

# Grantham Township Police Boy's Band

by Ron Bruce

**I**N LATE 1954, the Grantham Township Police Force founded the Band in St. Catharines, Ontario (pop. 16,000). The Chief of Police was Norman Fach. Here is a bit of the background.

In the spring of 1954, Chief Constable Norman P. Fach, of the Grantham Township Police Department, had a discussion with a citizen of Grantham Township regarding Juvenile Delinquency and ways of providing a hobby during out-of-school hours for young boys in the community. Their decision was to form a trumpet band since it would serve a three-fold purpose. It would offer an education in music for the

prospective members, cultivate a better relationship between the Police Department and the younger generation of the community, and it would be a source of entertainment to thousands of people in the immediate and outlying districts.

When asked about creating the band, Chief Fach purportedly said, "I can either chase these kids on the streets or gather them all up here and give them something constructive to do". This was one of the many reasons for creating a traditional drum corps: give kids a positive purpose and an opportunity to work together to create something much greater than one could as an individual.



Ron Bruce



Grantham Township Police Boys Band in their brand new uniforms (May, 1955)

## FEATURE ARTICLE: Grantham Township Police Boys Band (continued)

A Drum Corps needs uniforms and instruments, and these are expensive. As a result, there is a hefty start-up cost for a new corps. The gentleman with whom the Chief had been conferring kindly offered to finance such a project, providing his name remained anonymous, and that members of the Police Department, in their off-duty hours, take over the training and counselling of the corps members. The aim was to create a Street Parade band, offering the opportunity of musical training and marching at no cost to the member.

Chief Fach accepted these terms. As a first step, they formed an advisory Board of Directors which was composed of several interested citizens of Grantham Township together with members of the Grantham Township Police Department.

The Board approached Charles Hill of St. Catharines and he agreed to accept the position of Bandmaster. Mr. Hill had been an understudy of the late John Phillip Sousa (a well-known writer and composer of music designed for military bands). Locally, Mr Hill had been associated with orchestras and trumpet bands for many years and was well known in the community as a musician capable of producing a first class trumpet band.

In October, 1954, enrolment for band members began, and shortly thereafter, approximately sixty boys ranging in ages from eleven to eighteen years began studying the rudiments of music in one of the Township Schools. Mr. Hill gave generously of his time and personally

began instructing prospective trumpeters.

The instruments used were soprano, tenor, and baritone bugle horns, as well as snare, tenor, bass drum, bells, and cymbals. Charlie was a strict disciplinarian who expected us to practice daily and know all the marches. At one rehearsal, he asked someone to stand up and play



Chief Norman P. Fach, Founder and Director of Grantham

*One of the benefits of drum corps was very well articulated by Norm Fach who was both the Police Chief of St. Catharines, Ontario and the Director of the Grantham Township Police Boys' Band. He said "look I can either chase these kids on the streets or gather them all up here and give them something constructive to do".*

a line from the Sousa March. This boy could not play it. Mr. Hill said, "Hand in your horn, you are done!". This got everyone's attention. It set the tone very early on with the Corps that you HAD to practice daily and learn how to read music.

The duties of Drum Instructor were taken over by Mr. Donald Gill of St. Catharines, a qualified musician in his own right and a former member of civilian and military bands in the area. These two men were responsible for the musical

knowledge the band members attained and used successfully in the competitions and parades in which the band later participated. Unfortunately, after a short time, Mr. Hill became the victim of a serious illness which necessitated complete rest and, for this reason, he was unable to continue his active role in the organization. Since the group needed a Bandmaster, Mr. Gill agreed to take over Mr. Hill's position as Bandmaster. He did an excellent job.





## FEATURE ARTICLE: Grantham Township Police Boys Band (continued)

Instruments were purchased shortly after music studies began and, while the boys practised several hours a week during evenings, uniforms were being tailored and fitted, intricate drills were being worked out, and equipment readied in preparedness for the parades and competitions they were hoping to enter the following spring and summer. Several members of the Police Department, having had previous drum corps experience as well as military training with the armed forces, pitched in to act as assistant instructors on music and military drill. Along with Chief Fach, they worked many hours during their off duty time to make the band a success. At every function the band attended, several men from the Police Department would be in the background, lending their moral support and making sure the boys looked their best as they turned out on parade.



