

The Teutonic Triumvirate

by John Trendell (RMHS)

Should the title of this article give the impression that it concerns three of the evil men who controlled the Third Reich, then nothing could be more misleading. It is in fact the story of a peaceful trio of German musicians who, just over a hundred years ago, played an important part in the evolution of the highly professional Royal Marines bands of today.

But first some background:

After the death of Henry Purcell in 1695, English music and musicians went into decline for almost 200 years. This was to have such a marked effect on military music in this country that during the eighteenth century the prestigious Coldstream Guards and the Royal Artillery both found it necessary to recruit in the German States, 'Bands of musick for service within the regiment'. In the 1830s one Wilhelm Wiepracht was given the task of reforming the bands of the highly efficient Prussian military machine, the results of which impressed the hierarchy of the British Army to such an extent that within a few years it became almost fashionable for British regiments to employ a German civilian bandmaster. The Germanic influences of the Prince Consort in official and musical circles had the effect of encouraging the policy.

Having set the military music scene of mid-Victorian times, it will now come as no great surprise to those unfamiliar with this facet of Corps history to learn that when the bandmastership of the Chatham Division RMLI became vacant in 1857, Jacob A Kappey, a native of the Rhineland, was selected for the post from more than one hundred applicants. After serving as a musician in the German Army for four years, Kappey came to England in 1848 to become the civilian bandmaster of the 89th Regiment of Foot (later known as 2nd Royal Irish Fusiliers). The officers of the Chatham Division, whilst adhering to the contemporary custom of appointing a German bandmaster, certainly chose wisely for Kappey was to become, during the second half of the nineteenth century, one of the most eminent and respected military musicians in the country of his adoption.

Kappey was the complete musician - conductor, composer, teacher and learned authority on all musical matters. His compositions included operas, cantatas and numerous arrangements for military band, but most of all he is remembered for his arrangement of the 'Royals' signature tune. Prior to 1883 each Division had its own march and these often changed as new Commandants were appointed. In that year the Deputy Adjutant General called upon the Bandmaster of each Division to arrange or compose a march for use as a Regimental March. Kappey's arrangement of Henry Russell's 'A Life On The Ocean Wave' was selected from the four entries. For over a hundred years this tune has musically identified the Royal Marines in every part of the globe.

Kappey's highly professional direction of the Chatham Band was to result in considerable acclaim being won for the musicians wherever they went. No less a musical



Royal Marines Barracks Eastney 1990



The Royal Marine Light Infantry Band of Portsmouth Division from Forton Barracks, Gosport who accompanied HRH The Prince of Wales on a visit to India and Burma in 1875/6. In the centre is Bandmaster Johann F C Kreyer.

authority than Sir Arthur Sullivan, after hearing the band at a London event, commented "It is without exception the finest military band I have ever heard". Kappey was also to make his name in the musical world outside the Corps; in 1869 he was made editor of 'Boosey's Military and Brass Band Journal' and in 1889 the Royal Military School of Music (Kneller Hall) appointed him as the external examiner of student Army bandmasters. The results of his years of research into musical history together with his extensive library of wind music have been preserved for posterity in the British Museum.

On Kappey's retirement in 1892, a presentation was made to him by his fellow bandmasters of the leading Army and Marine bands in recognition of his great contribution to British military music. The officers of the Division also marked the event by presenting Bandmaster Kappey with the ceremonial sword given to the Chatham Divisional Band by the Tsar of Russia when the band visited Moscow in 1826. Although very much regarded as an alien when he took over the band thirty five years earlier, Jacob Kappey was to retire from the Corps as one of the most popular figures to have served in the Chatham Division.

Possibly in an endeavour to 'keep up with the Jones's' at Chatham, the officers of the Portsmouth Division RMLI followed suit in 1865 by appointing Johann F C Kreyer, a native

Hanover, to fill the vacant post of Bandmaster of the Division. Although not such a prolific writer as Kappey, Kreyer was the composer of a number of songs and military band works. Undoubtedly the highlight of his nineteen years at Portsmouth was when the

Divisional Band accompanied HRH The Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII) in HMS *Serapis* on a visit to India and Burma during 1875/6. In acknowledgement of the service given by Bandmaster Kreyer and his musicians to the Prince on this tour, the Portsmouth Division RMLI was awarded the Prince of Wales' plume for wearing as an additional badge on the head-dress of its members. This distinctive badge was worn by the Portsmouth Band until the 1923 amalgamation, then for a further seven years the custom was perpetuated by the Depot Band at Deal, which was disbanded in 1930 when the Royal Naval School of Music moved there. (See note below)

Before looking eastward in the direction of Plymouth, we ought to examine what was happening in the bands of the British Army during the early 1870s. A strong official reaction had set in against the future employment of German civilian bandmasters, mainly due to the continuing success of Kneller Hall in training enlisted Army bandsmen as military bandmasters. This establishment was the brainchild of the Duke of Cambridge, the long serving Commander-in-Chief of the Victorian Army, and therefore the official pressure applied at this time to regiments still having civilian bandmasters was not totally unexpected.

