

THOMPSON'S FOUNDRY BAND

Castlemaine's Pride.

The Castlemaine Foundry Band which claims to be one of the oldest in Victoria, was founded in 1885 by a small body of enthusiasts, eight in number, who conceived the idea of forming a band from among the employees of Messrs. Thompson and Co. The firm then employed about seventy men and boys. Since then the band has been going continuously. Few bands have such a record.

In a hard struggle, the principal difficulty was raising the funds to purchase instruments. The members had to depend mostly on themselves by paying weekly contributions, and after a while a few purchases were made.

At first the band battled along with a fair amount of success under local bandmasters. In 1887 Mr. J. Northcote, of Bendigo, was appointed, and he effected a wonderful improvement in the playing. More members were obtained, and the band was thoroughly organised with Mr. David Thompson as president, and Mr. J. Lancashire as secretary, and it was brought to a high state of efficiency. Contesting was now spoken of, and about the year 1892 the band entered for its first contest. This was at Maryborough, where Castlemaine's entrant was awarded second place, being beaten by the Bowenvale Band.

In 1893 the band was again second, this time to the Daylesford Band. The contest was at Castlemaine. This was the last appearance under Mr. Northcote, whose business would not allow him to continue going to Castlemaine.

In 1894 a band room was built, Messrs. Thompson and Co. providing the ground, and the building being erected by the members, three of whom stood as guarantors for the payment. A series of concerts and dances were held to liquidate the debt.

First Place Against Code's.

Mr. Northcote was succeeded by Mr. T. Riley, and in 1894 the band entered the contest field at Castlemaine, securing first place against Code's Melbourne Band, and the Bowenvale Band. In 1895 a second was obtained, the band being beaten by the famous St. Joseph's Band, of Launceston (Mr. Lithgow,

conductor) then at its best. In 1897, with Mr. C. Greensides conducting, the band was second to Eaglehawk at Castlemaine.

In 1900, under Mr. E. T. Code, the band tied for third place with Bendigo City, Lord Nelson being first and Eaglehawk second. Many think



Mr. J. Tansey.

this was the band's best performance as all the bands—eleven in number—were first-class ones. The winners had just won the championship at Ballarat.

As is often the case when a band is at its best, things go wrong. About this time bad times were struck and on account of scarcity of work and other causes, players were lost to the band. It was with difficulty kept going. In 1910 Mr. Barnett was appointed bandmaster, and he pulled things together for the time being. He was succeeded by Mr. C. H. Richards, who was in charge for a number of years.

War Call Was Heard.

During his term as bandmaster the call of the war again greatly reduced the Thompson's Foundry Band in numbers. Many members enlisted, while others went as munition makers. A long list of names—26 in all—is recorded on a fine Honour Board erected in the band room. The Board was the gift of Mrs. David Thompson. There is also a fine Life Governor and Life Membership Board, this being the gift of Mr. W. J. Whitchell. Upon it are the names of six bandsmen who have been active members of the band for twenty-five years or more.

After the war Mr. H. L. Rasmussen was appointed bandmaster, but through ill-health had to resign. He was succeeded by Mr. J. S. Sansey, who now holds the position as bandmaster and with quite a new team took part in the Bendigo contest in 1925. The band then was placed third. It also competed at Kyneton this year, securing third in the selection. During its existence the band has been the means of raising hundreds of pounds for charitable purposes. Every summer several Sundays are devoted to the purpose of playing at charitable gatherings, and in consequence some of the members have been elected Life Governors of the local Hospital and Benevolent Home. The band is out to help all deserving causes, and it is to be hoped that in the future it will continue to uphold the good name that it has held for so long.