus; the organising committee for the Masonic Benevolent Fund were entertained at Philorth House, Fraserburgh by Lord Saltoun, on 20 September 1890, and the Rifles Band provided musical discourse; the Band promoted the idea of a public bandstand in the town, and gave a concert in the Dalrymple Hall on 9 March 1892 in aid of the Bandstand Fund; the Band held its own picnic and games at the Brucklay Grounds on 20 May 1893; it marched through the town providing a musical background to the local celebrations of the wedding of the Duke of York and Princess May on 6 July 1893; another young Rifle Band member, James Thompson, died at the age of 26 in May 1895; the Band led the Rosehearty Freemasons on their parade on 7 January 1896 from Rosehearty to Sandhaven; accompanied the procession of school children in the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations in the town in June 1897; and, conducted by L. McAllan, played in front of the Dalrymple Hall before the West Parish Church bazaar on 9 September 1897.

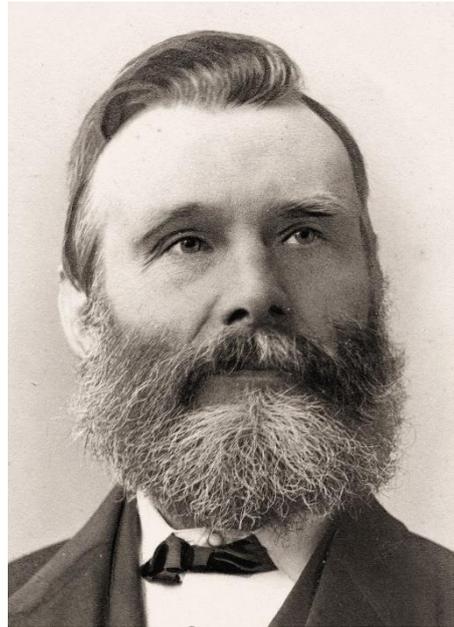


*Fraserburgh Rifles Band, c. 1895.
Bandmaster Robertson Buchan in centre, Peter Buchan 3rd from right*

The Rifles Band accompanied the Ivy Leaf Lodge of the Free Gardeners in their annual walk through the streets of the town on 3 January 1898. Later, in June, the Buchan Battalion was inspected at Peterhead (the right half) and Fraserburgh (the left half). The latter consisted of 291 men of all ranks from the five companies (A, C, E, G & H), which marched to the Links, headed by the Rifles Band (of 12 members) conducted by Bandmaster Dimmer, for the inspection by Colonel Gilden.

During the 1890's the bandmaster of the Rifles Band was Robertson Buchan (1840-1922) – pictured on right. His son, Peter Noble Buchan (1873-1947), played clarinet in the Band.

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In March 1899 the Rifles Band gave a concert in the Dalrymple Hall, conducted by Mr Dimmer, with various solos, piano and vocal selections; they led the procession of the Strichen Volunteers in their church parade in June, and Bandmaster Dimmer was congratulated from the pulpit by the chaplain, Rev. Mr Goodwillie on the excellence of the band's playing; the band provided musical entertainment at the Tyrie Horticultural Society's show on 9 August; entertained the guests at a garden party hosted by Lord and Lady Saltoun at Philorth, on 24 August 1899, at which the Artillery Band was also present; and held their annual supper at the Royal Hotel, Fraserburgh, which included Bandsman Angus presiding at the piano during the evening. The Band completed the year 1899 with a concert in the Dalrymple Hall on 20 December to assist the fund being raised for the Gordon Highlanders. The concert included a cornet solo from L. McAllan, and a euphonium solo by Mr Angus. It should be noted that, in addition to the brass band, the Fraserburgh Rifle Corps also had a bagpipe band at this time.

