

# Notes

FROM THE PIPING CENTRE

Issue No. 9

Spring 1999



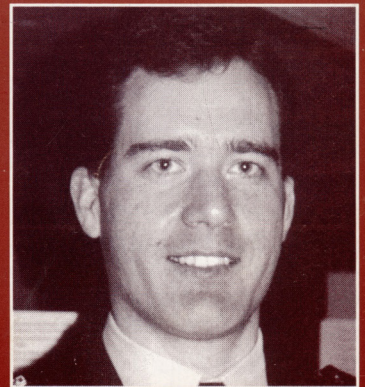
## WHEN PIPES WON THE DAY ON WALL STREET

IRISH New Yorker Brian Meagher won a round of applause at the New York Stock Exchange when he piped for the the first listing there of ScottishPower Corporation stock on 8 September 1997. Brian Meagher, instructor to the New York City Fire Department Pipe Band, has been revisiting Scotland to prepare his repertoire for the 1999 competitions season. PAGE 14.

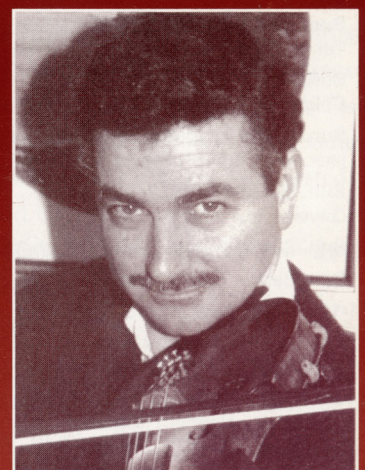
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[www.thepipingcentre.co.uk](http://www.thepipingcentre.co.uk)



Barnaby Brown — taking a new look at the old music of the MacCrimmons. PAGE 6.



Greg Wilson — news from the National Schools Piping Project.  
CENTRE SUPPLEMENT



Dr Angus MacDonald — explorations on a fiddle. PAGE 16

THE Piping CENTRE

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## Sheriff Sandy" Macpherson

# A loyal friend to the Centre

**W**ITH the death of Sheriff Alexander Macpherson on 11 March, The Piping Centre lost a loyal friend.

From March 1978, he served as a sheriff to Hamilton, one of Scotland's busiest courts, and at the time of his death was an elected member of the council of the Sheriffs' Association.

Beyond his professional life, he expressed a love and deep knowledge of Scottish literature, history and arts,

making a particularly valued contribution to piping.

He was a widely liked and respected piping judge, and was actively involved over many years with the Royal Scottish Pipers' Society and the Glasgow Highland Club.

"Sheriff Sandy" was also always keenly interested in and warmly supportive of the Centre throughout its formative and early years.

He will be much missed by his many friends in the piping world.



## NOTES

NOTES is produced for The Piping Centre by Mike Paterson and printed by the A&J Typesetting and Printing, Lanark

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### MAY

**22 Sat.** European Pipe Band Championships (all grades & D/M). Ayr.

**24 Mon.** Bands (grades 2, 3, 4 & D/M) competition. Richmond, Yorkshire.

**2 Wed.** BBC Music Live — Young Pipers recital. 7.30 p.m. The Piping Centre auditorium. Free admission.

**29 Sat.** Bands (grades 1, 2, 3, 4, novice, junior & D/M) competition. Bathgate.

**Sat.** Bands (grades 1, 2, 3, 4 & D/M) competition. Eniskillen.

**Sat.** Bands. Blackford Highland Games.

**30 Sun.** Atholl Gathering.

### JUNE

**2 & 4 Wed & Fri** Harris Mod.

**5 Sat.** Highland Games: bands (all grades & D/M). Shotts.

**Sat.** Bands (grades 3, 4 & D/M). Wirral.

**Sat.** Strathmiglo Highland Games.

**Sat.** Bands (grades 1, 2, 3, 4 & D/M). Ahoghill, Northern Ireland.

**6 Sun.** Bands (grades 1, 2, 3, 4 & D/M). Turriff.

**Sun.** Bands (grades 2, 3, 4 & D/M). Colchester.

**Sun.** Bands (grades 1, 2, 3, 4, novice, junior & D/M) competition. Markinch.

**Sun.** Bands (grades 2, 3, 4 & D/M). Girvan.

**Sun.** Bands. Carrick Lowland Gathering.

**7 Sun.** Bands. Gourrock Games.

**11-12 Fri-Sat.** Perthshire & Angus Mod.

**12 Sat.** Bands (all grades & D/M). Bearsden & Milngavie Highland Games.

**Sat.** Bands (grades 1, 2, 3, 4 & D/M). Cookstown, Northern Ireland.

**Sat.** Edinburgh Miners' Gala bands (grades open 3 & 4). Edinburgh.

**Sat.** Aberlour & Blairmore Gathering.

**13 Sun.** Bands (grades 2, 3, 4, novice, junior & D/M). Ardrossan.

**Sat.** Bands (grades 2, 3, 4 & D/M). Banbury.

**Sat.** Forfar Highland Games.

**19 Sat.** Scottish Pipe Band Championships (grades 1, 2, 3 (A,B), 4(A,B), novice, juvenile & D/M). Rothesay.

## The Piper's Diary

### LUNCHTIME PIPING RECITALS

**Most Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, 2 July - 13 August, 1p.m. The Piping Centre Auditorium, £3 (£2). Please check with The Piping Centre desk (phone 0141 353 0220) for the day's programme.**

### SUNDAY NIGHT CEILIDHS

**Every Sunday, 6p.m. - 11 p.m.. 20 June - 5 September, The Piping Centre auditorium, £7. (Live traditional ceilidh band, dance instruction available.)**

### PIPE BAND

**The Piping Centre Pipe Band practises every Wednesday: new members — drummers as well as pipers — are always welcome.**