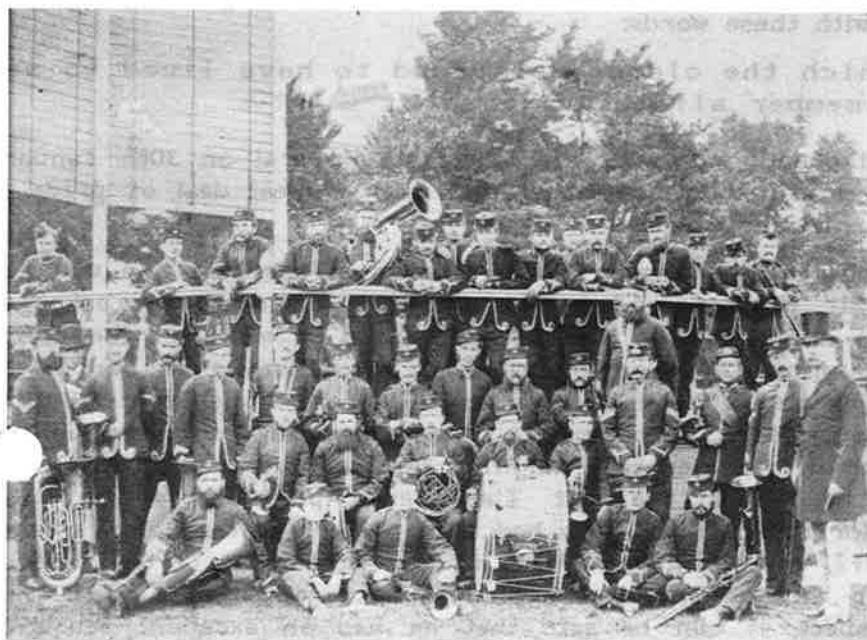
Embarrassingly placed in this unfavourable climate was Carl F H Froehnert, Bandmaster of the 2nd Life Guards. Born in Saxony, Froehnert came to England in 1856 under the sponsorship of the Prince Consort. The reason for him leaving the Metropolis for the West Country in 1872, when he exchanged posts with the Bandmaster of the Plymouth Division RMLI, William Winterbottom, is not absolutely clear; it could well have been connected with the feeling in the Army against the employment of foreign bandmasters. Whatever the reason for his departure from the Household Cavalry, Carl Froehnert's appointment as Bandmaster of the Plymouth Division was an outstanding success. He founded an orchestra and took the band on numerous concert tours in the West of England.

Froehnert occasionally visited his homeland, then still the mecca of military music, and would bring back with him the latest in military band publications for subsequent presentation by the Plymouth Division Band. One of these works 'The Turkish Patrol', which became a universal favourite with concert goers throughout the world, was first performed in this country by the Plymouth band. The stone-laying ceremony of Truro Cathedral in May 1880 was an event which attracted the attendance of several members of the Royal Family for which the Plymouth Band under the direction of Bandmaster Froehnert was engaged to play, both at the ceremony itself and at the week-long programme of associated social events held at the home of Lord Falmouth. The Band later participated in the consecration service of the new building at the invitation of the Dean and Chapter; on this occasion the musicians 'rigged up' in the choir stalls and in the interests of ecclesiastical propriety were asked to wear choristers' surplices over their ceremonial uniforms. Although he spoke very poor English, Froehnert became fully integrated into the Plymouth musical scene, both military and civilian, and for many years acted as Inspecting Bandmaster of the Devonport based training ships. He died in 1890 whilst still in harness and was buried with full military honours in Plymouth Cemetery.

Without wearying the reader with too much background which would include a reference to the Cardwell reforms, the War Office decided that there should be more tangible recognition for the responsibilities and qualifications of Army bandmasters. Accordingly, General Order dated 1st July 1881 granted Warrant Officer status on all qualified bandmasters of the Army. Resulting from this directive, the three RMLI bandmasters and the bandmaster of the RMA were similarly elevated at the end of 1881, but with effect from

the same date as that applicable to the Army. By this time each of our three 'alien' bandmasters had become naturalised British subjects. There were, however, some obstacles to negotiate.

By virtue of the trio's newly acquired Warrant Officer status, it was obvious that something would have to be done about the wearing of uniform. Kreyer normally appeared with the Portsmouth Band in uniform but his two colleagues preferred to be dressed on such occasions in civilian clothes (the Army had ruled against this practice in 1874). One can only guess that official pressure was brought to bear on the two erring bandmasters for it is subsequently recorded that when the Chatham and Plymouth Divisional Bands of the RMLI appeared at the Bath and West Show, held at Bridgwater in 1883, both Bandmaster Kappey and Bandmaster Froehnert appeared in uniform for the first time. Even after this event, Froehnert was known to be averse to wearing uniform, as witnessed in a photograph



The Plymouth Division RMLI Band in 1888 with Bandmaster Carl Froehnert on the right in his usual civilian dress.

of the Plymouth Band taken in 1888. On this occasion the rig of the day for Bandmaster Froehnert was a tailed coat and billy-cock hat. Included, rather ironically, among the much prized uniform exhibits on display in the Corps Museum are those belonging to Bandmaster Froehnert.

Much of the criticism directed at German Bandmasters in the Army concerned the impermanence of their employment. Such criticism could not be levelled at the Marines' three German bandmasters for collectively they were to serve the Corps for 72 years. During the period from 1872 to 1884 all three RMLI Divisional Bands were directed by native Germans, which must have made John Winterbottom, bandmaster of the RMA at that time, feel quite a foreigner in such company. Kappey, Kreyer and Froehnert were musicians trained in the classical style, a characteristic which each was able to inject into the performances of the bands and orchestras they directed, a tradition still maintained by Royal Marines Bands a century later.

Note: The Prince of Wales' Plumes awarded to the Portsmouth Band are not to be confused with a similar award to the Plymouth Division Band as a result of the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VIII) world tour in HMS Renown in 1920.