*Grantham in their "Bobby" helmets (East York Stadium, 1960)*

Instead of Shakos, the corps decided to use "Bobby" helmets. Many Police Departments, both in Canada and the United Kingdom, had formerly used this head dress. These police departments were contacted and many of them sold their old helmets to the corps. These used helmets were sanded and

painted white. A chrome maple leaf with beaver (the official Police Badge) was mounted on the front. The helmets stood out well in contrast to a scarlet tunic with white piping and blue trousers to match. These white "Bobby" helmets remained a signature part of the total uniform until 1964 when the corps purchased cadet style uniforms.

The result of a full winter's training was first seen at a dedication ceremony, held at the Grantham Township High School, on May 19, 1955. The band turned out, resplendent in their new uniforms. They played several selections while countermarching under the command of Drum Major John Kerr, a member of the Police Department. On this occasion, the band pennants and flags were presented to the band by visiting dignitaries of the community.

After that first parade, the Grantham Township Police Boys Band performed in a host of parades and competitions, both in Ontario and the United States. They brought home many honours not only for themselves but also for the community in which they lived. In 1956, the Grantham Township Police Boys Band competed in their first Canadian Championships held at Merriton, Ontario and became Junior "B" champions of Canada.

Grantham had the singular honour of representing Canada in both 1956 and 1957 as the only Canadian band to perform in the parade at the All American



*Grantham (All American Soap Box Derby, Akron, OH, 1957)*

## FEATURE ARTICLE: Grantham Township Police Boys Band (continued)

Soap Box Derby in Akron, Ohio, U.S.A. The band's marching and musical ability had improved a great deal since that first public appearance and everyone felt that their original purposes had been well fulfilled.

**T**HE TRANSITION to field competition began after the 1957 season when the corps moved into the Junior "A" class. In 1958, their first year in Junior "A", they appeared at the Canadian National Championships in Galt, Ontario, taking fourth place honours. This was quite an accomplishment considering that it was only their second appearance in championship competitions!

In 1959, Chief Fach hired Fred Johnson as the corps' drum instructor. Harry Hamilton would instruct brass while Vince Bruni handled Marching and Maneuvering.

The instrumentation was expanded by adding French Horns and G Basses. Fred Johnson's instructions were quite simple "Let's aim for the 1960 National Championship in Hamilton, Ont." Fred realized that, in order to achieve his goal, the corps needed more members so he insisted that, at our next rehearsal, everyone must bring in at least one new member. The Corps immediately doubled in size. The drumline now included three snares, two tenors, two bass drums and two cymbals.



*Buddy Latour (1960)*

Buddy Latour had been a bugler since joining the Corps in 1955; however, that changed five years later. Buddy had grown quite tall, making him stand out in a crowd.



*Dennis Roberts (soprano) with Rick Robida, Larry Galasso and Jack MacMullen (Windsor, 1960)*

This is perfect for a Drum Major! In 1960, Buddy Latour became the corps' new Drum Major.

Harry Hamilton created some great arrangements and the repertoire for 1960 was: "Jezebel", for the Opening Fanfare, followed by the off the line "Lover", then "Love For Sale" into "Greensleeves" and "Marie" for the Concert (featuring three of our G Basses; Richard Robida, Larry Galasso and Jack MacMullen, as soloists, with a young Dennis Roberts trying to butt in for a solo). It was one of the highlights and a great crowd pleaser. Out of concert was "In the Good Ol' Summertime" and then the colour presentation of "O God Our Help in Ages Past" featuring Ron Bruce as soloist, with a



*Grantham (Nationals, Galt, 1958)*





*Ron Bruce, Ken, George Brown, Art Ratelle, Dennis Roberts and others (1961)*

sustained high D conclusion. The exit number was “Good Night Sweetheart”, making for an all round entertaining Corps.

We spent the winter and early spring rehearsing twice a week, on Sunday afternoons and Wednesday evenings. We were very excited about the outside drill show. These were “heady” days. We sounded so good.