**Sat.** Bands (grades 1, 2, 3, 4 & D/M). City of Aberdeen Highland Games.

**Sat.** Campbeltown & Kintyre Highland Games.

**Sat.** Bands (grades 2, 3, 4, juvenile & D/M). Lesmahagow.

**Sat.** Bands (grades 1, 2, 3, 4 & D/M). Old Meldrum.

### JULY

**3 Sat.** All Ireland Pipe Band Contest (grades 1, 2, 3, 4 & D/M). Kilkenny.

**Sat.** Bands (grades 2, 3, 4 & D/M). Thornton.

**Sat.** Bands (grades 1, 2, 3, 4 & D/M). Annan.

**4 Sun.** Bands (grades 2, 3, 4 & D/M). Birmingham.

**Sun.** Cupar Highland Games.

**5 Mon. - 9 Fri.** Piping Summer School at The Piping Centre.

**10 Sat.** Bands (grades 2, 3, 4 & D/M). Corby.  
**Sat.** Forres Highland Games.

**11 Sun.** Bands (grades 2, 3, 4, novice, junior & D/M). Stirling.

**12 Mon. - 16 Fri.** Piping Summer School at The Piping Centre.

**17 Sat.** Bands (grades 1, 2, 3, 4 & D/M). Balloch.

**Sat.** Loch Lomond Highland Games.

**Sat.** North Uist Highland Games.

**Sat.** Lochcarron Highland Games.

**Sat.** Lewis Highland Games.

**Sat.** All England Pipe Band Contest (grades 1, 2, 3, 4 & D/M). Ashbourne.

**21 Wed.** South Uist Highland Games.

**24 Sat.** Bands (grades 1, 2, 3, 4 & D/M). Bangor, Northern Ireland.

**Sat.** Bands (grades 1, 2, 3, 4 & D/M). Dundonald.

**Sat.** Bands (grades 3, 4 & D/M). Dumbarton.

**Sat.** Inverness Highland Games.

**Sat.** Taynuilt Highland Games.

**Sat.** Balquhider, Lochearnhead & Strathyre Highland Games.

**Sat.** Southend Highland Games.

**25 Sun.** Bands (grades 1, 2, 3, 4, novice, junior & D/M). Aboyne.

**Sun.** St Andrews Highland Games.

**31 Sat.** Halkirk Highland Games.

**Sat.** Lochaber Highland Games.

**Sat.** Dufftown Highland Games.

**Sat - Sun 1 August** Bands (grades 2, 3 & 4). Callander Highland Games.

### AUGUST

**1 Sun.** Montrose Highland Games.

**2 Sun.** Mallaig & Morar Highland Games.

**Sun - 4 Tue.** Solo piping. Skye Highland Games.

**2 Mon. - 6 Fri.** Piping Summer School at The Piping Centre.

**4 Tue.** Silver Chanter, Dunvegan Castle, Isle of Skye.

**6 Fri. - 8 Sun.** Border Gathering, Gretna Green.

**6 Fri.** Dornoch Highland Gathering.

**7 Sat.** Inverkeithing Highland Games.

**Sat.** Aboyne Highland Games.

**Sat.** Brodick Highland Games, Arran.

**Sat.** Glenmorangie Tain Highland Gathering.

**Sat.** Newtonmore Highland Games.

## William Jackson's *Land of Light* a worthy anthem

THE HERALD'S 'Song for Scotland' competition has produced a winner: William Jackson's *Land of Light*.

It was chosen by a panel of three judges from 249 entries. The judges' decision was unanimous. Said composer and accordionist Phil Cunningham, who sat on the judging panel: "The hairs on my arms stand well proud when I hear something this good."

William Jackson is a gifted composer, arranger and performer with a thorough appreciation of Scotland's musical traditions.

His *Land of Light* commends itself as a prospective Scottish anthem on a number of counts, over and above its being a pleasing tune.

It is appropriate to have in new

Scotland, a new Parliament and a new anthem as we go into a new millennium. William Jackson's words express more appropriate sentiments for this purpose than the late Roy Williamson's rousing but somewhat anti-English *Flower of Scotland*.

By contrast, *Land of Light* looks forward in words that express the sorts of things you would want to see embodied in any new constitution: justice and hope, confidence and freedom. There are references to Scottish accomplishments, but also to what we offer the world. The incorporation of a Gaelic line into the English version is also appropriate.

The tempo of *Land of Light* will want to be stepped up for some

purposes — and no doubt will be. But it is a simple, haunting and versatile tune.

It adapts well to the pipes (leading theatre impresario Sir Cameron Macintosh has already asked the Lothian Pipe Band to play it at his Millennium hogmanay party) and will suit the full range of Scotland's traditional instruments, as well as lending itself to choral, orchestral, brass band and other arrangements.

Pipers and pipe bands around the world will do well to add this tune to their repertoire.

*Notes* is pleased to publish an arrangement of *Land of Light* for the pipes in this issue. (Page 18)

## Bank of Scotland backing for Schools Project

A £30,000 contribution by the Bank of Scotland towards The Piping Centre's National Schools Piping Project will help to ensure that the project's courses continue to be as accessible as possible, said the project's director, Greg Wilson.

"It is a wonderful affirmation of our aims and significantly enhances the security of the whole project.

"Alongside other contributions we've received towards the Project, it means we can look towards lowering student fees for the next two terms."

Said Roddy MacLeod, director of piping for The Piping Centre: "As well as making a real practical difference, this donation comes as a considerable morale boost in our campaign to do all we can to help and encourage piping tuition in Scotland's schools.

"We are very grateful to the Bank of Scotland."

## <http://www.thepipingcentre.co.uk>

THE PIPING Centre now has its own Internet website at: <http://www.thepipingcentre.co.uk>.

"It's set up and running but there are still one or two pages we want to develop," said the Centre's director of piping, Roddy MacLeod. "We're also keen to develop as many appropriate links as we can."

Pages are in place for each of the Centre's main activities, and attractions, including the conference, accommodation, dining and wedding facilities that help to support the Centre's core purposes related to piping including piping tuition and events, the Piping in Schools Project, the National Museums of Scotland Museum of Piping.

Each page provides quick e-mail links to the appropriate Centre staff.

"Although one or two pages are still under construction and we see tremendous scope for taking it further, what's there is quite comprehensive," said Roddy MacLeod.

"Our website has been quite a long time coming, but we're happy with what we have as the basis for further development — and pleased that it is already being accessed by so many people from around the world."

The development of a website for The Piping Centre began as a project for research students at Glasgow Caledonian University. Lecturer Peter Duncan, who was attending evening classes at the Centre, suggested it could be a good project for two of his students: Gillian Fearn and David Abbott.

After Gillian Fearn took up full time employment, David Abbott continued work on the site, donating his time even after beginning employment with Delphic Interactive. "He's stuck to the task as a volunteer," said Roddy MacLeod, "and we thank him for his loyalty and devotion to the job.

"He's really been the architect of the site. He's also given our staff training in updating the site and continues to be involved."

## Finger Feats

FROM: *Geoffrey Walsh*  
64 Liberton Drive  
Edinburgh

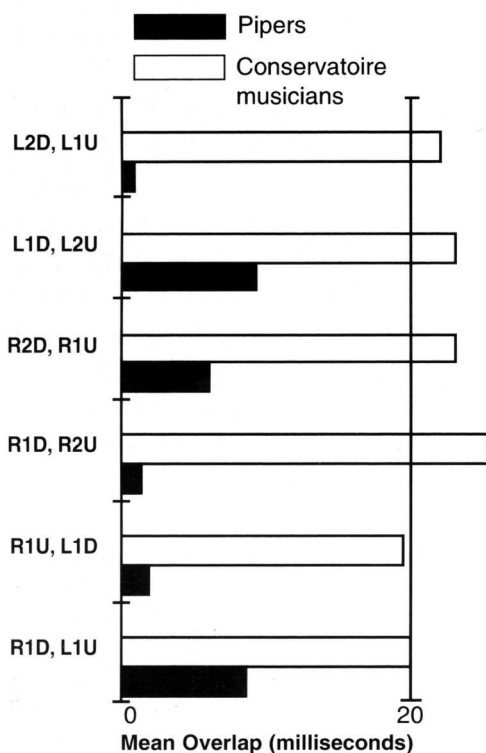
THIS NOTE is just to thank you and the pipers who helped me and Les Wood last Saturday in making the measurements of finger control.

I have plotted out the results and compared them with those from science and medical students. In each of the tests, the mean errors for the pipers were smaller. This result is perhaps not wholly unexpected as the students will in general be expected to have no special dexterity, although they are mostly younger than the pipers.

A few months ago, I went to the Birmingham conservatoire and was able to test some 25 highly skilled classical musicians in the same ways. The comparison with the pipers is interesting. Pipers have clearly smaller errors and all these differences are significant to the  $p < 0.01$  level. (See table below — the nearer the values are to zero, the less the error.)

I hope to speak about these investigations at the meeting of the Galpin Society due to take place in Edinburgh in July.