The new century dawned with the Rifle Band leading the Rosehearty Freemasons on their Auld Yule masonic parade to Sandhaven, on 5 January 1900 – as usual this particular march was no joke as the streets at that time of year were over the Band's boots in mud, however the ducks seemed to enjoy the music as the Band were continually tripping over them as they marched through the town, with the Band playing "*The Merry Masons*" on the Brethren's return to their lodge; the Band took part in a concert at the Rosehearty Fordyce Street Hall in aid of Pitsligo Parish Church, on 23 March, which was greatly appreciated:

"The first item on the programme was "*Rule Britannia*" by the choir, accompanied by the Fraserburgh volunteer band – under the leadership of Mr Dimmer - which was present by permission of Major McConnachie and throughout the evening gave several selections. It may be mentioned by the way that we have never heard the volunteer band to so much advantage as on Friday night. As country bands go it has for many years been recognised as one always worth listening to, but hitherto we do not think it has ever attained the same stage of excellence as it has at present."²⁵

On 28 April 1900 the Fraserburgh Rifles Band joined forces with the Peterhead Rifles Band in a joint concert at the Cross at Fraserburgh.

²⁵ Fraserburgh Herald and Northern Counties' Advertiser, 27 March 1900



Unknown Scottish Rifle Volunteers Band, c. 1900

Only a few more engagements are recorded for the Rifles Band – playing for a garden party at Boyndlie, on 30 May 1901; the Fraserburgh Coronation Committee held a grand fancy dress cycle parade through the town, headed by the Rifles Band, on 2 July 1902, in honour of the upcoming coronation of King Edward VII; a presentation of a 'handsome pipe and tobacco pouch' was made to Sergeant Lewis Rankin McAllan (1865-1925) in October 1902, on his completion of 25 years service with the Fraserburgh Volunteer Band [*which he must have joined at the age of 12*]; the Band made music once more at the Rosehearty Highland Games at Pitsligo Castle, on 10 August 1903, under the leadership of Bandmaster John Sim; and their final appearance was at the Aberdour and North East Agricultural Association's show at Memsie, on 6 August 1903.

Sadly, for Fraserburgh, it was decided in December 1903 that the headquarters for the brass band of the 3rd Volunteer Battalion Gordon Highlanders would henceforth be at Peterhead, and the pipe band, consisting of ten pipers and three drummers, under Pipe-Major Burr, would be located at Fraserburgh.

Over the years, as the resident Rifles Band in Fraserburgh, they attended many inspections of the other companies in the Battalion, with outings by horse-drawn brake to Old Deer, Hatton of Cruden, New Deer, Strichen, etc. On one occasion, at the wedding of Miss Dingwall-Fordyce, the sister of the Battalion commander, the Band could only play the first part of the Wedding March, and they played it over and over, till the guests must have been mad!

Archibald Robb, a cabinet-maker, who had led the Artillery Band, had also been an instrumentalist in the Rifles Band in his later years. Lewis McAllan, who played cornet in the Rifles Band, and was its conductor at one time, was a fish curer by trade, and he emigrated to Australia with his family in 1905. Another member, both of the Rifles

Band and the Artillery Band, was William Lee (1850-1924), a shoemaker, who emigrated to Canada in 1906. Thomas Peterkin (1870-1930) played cornet in the Rifles Band.

Fraserburgh Public School Brass Band [1881 - 1884]

This band was founded in late 1881, with conductor Robert Cooke (the Rifles bandmaster). It consisted of boys attending the Fraserburgh Public School. A bazaar was held on 5 January 1882, to raise money to defray the 'very considerable' cost of the instruments.²⁶ Under the training of Mr Cook, the Band gave its first public performance around 20 July 1882, on the occasion of the school closing for the summer holidays. They played to a very appreciative audience and received repeated rounds of applause. The Band's next appearance was on Friday 20 October 1882, providing music at a bazaar at Sandhaven in aid of the New Mission Church. The Fraserburgh Safety Lodge No. 650 of the Good Templars held their demonstration on Friday 5 January 1883. The Public School Brass Band led the procession from Broadsea through the streets of Fraserburgh. The Band's last known performance was at the Industrial and Loan Exhibition of industry and art at the Dalrymple Hall, which had been organised by the Faithlie Lodge of the Good Templars, on 29 December 1883.²⁷ Thomas Peterkin (1870-1930) had been a member of this band.