The Corps uniform for parades started as a Red Tunic with Navy blue pants and black Wellington boots, white gloves and white “Bobby” helmets. The marching uniform required some modification

for field competition, but the white “Bobby” helmets remained a signature part of the total uniform until 1964.

In 1960, we were all pumped up for the Canadian National Championships at Ivor Wynne Stadium in Hamilton, Ont. The week before this championship, we had practiced every night for three hours. Our execution was nearly flawless.

We hoped to take the preliminary morning show and we were looking forward to the night’s competition. Only the evening show would stand between us and the Championships.



*Buddy Latour conducts Grantham (CNE, Toronto, 1960)*





Newspaper article about the food poisoning (1960)

**F**ATE HAD ANOTHER Plan. Off the line was great but then Corps members began falling. First was the bass drummer falling on his bass drum. Some in the Colour party also collapsed. I had to walk over my fallen comrade, John Welsh, who was carrying the National colours. We concluded the show with many more fallen comrades. The story revealed that many band members ate at restaurants in the area and then developed “food poisoning”. What could have been a glorious evening, turned into a nightmare and disappointment for the Corps.

*The food poisoning did us in for the finals. Being Chief of Police in Grantham, Norm Fach had the restaurant responsible charged to the full extent of the law. Corps and bands from that time on, were very careful about what they ate. In many cases, they brought their own source of food.*

— Jack Roberts

The Corps competed at the 1961 Canadian Nationals in Waterloo and we finished “third”.

During the 1962 and 1963 seasons, Grantham left the ranks of Junior “A” and competed in the Junior “B” class. In 1964, however, they returned to Junior “A” sporting smartly designed cadet style uniforms. Sadly, shakos replaced their signature “Bobby” helmets.

For its entire existence Grantham had been an all-boys corps. In 1964 this, too, changed as Grantham went co-ed. Former Grantham member, Jack Roberts, wrote and instructed the drill for this new incarnation of Grantham. The corps competed during both the 1964 and 1965 contest seasons.

During the summer of 1965, management of Grantham and the Denis Morris Majestics, another local corps that competed in Junior “B”, had been discussing a merger. During the retreat for the



Grantham in their Cadet Uniforms (1964 or 1965)



1965 Grape Festival competition, Grantham and Denis Morris went on retreat as one corps, playing, “You’ll Never Walk Alone”. This was the final performance for these corps. After this show, the two corps merged to create a new Junior “A” corps, the Chessmen.

### Some Interesting facts about the Corps:

- Chief Fach decided it would be a good fundraiser, to sell “wooden nickels” as souvenirs. It was very successful.
- The Corps marched twice at the Akron Ohio Soap Box Derby, in 1956 and 1957.
- Bob Luckanchoff became a St. Catharines Police officer. Bob was a lead soprano and High “G” specialist.
- In 1959, Grantham was unable to compete in the New York/Canadian Championships because a quarter of the corps was banged up from a high school football game.
- The traditional “Bobby helmet” was changed to a “Shako” when the corps got cadet-style uniforms in 1964.
- The Corps twice marched in the Indianapolis 500. Grantham was the lead band for the Indianapolis 500 prior to the race in both 1956 and 1957.
- In 1963, Ron Bruce, former Grantham soloist, won The Canadian Individual Bugling Championship, Senior Class, as a member of the Merritton Buccaneers.



Grantham Wooden Nickels



L-R: Don Gill, Chief Fach and Charles Hill (1955)



Buddy Latour, Grantham’s Drum Major, converted an old white hearse into an equipment truck with this crest on the side



Grantham at the Soap Box Derby (Akron, OH, 1956)

## Message From The Business Manager

*(from a 1957 program)*

**T**H SIXTY-TWO members of the Grantham Township Police Boys' Band made their first appearance in full dress uniform at the Grantham High School, Church Road, in May 1955. A board of Directors was formed for the purpose of managing the affairs of the band.

For the first two years it was very difficult to keep the band going and at the same time attempt to meet the many unforeseen expenses. Boys will be boys and it was, and still is, somewhat of a problem instilling in their minds that even though

they give their time they must be more careful with equipment. We are trying to teach them to be better boys and it is now very gratifying to hear the compliments we receive from citizens of both Canada and the United States.