(The following chart is derived from data provided by Dr Walsh.)



### KEY

R = right; L = left  
1 = index finger; 2 = middle finger  
U = up; D = down

What is measured is the duration of overlap of two finger movements, as on a pipe chanter.

## Letters

Your letters are very welcome. Please sign your letters and give a full address. Letters are published at the discretion of the editor as space permits, and may be abridged.

### John Macdonald Style

FROM: *Ewan Masson*  
86 Harvey Street East,  
Woodville Park, South Australia.

I WAS saddened to read Murray Henderson's obituary for his friend and mentor Donald Bain. Donald had been our house guest on many occasions when here to conduct workshops and adjudicate our annual R. U. Brown Piobaireachd Society of South Australia gold and silver medal competition. We have lost so many teachers of the John Macdonald style. Bob Brown's last teaching workshops were in Adelaide, soon after Hamish Mackenzie, a son of Donald Iain, died. He too was an unassuming man, and gave his knowledge freely provided the pupil listened and practised.

Murray and Patricia Henderson, John D. Burgess and Jimmy MacIntosh have also stayed here. Visitors are always welcome as long as they bring their pipes.

After founding our society and 25 years, with 23 as president, I decided it was time to hand over to a younger person. The current president is Craig Ewan Masson, 23 Arcowie Road, Dernan Court, S. A. 5075. He was well taught by Hamish Mackenzie, attended the R. U. Brown workshops in 1972 and is a piping adjudicator.

### Six in Bermuda

FROM: *Tom Aitchison*  
Roxdene, Apt C-6  
5 Roxdene Lane, Pitts Bay Road  
Pembroke, Bermuda

I WAS amazed to read that you had five new subscribers from Bermuda and am delighted that you have. Now you have six! One of them is undoubtedly William Ferguson. Bill's one of the most enthusiastic pipers I've ever known and plays at many local important functions as well as with the band ... He has to go back quite a number of generations to find his original Scottish ancestor who emigrated to Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. His grandfather came to Bermuda earlier in the century to found the Bermuda Telephone Company.

## Piper's books donated to Centre library

A COLLECTION of books and documents belonging to the late Thomas (Tom) Houston Johnston has been presented to The Piping Centre library by his sister's grandson, Ian Thomas of Dunbar.

Tom Johnston was born in 1897 in Inverarity, Forfarshire, and grew up on a small farm at Creebridge in Galloway. He began piping with a Boys Brigade band and joined the Territorial Army as a piper.

At the outbreak of the First World War, he was a student in Edinburgh. He joined the Seaforth Highlanders, then was selected for a commission and posted to the Camerons. Wounded in a sniping duel, he lost the lower part of a leg.

After the war, he entered the textiles industry. In 1938, his career took him to Leeds where he became chairman and managing director of a successful mill.

As well as working for the welfare of ex-servicemen, Tom Johnston maintained his enthusiasm for piping. He was a driving force behind the establishment of the *City of Leeds Pipe Band* and a piping judge in Scotland, London and South Africa.

Tom Johnston died in July 1978.

The collection donated to The Piping Centre includes a first edition copy of Angus Mackay's *Collection of Ancient Piobaireachd or Highland Music*, several parts of David Glen's *A Collection of Ancient Piobaireachd*, a copy of a paper presented to the Scottish Piping Society of London on 7 March 1952 by Archibald Campbell of Kilberry and various other books and documents.

# Ian Kinnear

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# Researching the early music of the pipes

**T**HE 1999 Royal Scottish Pipers Society Archie Kenneth Memorial Quaich for piobaireachd was won by Barnaby Brown of Glasgow.

He was playing pipes made by Peebles pipe maker Julian Goodacre: a replica of a set in the National Museums of Scotland bagpipes collection at The Piping Centre.

Said Barnaby Brown: "They are very slender and deliciously light — they don't weigh your shoulder down in the slightest — and they produce a gorgeous, sonorous sound."

"The original drones<sup>1</sup> [of elder wood with horn mounts] were reputedly played at the Battle of Waterloo and look very similar to the sketch on the front of Joseph MacDonald's *Compleat Theory of the Scots Highland Bagpipe* (c.1760), except that the bass drone has three joints, not two.

"The reeds in them are massive. The tenor reeds look like bass reeds and the bass reeds are proportionately bigger.

"The chanter<sup>2</sup> [of Macassar ebony with ivory sole and bulb] is thought to have come from Mull; perhaps it was a Rankin who played it.

"It's an important chanter, and I would say could be early or mid 18th century — beautiful," he said.

"The pitch of the chanter is about Bb. All of the 18th century chanters which I have tried appear to be more or less Bb. Why this notion has persisted that pitch in the 18th century was A, a semitone lower than today, I don't know. (I think pitch did go down in the 19th century, and there certainly were chanters towards the end of last century that were much lower in pitch.)"

The tune he played for judges Donald MacPherson and Andrew Wright at the March 6 competition was the *Piobarich aon Crochan*<sup>3</sup> (*Piobaireachd aon Cnocan*), an unpublished tune from

the Colin Campbell canntaireachd manuscript.

"I played all my taobhlùth [taorluath] and crunnlùth [crunluath] movements the old way — with an additional low A before the E grace note. And there was very little hanging about on 'cadence E'. But, first and foremost, the thing that was different about the way I played was playing the ground a total of four times.

"I played it after the lùth sleamhainn (smooth) variation set, known today as the dithis, but in Joseph MacDonald's *Compleat Theory of the Scots Highland Bagpipe* (c. 1760) it is called the lùth sleamhainn, the smooth movement.

"I played it again after the taobhlùth doubling and again after the crunnlùth doubling.

"Then, after the fourth playing of the ground, I played the crunnlùth a mach to finish the tune. Crun lùth a mach means the 'crun lùth' going out

**"'Ceol mor' is something of a misnomer because a lot of it is small and many of those small pieces were discarded during the 19th century because they didn't fit the competition piobaireachd mould."**

— 'a mach' means 'out'. So a crunnlùth a mach is definitely the end of the tune. The ground was never played after the crun lùth a mach in the MacCrimmon era.

"The deletion of these repetitions of the ground between variation cycles happened towards the end of last century. Angus Mackay wrote 'D.C.' after every single taobhlùth doubling and every crun lùth doubling — it's there in his manuscripts — and it inevitably means you play the piece in a different way. You can't repeat the ground exactly as you played it the first time: it's not musical, there has to be some progression.

"You don't play the ground four times in every piobaireachd — this tune which I played at the competition had a very short ground and the kind

of structure where it's appropriate. There are other piobaireachd where you just go through all the variations that there are and then play the ground again at the end.

"There's another variety of tune where there is only one variation. For example, if you have a long ground, a lament I'm thinking of generally, then you'll have a variation and then you'll play the whole of the ground again. I think many of the laments were like that when their function was to caoine (keen) rather than to win prizes.

"These different styles of tune have been lost now that piobaireachd is a very pigeon-holed branch of piping. I feel that the range of moods and styles and musical contrasts within piobaireachd have kind of degenerated into one homogenous bracket."

"There are, for example, beautiful short pieces that never occur on the competition platform because they're not 'big' enough. 'Ceol mor' is something of a misnomer because a lot of it is small and many of those small pieces were discarded during the 19th century because they didn't fit the competition piobaireachd

mould. If you go back to the Campbell canntaireachd, you find delightful little variation sets where extraordinary, wild, creative things happen which have been dismissed as 'erratic'."