Fraserburgh Brass Band (3) [c. 1890 - 1905]

The Fraserburgh Brass Band was reformed some time before 1891. It provided music for dancing at the Crimonmogate picnic and games, on 4 July 1891. A few more engagements are known, before its demise some time in 1905: playing for the Gamrie picnic and games at Wards of Afforsk, conducted by Mr Gibb, on 17 June 1893; playing at the Rosehearty Highland Games, at Pitsligo Castle, conducted by William Noble, on 1 August 1904; provided music for dancing at the Tyrie Horticultural Society's exhibition on 11 August 1904; and entertained the guests, conducted by John Gauld, at the Pitsligo Rifle Volunteers 'at home' at the Public Hall on 13 January 1905. It is assumed this Band folded some short time thereafter, in early 1905.

Fraserburgh Brass Band (4) [1906 - 1913]

The Fraserburgh Orchestral Association decided, in May 1906, to try and raise a public subscription band in the town, to play at the Cross, the Links, or in the proposed Pleasure Park.²⁸ The townsfolk were quick to support the idea, with F.J.R. Anderson (town clerk), John Cranna (harbour treasurer), and J.D. McIntosh (solicitor), acting as trustees, and George W. Robb being appointed secretary. Various donations were received, and the band first appeared at the Garmond Highland Games on 21 July 1906, conducted by James Campbell. The Orchestra gave a benefit concert to raise funds on 1 August, and the new Band gave a joint concert with the Orchestra on the Links near the Coastguard Station, on 28 August. It concluded the year with playing for dancing at the Operative Masons' ball at the New Pitsligo Public Hall, on 7 December 1906. This Band was known variously as Fraserburgh Brass Band,

²⁶ Buchan Observer and East Aberdeenshire Advertiser, 23 December 1881

²⁷ Aberdeen Press and Journal, 31 December 1883

²⁸ Fraserburgh Herald and Northern Counties' Advertiser, 15 May 1906

Fraserburgh Amateur Brass Band, Fraserburgh Town Band, and Fraserburgh Public Band at different times.

The following year, 1907, was a busy one for the Band. Starting with its own concert staged for the town provost and officials, on 20 February; they managed to secure a grant of not more than £10 from the Feuars' Managers, in June, to help with the outstanding debt of £17 on the instruments – which had cost £40; entertained the guests at the wedding of Christine G. McConnachie and Alfred G. Ross at Knowsie House on 8 June; a correspondent in July did not seem satisfied with the Band's sound:

“The other night I listened for some time to the Public Band at practice. The music was rather thin, without fullness or body. The under parts seemed indifferent to the melody. But they mean well. What else could be expected. There is little or no music appreciation here. How many lads whistle about the streets, or rack the bellows of a melodeon, who, if they would only submit to discipline, would become a credit to our town. We want a strong leader and more general enthusiasm.”²⁹

They performed at the Rosehearty Highland Games on 22 July; started a series of dance evenings at the Dalrymple Hall, from Monday 12 August; led the Friendly Societies' parade in aid of the Thomas Walkes Hospital, on 18 August; held their annual meeting on 20 August, where the following officers were elected: John Sim (bandmaster), George W. Robb and R.S. Elliot (joint secretaries), Charles Pressley (treasurer), Harry Campbell (librarian), Peter Mitchell, William Noble, W. Buchan, and J. Gauld (committee); led the procession of the joint members of the Good Templar and Friendly Societies' lodges through the town on 1 September; provided music for the celebrations for the coming-of-age of Alexander Arthur Fraser, Master of Saltoun, in early September; held their annual concert on 25 October; contributed to a concert in aid of the funds of the Toolworks Institute on 27 November 1907.

The annual New Year's Day parade, on 1 January 1908, was held in aid of the Thomas Walker Hospital, with the Fraserburgh Brass Band leading the procession, with the Fraserburgh Rifles Pipe Band and Park's Flute Band also in the line. Further engagements in 1908 included playing for the New Pitsligo Rifle Volunteers' assembly and dance, on 10 January; led the parade of the 'Passing Away of the Volunteers' on the occasion of the cessation of the Volunteer battalions – which were being replaced by the Territorial Army – on 31 March; provided music for the inspection of the Fraserburgh Boys' Brigade on 27 May; performed for the Rosehearty Highland Games on 20 July; were engaged for the Fraserburgh Highland Games, organised by the Friendly Societies and Good Templars, on 3 August; and provided musical entertainment at the Fraserburgh Swimming Club Gala, conducted by James Campbell, at the South Breakwater, on 5 August.