These boys are international ambassadors of goodwill and, in my humble opinion, do more to advertise Grantham and St. Catharines district than any other medium that I have seen. This is accomplished at no cost to either Municipality.

The members of the Grantham Police Department have put thousands of off duty hours along with Bandmaster Charles Hill. Mr. Hill suffered a heart attack which forced his retirement as band master. He deserves the highest praise, as with the help he

received he was able to produce a band that were the Junior B Canadian Champions for 1956. As a result of Band Master Hill's illness, the Board of Directors appointed Don Gill as Band Master and Charles Hill as Honourary Band Master. Mr. Gill, Drum Major John Kerr, Zuliana Gambi, assisted by Dave McKnight, are responsible for the musical education of the Grantham Township Police Boys' Band.

I would like to extend hearty thanks to all these instructors and the many citizens who are ardent followers and supporters of the Band. I would also like to thank the Grantham Township Area School Board for the use of Consolidated School for the Practice Hall, also the Grantham Lions Club who allow us to drill at their Sports' park.

*Norman P. Fach, Business Manager.*



*Chief Fach presents the Nationals trophy to Phil Hennings (Galt, 1958)*



## FEATURE ARTICLE: Grantham Township Police Boys Band (continued)

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*Ron Bruce playing a solo, Grantham (Windsor, 1960)*



*Grantham (Nationals, Galt, 1958)*

## **Anonymous donor gave uniforms and instruments**

*Article about the anonymous donations of uniforms and instruments to Grantham to get the corps started (1955)*

THE SIXTY-TWO-MEMBER Grantham Township Police Boys' Band, which has been outfitted with instruments and uniforms by an anonymous donor, last night received its colours in the group's first public appearance.

The dedication ceremony was held in the auditorium of the Lincoln and Welland District High School, Grantham Township, on Church Rd., and nervous tension coupled with the stuffiness in the building caused several of the youngsters in the band to pass out.

After the five flags had been presented and various dignitaries had spoken, the band, resplendent in white helmets and striking red uniforms moved outdoors to cooler air and there played several selections while counter-marching, under command of Drum Major Jack Kerr.

The colour party, under Sgt. Maj. M. J. Friesen, received the Union Jack from Lt. Col. E. Clemis, MBE, ED, former commanding officer of the 44th Field Regiment, RCA.

Victor Edwards, Grantham Township councillor, presented the Canadian Ensign to the band and Major W. T. Thompson, commanding officer of 30 Technical

Squadron, RCEME, presented the flag of the United States.

The two police pennants were presented by Ivan Buchanan, first commissioner of the Grantham police commission and Constable Jack Timlock of the Grantham township police force.

Rt. Rev. Monsignor A. E. McQuillen, Dean of Niagara, and Rev. Paul Moore, rector of St. Columba's Anglican Church, were present at the ceremony.

Col. Clemis told the large gathering that the Grantham police and especially Chief Norman P. Fach deserved a lot of credit for the work they had done in getting the band together. The boys themselves, he added, also deserved commendation for their efforts. Mr. Edwards reminded the band that they should not forget to thank the anonymous sponsor of the group who had paid for the unit's equipment. He also congratulated Chief Fach, his staff and the band members for their work.

"May you look on our police force with great pride," said Mr. Buchanan. He added his own words of praise to those of the other speakers for the efforts of the Grantham police force and the boys of the band.

### **The Band Motto**

Monsignor McQuillen centred his remarks around the band's motto, "above all else, manliness."

"Manliness is another word for virtue," he said, "and virtue is formed by the repetition of good acts. We should put manliness above all else because it implies strength of soul as well as body."

The speaker commended the action of the man responsible for outfitting the band.

"I would like to commend this man in the highest for his interest in these boys" he said.

The band was formed in August, 1954, and began practising under Bandmaster Charles Hill in November of last year. Mr. Hill is assisted by Donald Gill drum Instructor.

At the conclusion of the ceremonies, Drum Major Kerr led the band in three cheers for Chief Fach, Bandmaster Hill and Mr. Gill. Chief Fach was master of ceremonies for the occasion.