Barnaby Brown brings a scholarly approach to pipe music that is still rare. He is a Cambridge University music graduate and former principal flautist with the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain. He is a modern and Baroque flute recitalist and has featured in a number of prestigious orchestral performances.

Now, he has made a musical return to the pipes.

Barnaby Brown took his first piping tuition with the College of Piping when he was eight years old, with instruction from Tommy Pearson, Fred Morrison (snr) and, for four years,

<sup>1</sup> These drones were lodged with the museum by Mrs Younger of Melrose.

<sup>2</sup> This chanter was donated to the museum by Alasdair Reid of Lochbuie, Mull.

<sup>3</sup> Colin Campbell's spelling.



**BARNABY BROWN ...** “I feel that, during the height of the MacCrimmon era, there was a real excitement of composition — people were creating music.

from Seamus MacNeill. He competed in the junior piobaireachd at the Cowal Highland Games when he was 12: “It was pouring with rain, I slipped on the platform and broke up. That was the last time I competed.”

He piped with the Knightwood Novice Juvenile Pipe Band and, later, for the Loretto Pipes and Drums tour to the United States in 1989.

By then, though, the flute had largely taken over his musical life.

It was only in his last year at Cambridge, not having piped for six years, that he rediscovered the pipes.

“I had to write a dissertation and came across the Piobaireachd Society editions on the university library book shelves,” he said. “I started at *Book 1* and went through the whole series doing a structural and tonal analysis, and that’s where it started.”

From Cambridge, he took a teaching job at an international school in Rome, before continuing his studies in Berlin.

In Rome, he saw an advertisement for replica Highland bagpipes and promptly ordered a set. “That set caused me a year and a half of woe.

**“My interest is in getting back a little closer to piobaireachd as it was during the MacCrimmon dynasty.**

**After all, they’re the composers of this music we still play.”**

That’s putting it too strongly — but I would say that, whereas in the urban musical tradition period instruments and the whole concept of authenticity and historically-informed performance have been through almost 50 years of development, it’s still in its infancy in Scotland.”

In Berlin, Barnaby Brown completed his survey of 18th century piobaireachd, preparing editions of all the unpublished works from facsimile copies of the earliest sources.

“As far as the indigenous musical culture of Britain is concerned, the

Colin Campbell canntaireachd collection is even more important than the Robert Ap Huw manuscript — a circa 1613 bardic tablature that has been fascinating scholars ever since it was written because it was noted down by the last of the classically trained Welsh bards.

“I feel that, during the height of the MacCrimmon era, there was a real excitement of composition — people were creating music. Evidence of this abounds in the texts as they were written down by Colin Campbell.

“A lot of what has been read into that manuscript as errors or corruptions are in fact the whole spirit of 18th century piobaireachd.

“When you have a text-based musical culture, such as that which emerged in the 19th century, the creative role played by the performer is inevitably diminished. I feel that performers in the 18th century were much more their own masters.

“There is a vivacity, a rhapsodic spontaneous musicianship, a richness is recorded by Campbell that is missing in the music we know as piobaireachd today.

“A change in aesthetic is very noticeable as you go from that underpinning the Campbell canntaireachd, and compare it with the records from 1830 onwards.

“To take metre as an example: Angus Mackay had picked up the urban musical aesthetic: he’d been taught there should be four beats in every bar if the time signature was 4/4 and, because he was taught this by his social superiors, he very fervently believed it. So he corrected what his father taught him by adding extra tails to notes to squeeze five beats into four or adding extra notes to the melody to fill up incomplete bars. In the Campbell canntaireachd the irregularities are all still there, many things that would never have passed Angus Mackay’s aesthetic filter.

“I don’t want to defame Angus Mackay at all. He was being a true musician, true to his age.

“But my interest is in getting back a little closer to piobaireachd as it was during the MacCrimmon dynasty. I’m happy to do that because I feel that the earliest texts and the evidence of performance style that we have are incredibly musical ... and nobody’s playing them.

“At the moment, we are playing 17th and 18th century compositions on Victorian instruments in a 20th century style. Eighteenth century instruments do survive and bits and pieces of 17th century instruments. There are indications in art (although they’re very problematic), and a wealth of manuscripts that would be the envy of any other country in the world.

“Why these have not already produced a dozen PhDs is a cause for concern. I don’t think anyone before Alan MacDonald has really tackled the central issue: the music. People have looked at peripheral issues such as history and folklore. But to my mind, as a musician, what’s important is the music and we have hundreds of pages of manuscript that have received next

Continued on page 8

# Researching the early music

Continued from page 7

to no scholarly attention. A little circumspection is all that's required to see that what we have here in Scotland, in our manuscript and oral heritage, is something valuable not just to our own sense of national pride but to the cultural heritage of the globe — grand words, I know. But people (overseas) are interested in and love piobaireachd."

One deterrent to serious musicological study may have been the range of skills needed to address many of the problems. The surviving examples of early pipes, for example, present their own set of complexities.

Barnaby Brown has looked at 12 pre-1760 chanters so far and has found all are very different. "I'm not sure that they all would have sounded that different. So much depends on the reed and, of course, there has always been a certain tolerance. Today there is wide tolerance in the pitch of certain notes — D, high G, low G and B, and high A in fact. There is a significant range of acceptable values for these notes. One person may prefer one value, another person may prefer another.

"This is due to the number and proximity of the consonance peaks you get as you raise the pitch up against the drones.

"I'm sure that the temperament used by the bards when they tuned their harps was what was in the ears of all these pipers when they were designing their instruments in the 16-17th and early 18th centuries.

"The harp was so very much around. Iain Dall was himself a harper and a piper. I can't believe that musicians in the same culture, even in the same skin, could tune one instrument one way and another instrument another. I'm fairly certain that the scale on the harp and the scale on the bagpipe would have been pretty similar.

"The harp which I've just started learning — brass strung, solid hewn-out sound box, played with the finger

***"I'm sure that the temperament used by the bards when they tuned their harps was what was in the ears of all these pipers when they were designing their instruments in the 16-17th and early 18th centuries."***

nails — is so resonant that, if you haven't tuned the strings to one of these consonance peaks, you get a very strong beating sound. It's even more prominent I would say than with the bagpipe. If you have a D for example, it's very difficult to hear the beat against the drone unless you've got a very well balanced set of pipes and your ears are accustomed to it. With the harp, it's very noticeable.

"Bill Taylor and other players of the authentic clarsach today tune all the notes of their scale to perfect consonances using fourths and fifths. This leaves the major thirds slightly sharp: sharper than pure. The old Highland chanters, however, give a major third that is slightly flat. It boils down to C. Whether C should be a pure major third with the drones or not: that's the question.

Barnaby Brown is now preparing for an Edinburgh Festival concert of piping on 30 August when he will play Julian Goodacre's pipes in a programme that also includes Roddy MacLeod, Willie MacCallum and Alan MacDonald.

"I don't know what I'll be playing in Edinburgh.

"The difficulty is that on this chanter, with a modern reed, both the B and C are quite considerably flat.

"For the competition I was fortunate in being given a tune with only five notes that had no C — but I had to vandalise the chanter to get the B up to a pitch I thought I could reasonably go into a competition with.

"I asked Julian (Goodacre) to drill the B hole two millimetres higher than he had measured it because I knew on his prototype how flat it was. I hoped that would bring up the C sufficiently.