1909's New Year's Day parade was postponed and took place on 30 January instead, with the Fraserburgh Brass Band taking part in the procession. On Monday 8 February, the Band hosted the visiting Besses o' th' Barn Band on its Scottish tour, when they gave a concert in the Dalrymple Hall, conducted by Chris Smith. Besses o' th' Barn Band's programme included the march “*Australasian*”, selections from “*Tannhauser*”, a cornet solo from E.P. Wilson, and a trombone and euphonium duet

²⁹ Fraserburgh Herald and Northern Counties' Advertiser, 9 July 1907

from W. Weedall and E.P. Kerry. William Noble conducted the Fraserburgh Band at the Gamrie picnic and games on 19 June; James Campbell led the band at the Rosehearty Games on 26 July; the Band performed for the Fraserburgh Highland Games on 2 August; and concluded the year with a performance at the opening of the new roller-skating rink, in the High Street, conducted by John Gauld, on 25 December 1909.

The New Year's Day parade was the Band's first engagement of 1910, leading the procession from the Links through the town. The Band's secretary and treasurer, R.S. Elliott, was presented with a handsome Gladstone bag on his retirement from the Band, prior to his departure to Canada, in April; the Band attended the Gamrie Games on 9 July, the Rosehearty Games on 18 July; and the Fraserburgh Highland Games on 1 August 1910.

1911 started once more with the New Year's Day procession, led by the Band, with the usual societies, and tradesmen, raising funds for the hospital. The Band's new secretary, William H. Campbell, followed his predecessor, in emigrating to Canada, in March 1911, and was also presented with a Gladstone bag by the Band. The Band attended the Fraserburgh Highland Games in August. In October 1911 the Band appointed a new conductor, Peter Mitchell, and presented their retiring conductor, James Campbell, who had led the Band from its formation, with a '*beautifully upholstered easy chair*'.

A friendly football match between Fraserburgh and Banff, took place on 30 March 1912, and the Fraserburgh Brass Band entertained the 1,000 spectators before the match and during half-time. The five Fraserburgh friendly societies – the Foresters, Free Gardeners, Oddfellows, Rechabites, and Shepherds, held their church parade on 14 July, led by the Band. The Garmond Highland Games, on 20 July, and the Fraserburgh Highland Games on 5 August 1912 both benefited from the musical entertainment from the Band.

**THE FRASERBURGH
PUBLIC BRASS BAND**

BEGS to Intimate that they are open for engagements,
**GAMES, FLOWER SHOWS,
GARDEN PARTIES, ETC.**

—

The above Band has a grand selection of Music
for the season.

All communications should be addressed to
P. MITCHELL,
Bandmaster,

11 Albert Street,
Fraserburgh.

Fraserburgh Herald and Northern Counties' Advertiser, 11 June 1912

There is no further mention of the Fraserburgh Public Band, and it is assumed that it disbanded shortly afterwards, in 1913, or possibly at the beginning of WW1. In 1917 it

was noted that the instruments of the band were still in store, together with some remaining funds.³⁰

This was the last of the brass or military bands in the town of Fraserburgh. Over the next century there were a few bugle bands and bagpipe bands in the town. Of course, various brass bands did visit the town for concerts or other engagements – one example is the Thurso Salvation Army Band which visited Fraserburgh in 1948.



Thurso Salvation Army Band, in Fraserburgh, 1948

References:

Fraserburgh Heritage Centre – see: <http://www.fraserburghheritage.com>

I was born in Fraserburgh and, despite having been away from the Broch for most of my life, I still feel a link to the town. My grandfather and great-grandfather owned the Benzie (& Miller) department stores in the town for 70 years from the late 1880's. For more information about this story see:

https://www.academia.edu/30072212/Benzie_and_Miller_-_Fraserburgh



³⁰ Fraserburgh Herald and Northern Counties' Advertiser, 6 November 1917