*Ron Bruce of the Merritton Buccaneers and his trophy for best soprano (1963)*



*Grantham (St Catharines, about 1960)  
L-R: Les Slorack, Tom May, Dave Haynes, Paul Price and Jim Robins  
Bass Drum: Rick Splonick, Drum Major: Bud LeTour*



*Grantham Off The Line (Nationals, Hamilton, 1960)*



## Denis Morris Majestics

The Denis Morris Majestics were a Junior "B" corps that was founded around 1962. Their sponsor was Denis Morris Catholic High School

in St Catharines, Ontario. At the end of the 1965 season the Majestics folded so that they could merge with Grantham to create a new Junior "A" corps, the Chessmen.



### THE MAJESTICS

DIRECTOR: Father Bochump  
HORN INSTRUCTOR: Ron Walker  
DRUM INSTRUCTOR: Dave Hayes  
DRILL INSTRUCTOR: Bill Rutherford  
DRUM CORPS MAJOR: Brian Baker  
DRUM LINE: M. Laseck, B. Grassie, L. Robbins, B. Kirkpatrick, K. Griffiths, B. Kelly, T. St. Amant.  
BASS DRUM: B. Lucy  
CYMBALS: D. Carter, S. Wronski  
HORN LINE: J. Libera, P. Hope, M. Gleason, C. Decker, C. Gicame, B. Kirkpatrick, J. Bryant, T. Molyneux, M. Guerin, B. Kernahan, B. Hillier, J. Burrows, T. Byrnes, W. Wronski, L. Seo, T. Williams, M. Longpre, J. Clifford, T. Hus, D. Moccia, M. Persian, P. Mocha, D. Charlton, A. Cardin, R. Cournoyer  
COLOUR GUARD:  
CAPTAIN: Francine Moccia  
SERGEANT: Margaret Urquhart  
P. Davidson, A. Dunn, J. Bula, V. Winstanley, S. Young, M. Carroll, P. Mayle, P. Carterright, B. Caughill, T. Kirkpatrick, J. LaSalle, C. LaSalle, H. Miller, M. Pettie, R. Grosse, K. Van Der Gulik, C. Nesbit





## The Chessmen

On September 26, 1965, St Catharines two drum corps, Grantham and the Denis Morris Majestics, joined together at the Grape Festival to create a new corps called "The Chessmen". Ron Bruce was asked to be the Horn instructor. The Drum instructor was Gary Lichti from Toronto Marching Ambassadors. The Drill and colour guard instructor was Bill Rutherford. The corps purchased their uniforms from the Phantom Regiment, in Rockford, IL (a fire had destroyed Phantom's corps hall and they were forced to sell the uniforms).

Chessmen was a founding member of the AJrC drum corps association. Sadly, they only competed for three years, folding after the 1968 season.



Program cover for Chessmen's first show (1966)



When Chessmen folded the Optimists benefited greatly.

Many Chessmen moved to the

Optimists. Names of

some of the former Chessmen that come to mind are Peter and John Byrne, Bob Beachin, Jack LaLonde, Tom Sacco and John Kernahan.

John Byrne, an original member of the Chessmen, wrote: *"The amalgamation of the two former Corps was seamless and it performed extremely well in its first year and held itself in good stead in numerous competitions including the New York / Canadian Championships held in Rochester. In its first appearance there The Chessmen almost beat St. Joes in the preliminary. It happened that it was one of those occasions when everything just seemed to click. The drill especially went well and we actually beat St. Joes in that category. Unfortunately, I think it went to our heads and we didn't perform well at all in the final evening show. At least it was fun while it lasted."*

*The Colour Guard was our main asset. Not only did the Guard dominate the winter colour guard circuit, they played a key role with the corps itself. The guard was cited in numerous completions to be outstanding! And one highlight was beating Boston Crusaders guard at a completion in Utica New York.*

*As with most drum corps the measurement of success wasn't limited only to the scores they received in competition. Drum Corps was much more than that to us. Like other Corps drum corps was about bringing a bunch of kids together and helping them develop as good people, helping them learn the value of teamwork and striving for excellence; and even more it's about having fun while you are doing it.*

*Being a member of The Chessmen was one of the greatest experiences in our lives."*





*Chessmen (1966)*



*The Byrne brothers: L-R: David, Brian, Peter and John*



*Chessmen (1966)*