"It didn't bring either note up sufficiently, so I did a lot of undercutting that week before the competition. I felt awful vandalising his beautiful replica — his workman-

ship is fantastic — but it does now play with a modern reed.

"Obviously, I'd like to include a tune with a C in it for the Edinburgh concert. At the moment, the C on the chanter is flatter than is generally acceptable these days. I don't think I'd go on an international platform with a C that flat unless I was certain it was that flat in the 18th century.

"The professionals of that period may have consciously sought the vibrancy of discord. Today, we like these concords where there is no beating. The C on the modern scale is fairly universally tuned to a perfect major third: there are no beats at all.

"I have not been able to do that with any 18th century chanter because they're all flat — not as flat as a minor third, just about bang in between. So playing *Lament for Mary MacLeod* with a C that's really flat ... I can't quite bring myself to do that yet.

"I'm hoping and praying I can create a reed that doesn't force me to do that. Having been brought up with it, I quite like that pure major third. But I can't say what I'm doing is authentic if I've gouged out the C hole or drilled it two millimetres higher than it was on the original.

"My priority at the moment is doing experiments with reed and staple design," said Barnaby Brown.

"At the moment, I'm going on the basis of a sketch from the Joseph MacDonald manuscript that appears to suggest the reed was generally stumper: broader along the top and the angle of the blades steeper.

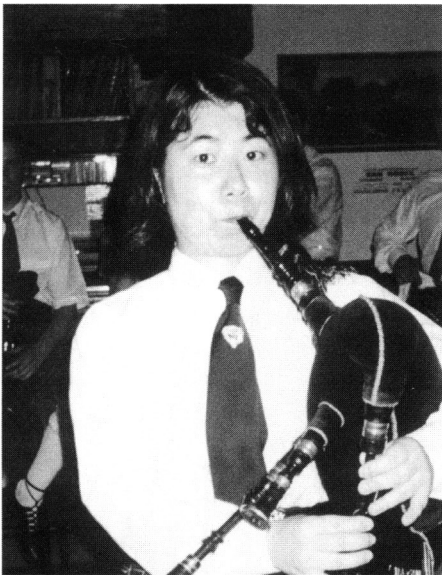
"It is an area that has many, many mysteries."

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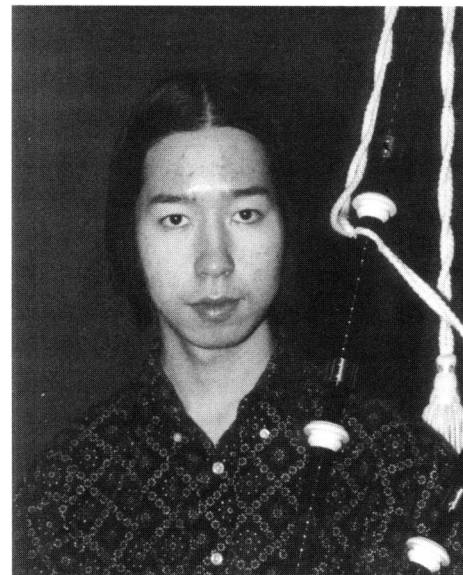
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**YUKARI SASAKI** ... playing traditional Galician gaita bagpipes at a festival in Ortigueira.



**HINAKO SUZUKI** ... "I was surprised at the big, beautiful sound so I decided to play it."



**TERUHIKO NISHIZAWA** ... "I like the bagpipes' sound."

## Centre finds growing links with Japan

**A**PPARENT similarities between Zen Buddhism and Celtic religion helped to play a part in bringing 18-year-old Teruhiko Nishizawa from his home in Osaka, Japan, to The Piping Centre in Glasgow.

He is one of a number of Japanese pipers to have made the expensive and challenging decision to travel half way around the world and into a different culture in pursuit of piping skills.

Hinako Suzuki is another. She spent January as a full time student at The Piping Centre. A 29-year-old, she had already learned the pipes for about a year in Japan.

"When I went to the Highland Games in Japan, I met the Tokyo Pipe Band," she said. "That's my first time to listen to the live playing. I was surprised at the big, beautiful sound so I decided to play it."

Another piper with the Tokyo Pipe Band, Yukari Sasaki, liked her time at The Piping Centre so much she extended her stay to five weeks. She also brushed up on her Highland dancing skills.

With the Neilston and District Pipe Band — whose pipe major, Iain MacDonald, has worked hard over the years to foster relations between the

Japanese band and Scotland — she went to Galicia, to a traditional music festival in Ortigueira, where she had the opportunity to try her hand at the local gaita bagpipes.

Teruhiko Nishizawa had also encountered the Tokyo Pipe Band but had the opportunity to take only three lessons with the band before coming to Scotland.

As a high school student, he had spent six months at Hobart College, Tasmania, where he first saw the pipes played and heard a pipe band for himself. Before that, his only experience had been from television.

"I have been interested in Celtic religion because Celtic religion is similar to Zen Buddhism," he said. "Zen admires nature very much. At first I am interested in Celtic music, and I like the bagpipes' sound."

An acoustic guitar player and maker, Teruhiko Nishizawa comes from a musical family: "my father plays Japanese bamboo flute, my mother plays piano and is a painter. My aunt plays mandolin and my older sister plays French horn. All my family plays musical instruments.

"I wanted to learn to play the bagpipe but in Hobart I couldn't," he said.

"After I finished school, I met the Tokyo Pipe Band, but I am from Osaka, a long distance away. I wanted

to come here (to Scotland) for the bagpipes and to learn English." He spends his time between The Piping Centre and Glasgow Caledonian University where he is studying English. Glasgow, he says, is a friendly city.

One day, Teruhiko Nishizawa would like to pipe with a Scottish band and, despite cultural and language differences, would like to stay in Scotland. He hopes to learn pipe-making and possibly become a piping tutor or Japanese language teacher.

**THE TOKYO Pipe Band was formed in 1975 by Dr Masami Yamane with the intention of helping to welcome Queen Elizabeth to Tokyo during a Royal Visit to Japan.**

Through an advertisement for pipers and drummers in the English language *Japan Times*, he recruited a band of six pipers: a Scot, an Australian, two Americans and two Japanese. Since then the band has grown in size and talent.

In May 1987, under the instruction of Piping Tutor Michael Green and Pipe Major Atsushi Yamane (Dr Yamane's son), the band made its competition debut with a creditable performance at the Jakarta Highland Games.

(Dr Yamane is the inventor of the bagpipe tuner.)

# A time with New Zealand's Donald Bain

**D**URING a tour to New Zealand in 1998, Roddy MacLeod talked with Donald Bain. He began by asking Donald Bain about his introduction to the pipes:

DB: When I was a small boy, the youngest of a family of five living on a farm, the man who used to come and draft the fat lambs to be killed was a piper. My father, having been a piper before the First World War, after they'd done the work, they'd get the pipes out and a bottle of whisky and they'd have a session.

My earliest memories are of listening to the pipes in the room at home. That gave me the idea I wanted to be a piper. I didn't get the opportunity to learn until I was 12 years old and we moved to town and I learned in the local Ashburton Pipe Band.

The man who taught me was a fine old man called David Wilson. After I'd made a bit of progress this friend of my father, George Robertson, took me and taught me until I was about 17.

I was more or less on my own from then until I was 22 and David Boyle came to live in Ashburton and I immediately became a pupil of his over a period of years and started making real progress then.

