

IAN HEALY'S Suburbia, This Week
Newcastle Morning Herald 23 August 1952

The Maestro Was A Porter (extract)

Before the curtains opened at the Newcastle Boys' High School annual concert in the City Hall on Wednesday, a porter from Newcastle railway station went back-stage for a last word with some of the boys. "Now, listen," he said. "Nice and crisp." The boys nodded and half an hour later marched out onstage to play a nice, crisp "march" from "Carmen" and "Nights of Gladness" on a piano, a piccolo, two flutes, two violins, a clarinet and 'cello.

The audience, including the porter, who by that time was up in a seat in the gallery, thought their efforts nice and crisp enough to warrant an encore - the only one of the night.

The boys are third, fourth and fifth year students who, when the concert was being planned, asked if they could appear as an instrumental septet. Welcomed to the programme, they began to rehearse, but soon realised that, however efficient they might be as individual musicians, they needed "polishing" as a group. So they called to see the porter and ask for his aid. He gave it readily, taking on the final training of this septet for its successful appearance

The porter is 59 year-old George Phillip Richards, of Smith-street, Junction. He has been an amateur musician for almost half a century. For 14 years he conducted his own local orchestra. The orchestra was the Austral Concert Band. Mr. Richards formed it at Merewether in 1926. It had a steady complement of 20 and with associate artists gave 125 concerts in the Newcastle-Maitland district, all for charity. The band's career ended in 1940, when Mr. Richards had a serious illness, but with two other members of the original team - Mr. A. Charlton, pianist, and Mr. L. Tennant, clarinet and bassoonist - Mr. Richards still appears at concerts to raise church, school and charity funds.

Email from John McKenzie 8 March 2021, who contributed this item.

1952 NBHS Annual Concert

Ted Smith and his violin were absent from the photo that accompanied this article.

It's a nice piece about the *Instrumental Septet* (Blaxland, Kalmykoff, Lloyd, McDonald, Atkins, Kearns and E. Smith) and their Cobar-born mentor - Junction resident and Railway Porter, *Mr. George Richards*.

[https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/133187947?searchTerm=G.Kalmykoff.
Newcastle](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/133187947?searchTerm=G.Kalmykoff.Newcastle)

Q: Could the A Charlton from the Austral Concert Band have been Alan Wallace Charlton, of Cooks Hill, who started at NHS in 1930?



MR. RICHARDS (centre) with six of the boys, back-stage. Left to right: G. Blaxland, G. Kalmykoff, J. Lloyd, K. McDonald, A. Atkins and E. Kearns. The missing seventh: E. Smith.

Mr. Richards (centre) with six of the boys, back-stage. Left to right: G. Blaxland, G. Kalmykoff, J. Lloyd, K. McDonald, A. Atkins and E. Kearns. The missing seventh: E. Smith.

From the 1952 Novocastrian

THE ANNUAL CONCERT

Our Annual Concert at the City Hall, August 20th, presented a very attractive programme. Part 1 consisted of items by the School Orchestra, the Instrumental Septet, the Junior, Senior and Combined Choirs, violin solos by Gregory Blaxland, flute solos by John Lloyd, songs by Ross Hynes, and a Gymnastics Display of vaulting, tumbling shuttles and pyramids. Part 2 was devoted to an excellent performance by a group of over 30 4A students of Acts 2 and 3 of Sheridan's play, "The Critic." Acting, make-up, costuming and scenery were all of very high quality. The use of painted ships to represent the Spanish Armada and the British Fleet, the representation of canon fire by lighted firecrackers, and the eight-piece orchestra led by John Lloyd were very effective. The producer of the play was Mr. F. Smith, the choirs and the orchestra were conducted by Mr. D. Watchorn, the Physical Education Instructor was Mr. R. Judge, and the House Managers were Messrs. A. H. Hodge and H. Abrahams.