*RMcL: Was he a brother of Bill Boyle?*

DB: An older brother. In his own right he was a very fine piper and a very good teacher: very patient and painstaking ... very firm ideas on what was right and what was wrong. He's been proved pretty right on most of it.

I competed quite successfully, got married and had a family and started wishing, like a lot of people, I'd gone to Scotland when I was younger.

And my wife, Alice, said: 'well, there's nothing to stop us going now.'

She arranged it and we ended up in Glasgow in a tenement flat in 'toonheid' and I was going to Donald MacLeod for tuition. It was fairly hard going as a family.

*RMcL: How different did you find it, taking lessons with Donald?*

DB: I'd had very little experience of piobaireachd. I'd learned a few and won a few prizes and I didn't really know what I was doing, but that's really why I went — to get the piobaireachd. It was a very simple way he had of teaching: this is how you play it, and he'd either play along with you on the chanter or sing with you. point out the odd thing and, as long as you observed the standard rules that apply to all piobaireachd, he'd be quite happy as long as it was progressing along the right lines.

*RMcL: What age would you have been then?*

DB: That was 1967, and when I started with Donald I would have been 33.

*RMcL: Who else would have been studying with Donald at that time?*

DB: Angus MacLellan was getting tuition at the same time. There was Dougie Ferguson (he worked with Donald and got his tuition that way), Andrew Wright, Dr John MacAskill (he was a medical student). And there were others. He had a lot of different people at all stages coming into the shop for tuition and advice. Sandy MacPherson was one — a young lawyer at that stage.

***I competed quite successfully, got married and had a family and started wishing, like a lot of people, I'd gone to Scotland when I was younger. And my wife, Alice, said: 'well, there's nothing to stop us going now.'***

*RMcL: Did you do any light music with Donald?*

DB: It was focussed on piobaireachd mainly but he used to listen to my light music on the chanter and always seemed to be fairly happy with the style of what I was doing. Sometimes he altered settings to what he considered were better settings than what I was playing but nothing major. I think I was probably playing quite well at that stage of my life.

*RMcL: Did you go around the games?*

DB: Yes. we went to the games in the Glasgow area, Luss and Balloch, and further north up the West Coast. We did all the games we could get to.

I actually got second in the Oban gold medal the first year I was there and fourth at Inverness, and won the light music: march strathspey and reel at Inverness and strathspey and reel at Oban.

*RMcL: On the first attempt?*

DB: Yes. Strathspey and reel at Oban, and second in the medal; fourth in the medal at Inverness and I won the march strathspey and reel. I didn't think much of it at the time but looking back...

*RMcL: That would have made people sit up and take notice.*

DB: I suppose it did.

*RMcL: And then back to New Zealand?*

DB: We had a winter and another summer. the second summer wasn't very good. I just couldn't get it together. And then I came back to New Zealand and tried to digest all I'd learned.

*RMcL: How do you rate Bob Brown as an influence on your piping?*

DB: He was a great influence. While we were living for the two years in Scotland, Malcolm MacRae, a pupil of Bob Brown at the time, lived with us and I got a bit of insight into Brown's thinking from him, which I found very interesting. But I was sticking to what I was learning from Donald MacLeod.

Having come home, I thought about it a bit and within a year or two Bob Brown was invited to New Zealand to do a recital and teaching tour. He stayed with me for four or five days and it was a very informative time. I spent a lot of time going over tunes and talking with him and finding out the way he thought about piobaireachd and sort of adapted my way of thinking along the same lines. For me, it was quite a revelation. It simplified things in mind about how the music should go.

Continued on page 11



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when **YOU**  
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got from the  
project:

in each newsletter  
we will publish the  
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went to print and  
send the writers a  
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*So — how was it  
for you?*

*What was your top  
cool time at Centre?*

*Why?*

*What's it doing for  
your piping?*

**W**ELCOME to the first of a regular series of features on the National Schools Piping Project. Through this, we will keep you updated with course developments, future initiatives and also personal feedback from students that have attended a course.

The aim of each course remains to “widen the overall training being offered to young people interested in the Great Highland Bagpipe and it's music, to develop awareness, knowledge and understanding of the instrument and to encourage skills, talent, participation and career development”.

From this aim, it is clear that our remit is outwith mere individual tuition on the pipes. Some individual tuition may be conducted depending on the specific needs of a group but this is generally not the best use of limited time on the course.

Feedback on courses conducted so far has been extremely positive as can be seen from some of the articles and comments in this newsletter. Courses for year one of the project are now fully subscribed and bookings are open for Year 2.

It has taken some time to publicise the Project and at first course bookings were slow. This has picked up tremendously towards the end of the first year which augers well for the next two years.

Piping is very fortunate to have gained a National Lottery Grant which part-funds the project. Every effort should be made to support this initiative as it strikes directly at the central concern we should all have: the future of piping. The National Schools Piping Project is a vital part of ensuring that piping does have a future and that the number of pipers reaching higher standards continues to grow.

Take every opportunity to improve your piping knowledge, standard and experience to ensure your own potential is realised. The National Schools Piping Project is a very important avenue — an opportunity that is assured for the next two years only.

*Greg*

Greg Wilson  
Director  
National Schools Piping Project

# A NEW REED

*Newsletter of the National Schools Piping Project  
at  
The Piping Centre*

# Thank You!

For assistance and expertise: The Army School of Bagpipe Music; McMurchie Bagpipes; Inveran House; Clan Bagpipes; R T Shepherd & Son; Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama; The College of Piping.  
For financial support: The Scottish Arts Council National Lottery Fund; Bank of Scotland, Fort William Branch; Bank of Scotland, Oban Branch; Keepers of the Quaich; Morrison Bowmore Distillers Ltd; The P F Charitable Trust; The Merchants House of Glasgow; the AMW Charitable Trust.

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## • BEST Feedback

**WE ATTENDED the National Schools Piping Project on the 30th March to the 1st April. Each day of the course consisted of a variety of different subjects.**

On the first day of the course we attended various classes which involved reed making and manipulation, theory revision, and maintenance, we were also introduced to Internet Piping Resources on the computers.

Nearer the end of the day we visited the College of Piping in Otago Street, where we got to look around the museum.

On the second day we travelled to Edinburgh to visit the Army School of Bagpipe Music at

Edinburgh Castle, afterwards we visited a Bagpipe Manufacturer, there we learnt all about the wood that pipes are made from and how it is treated. Then we were shown how the pipes were made which was very interesting. In the afternoon we returned to The Piping Centre, we then had classes on Piobaireachd and Canntaireachd, then we did a performance assessment where we were recorded playing on video camera so we could discuss our techniques the next day.

On our final day we spent the morning discussing each other's techniques from the video which I thought was really helpful to learn what our mistakes were or what we could improve on.

PIPING CDs of their choice are being sent to Miranda MacKay and Lorraine Jappy for their BEST Feedback responses.

Be in to win by sending YOUR account of WHAT worked for YOU:

Tell us what was the BEST thing about your course ... and why!

Send your responses to:  
**Morven McKerrell,  
National Schools Piping Project,  
The Piping Centre,  
30-34 McPhater Street,  
Cowcaddens, Glasgow,  
G4 0HW.**

I learnt a lot from this course, it introduced me to a lot of new things and I found it very informative.

I would recommend this course to anyone and I am sure it will be very successful.

Miranda MacKay  
Thurso

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## • BEST Feedback

**I ATTENDED the National Schools Piping Project from the 30th of March to the 1st of April and had an enjoyable learning experience.**

After being welcomed to the project by Greg Wilson and Morven McKerrell we were taken on a tour of the facilities and then browsed around the museum listening to musical extracts whilst learning about piping history.

Next we were introduced to the Piping Web on the Internet and then tried writing out music on the computer which was interesting.

We then had a very beneficial theory revision lesson before learning about proper care and maintenance of pipes. We also went into 'reed manipulation' in

some detail which was extremely useful.

Our first day concluded with a visit to the College of Piping's museum, while our night consisted of practising for our exams and working on our projects which we had selected earlier.

On our second day we travelled to Edinburgh Castle and visited the Army School of Bagpipe Music, before visiting a bagpipe manufacturer in Loanhead. The Army School gave us an interesting insight into piping whereas Craig Scott fascinated us by demonstrating how to make a blowpipe. On returning to the Centre we gained a great insight into Piobaireachd and Canntaireachd with Roddy MacLeod before being recorded on video so our playing could be

assessed.

Day three began with our piping from the previous day being played back to us.

Through in-depth discussion we picked up lots of good points which could be incorporated into our playing whilst discovering bad points to be avoided. We also had a lesson with Dougie Pincock about piping with other instruments before submitting our projects which consisted of four studies of famous pipers and two compositions.

Our course concluded with our piping exams, both written and practical and we were all delighted to have gained an Institute of Piping Certificate at the end of it.

Lorraine Jappy  
Wick

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**M**ACNAUGHTONS VALE of Atholl Pipe Major Ian Duncan tries to take Monday nights off. He sometimes has a clear Tuesday... most of his time is taken up with teaching piping.

MacNaughtons Vale of Atholl in Pitlochry has 109 members with grade one, juvenile and novice juvenile bands, a group of learner beginners and a number of former band pipers who still have the uniform and play at various public engagements.

Ian's brother, Gordon, takes the juvenile band and is musical director for the Grade 1 band. Ian takes the Grade 1 and Novice bands.



"We get a lot of help from Andy Renwick, my pipe sergeant, and other Grade 1 pipers make the effort on Wednesday nights to help me teach: we wouldn't never get round all of the kids otherwise. There are so many, and in a small place like Pitlochry. It's grown and grown."

Ian Duncan is also Pipe Major of the Tayforth Officer Cadet Training Unit pipe band, involving students from St Andrew's, Stirling and Dundee Universities, a role he has held since 1980. He also pipes with the Atholl Highlanders.

And then there is Ian Duncan's day job: for the past 20 years, the former maths teacher has been piping instructor to Dundee area schools.

He visits 16 schools where where he has about 100 pupils at present, from beginners at primary schools to sixth year secondary students.

"Sixteen schools is not bad. You can get from one side of Dundee to the other in 10 minutes — you're lucky if you can do that in Perth — so I don't spend a lot of time sitting in my car."

**"S**ixteen schools is not bad. You can get from one side of Dundee to the other in 10 minutes — you're lucky if you can do that in Perth — so I don't spend a lot of time sitting in my car...

# Never on a Monday

## A National Schools Piping Project Profile

Alongside the piping tuition, Ian Duncan is an examiner for Standard and Higher Grade piping for about 40 schools, sometimes helps to teach a little pure music theory and contributes to the teaching of a section within Standard Grade music on Scottish music. Dundee has no standing school pipe bands, but there is a Dundee Schools Pipe Band which is called up to play when it is needed, perhaps two or three times a year.

Each August, Ian Duncan starts fresh groups of young beginners on their involvement with piping.

There are those who drop out for all sorts of reasons, but many go on to provide the mainstay of bands in the area, including the Grade 2 Tayside Police Pipe Band and the Mackenzie Caledonian Pipe Band.

As in other areas, students taking music towards Standard and Highers qualifications do not have to pay for their tuition. But, said Ian Duncan, few find that music fits easily into their course options at the end of second year.

Thus, unless they are experiencing particular financial hardship, most face a fee of £80 a year to continue their piping. There is no charge for the hire of chanters but the use of a school set of pipes costs £40 a year. "In fact, almost all buy their own," said Ian Duncan. "It's gratifying to see how many not very well-off families will find money to buy pipes, it's great. People certainly want to learn piping, it's a priority, and there is a waiting list," he said.

"There was more piping taught in Dundee when I

• continued next page •

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## Ian Duncan on record

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P/M Ian Duncan features with P/M Roddy MacLeod on the recently released *The Piping Centre 1997 Recital Series Vol. 4* album.

Ian Duncan plays: *The Braemar Gathering/John D. Burgess/Miss Lily Christie; Highland Wedding/Tulloch Castle/John Morrison of Assynt House; the ground of The Lament for the Union; I'll Gang nae mair by yon Toon/Mount Stewart House/The Lovat Scouts/Dornoch Links/Glengarry's March/The Men of the Loom; Erwan Ropers Air/The Man from Skye/Crossing the Minch; The Earl of Seaforth's Salute.*



• continued from previous page •

**“I make sure they all join bands, and I encourage the best to go to people like Donald MacPherson once they get to a certain stage...**

started, but I'm sure there are more pipers now than there were then.”

One reason for the decline in tuition in the area, he said, had been a decline in the number of bands, especially Boys Brigade bands. “There are two very healthy ones left in Dundee, the 68th and 13th, and there's one in Monifieth as well, and certainly the standard's a lot higher, but there used to be many more,” he said.

“The big change since I started the job is that piping wasn't in any primary schools. That was something I had to push for: to get them started in primary.”

Now, eight of the schools Ian Duncan visits are primary schools and he seldom starts new pupils at secondary level.

“I find they tend to give up — they get to 14, second year, and give up.”

Ian urges those who stick with it and progress to seek extra tuition. “I make sure they all join bands, and I encourage the best to go to people like Donald MacPherson once they get to a certain stage. Donald's more knowledgeable in piobaireachd than me and he has taken people like Andrew Wright (now with the Black Watch), Bruce Erskine and Eddie Gotstaff (two highly promising young pipers).”

Ian Duncan has also sent two groups of young pipers to National Piping for Schools courses.

“I'll never get a student for more than 25 minutes a week. In that time, you're obviously throwing in little bits of other aspects of piping but it is basically just that 25-minute or half-hour solid lesson on how to play, and a bit of bagpipe maintenance.

“They don't get very much else which is the beauty of the

course at The Piping Centre. Both of the groups I had through were impressed with the course.

“I benefited as well,” he said. “It was good to see some ex-pupils there at the Centre too: people like Louise Hay, the first piper to be accepted for the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama course. She's doing awfully well.

“I'd never had much to do with typesetting the music and found that quite exciting.

“The students found that the least interesting part of the course funnily enough, probably because they get plunked down in front of computers every other day at school.

“But the course made them aware there's really a lot more to find out. They've all benefited.

“They enjoyed it, and it was motivating.”

**Students attending courses are requested to help make Morven happier in her work...**

*Be the first person to ask for an EGG sandwich*

**A**S Assistant for the National Schools Piping Project, I had assumed that all the “other duties” referred to in my job description would be your typical office tasks.

But I've been glad to be proved wrong.

I have visited Edinburgh Castle and the Army School of Bagpipe Music, and shared some of the best kept secrets in the world of bagpipe and reed making.

I have listened to many of you who have been on project courses and the aspirations you have with your own instrument, something I can relate to because I, too, am coming from a traditional music background.

Don't get me wrong, there

have also been a few less delightful tasks — like changing a tyre on a busy M8 at 8 o'clock in the morning with the bus full of sleepy students, and being left with the egg sandwiches because nobody else likes them.

But, seriously, the project is a landmark in terms of the way it stands for a new recognition for the Great Highland Bagpipe and its history.

The project is unique in that it offers promising young pipers a wider perspective and understanding of their instrument, and that little bit extra, something that time prohibits in the routine of weekly lessons.

To the end of May, we have had 85 young pipers attend the courses and we

have covered areas in the Highlands, the Western Isles, Aberdeen, Dundee, Perth, Argyll and Bute, Falkirk and Clackmannan. The enthusiasm from the students and their instructors has been overwhelming and will be a great incentive for other young pipers.

With the help and guidance of The Scottish Arts Council, the support of the Bank of Scotland, and the energy and support of the students and tutors, instructors and other staff at The Piping Centre — and all the other people who help in some way towards the project — we feel we are helping to preserve a valuable part of Scotland's heritage through some of today's young people — because YOU are tomorrow's piping future.

# Donald Bain...

Continued from page 10

He stressed the equal importance of thinking and playing in phrases — one bar or two bar, whatever they may be — and marking in quite definitely and line endings. He had a system of working out the rhythm by each pulse. In a common time tune, say, there may be a strong pulse, two medium pulses and another strong pulse in each bar, and you wouldn't stick to it rigidly but the general trend of each bar would fit into that rhythm.

I think it brings more music out. It makes more musical sense to me. One of the greatest things was that you could look at a tune you'd never heard and get some idea of how it could be played. You hear pipers playing a bar and they'll play a strong pulse and then another strong pulse, whereas I feel they should go on to the end of the bar. It's like stopping in the middle of a phrase and to me it doesn't have the same attraction, it's more of a mechanical thing rather than a musical thing.

*RMcL: So Bob Brown and Donald MacLeod had quite different styles of teaching — yet both come from the same teacher, John MacDonald of Inverness?*

DB: Yes. Brown's teaching, I imagine, was more similar to the way John MacDonald would have taught. I don't know where he got this idea of the scansion of the phrases from. Maybe that was his own method. But I find it very successful. I think Donald MacLeod, the fact he had so many pupils and so little time, he sort of did it on a basis of teach three or four people at once doing it his way and 'here's the tune', you take it and you do it yourself at home, rather than painstakingly getting you to learn it, play it and he'd correct it and play it again. It would have been just too time consuming ... he was such a busy man.

*RMcL: Were you able to keep in touch with Bob Brown?*

DB: He left a lot of recordings. Our Piobaireachd Society here in New Zealand has a library you can get copies of a lot of the stuff he did when

he was here, teaching by singing.

If you had a new tune to learn and you got a book out and a practice chanter, he wouldn't have that at all. He'd sing the tune, you'd watch the music, then you'd sing along with him. He would say that if you wanted to learn to play the tune well to go away and learn the song. Then pick up your pipes and play it. It's very difficult to get people to do that but, myself, I'm sure that's the way it should be, that's the old way.

I try to bring it out in my teaching. People are self conscious about singing. I used to teach Greg Wilson quite a bit when he was younger and that's the way we used to do it.

*RMcL: You've had a few notable pupils.*

DB: Yes. Murray Henderson was a young lad when I left and he made a lot of progress while I was away. He was an avid learner ... very, very keen.

*RMcL: When did you next manage to get back to Scotland?*

***"If you had a new tune to learn and you got a book out and a practice chanter, he (Bob Brown) wouldn't have that at all. He'd sing the tune, you'd watch the music, then you'd sing along with him. He would say that if you wanted to learn to play the tune well to go away and learn the song. Then pick up your pipes and play it."***

DB: I went back in 1977 ... and had another bad year. Everything went wrong. I had a new chanter and my fingers didn't fit on the holes and I got a lot of squeaks and it was pretty disappointing. But I won a second gold medal at Braemar. I'd won the first one ever presented in 1968 and that one



**DONALD BAIN ... "I don't know where he (Bob Brown) got this idea of the scansion of the phrases from. Maybe that was his own method. But I find it very successful."**

was presented by Angus MacPherson. The judges (in 1968) were the Bobs (Brown and Nichol), and Pipe Major Alex MacDonald who'd been the Queen's Piper.

*RMcL: Was it just that one summer of 1977 you were over for?*

DB: Yes, about eight or nine weeks.

But I determined to go back. By this time I was 45 years old and I thought it was sort of a last gasp if I wanted to do something, so I went in 1979 again and everything went very well.

*RMcL: What prizes did you win that year?*

DB: I got second in the march at Oban, I remember that. I could never do any good in the former winners' events at Oban. But I won three in a row: at Lonach, at Braemar and then the gold medal at Inverness.

When I was walking over the bridge over the Ness River in the morning I felt confident I could play well and I did. I felt good about things.

Continued on page 12

# Donald Bain...

Continued from page 11

I played first. I heard most of the competition and there was some good playing: Angus MacDonald played *Lament for the Only Son*, I thought that was pretty good, and I thought Jack Leigh was pretty good. he didn't get a prize but he played well. And I didn't think about the result actually. You don't do you. I was very surprised when I won it but pretty satisfied too.

RMcL: Can you remember what tune you played in the gold medal?

DB: MacCrimmon's Sweetheart.

RMcL: You must have been one of the first New Zealanders to crack that top level of competition, would that be right?

DB: Lewis Turrell and Alan Dodd back in the '50s, they did that — they went over as young men and both were very successful and brought back a lot of experience to New Zealand which people like me benefited from. But I think I'm the only one that packed up his wife and family and tried it.

**"I've found the problem is to get people with real talent who also have a good attitude ...to get the two things going at once. But the ones that are prepared to work at it, they make very good pipers."**

RMcL: You would have been invited back for what is now the Glenfiddich Championships?

DB: Yes. I had no intention of going. Alice was in hospital the day I left to go over to the main competition season and she wasn't all that well when I got back. Friends had looked after her and that. I had no intention of going but, by the time it came time to go, she had recovered quite a bit and she said: 'you'll only get one chance at it — so go'.

RMcL: This would be October 1979?

DB: Yes. They (John Grant and Sons) paid some of the expenses and MacIntosh and Henderson — I was playing one of their chanters — made up the difference. And when I got there, I had accommodation with Murray and Patricia Henderson and that was a big bonus. It was a great experience, a bit overwhelming.

I was persuaded to go back two years later. I did go back but took Alice

with me and she had quite an extended tour around Europe. I really wasn't playing well enough to be competitive but I did compete and it was really a bit of an anti-climax.

RMcL: Apart from teaching, do you have other piping involvements at the moment?

DB: I'm involved with a small Grade Two band here, a community thing. It's enjoyable and sometimes you can achieve a reasonable standard. Playing in the band keeps the pipes going

RMcL: I've been impressed by what I've seen here. You must be happy enough with standards in New Zealand these days?

DB: In 20 years it's unbelievable. I've found the problem is to get people with real talent who also have a good attitude, and to get the two things going at once. But the ones that are prepared to work at it, they make very good pipers.

**Donald MacKinnon Bain died at his home in New Zealand on 18 November last year.**

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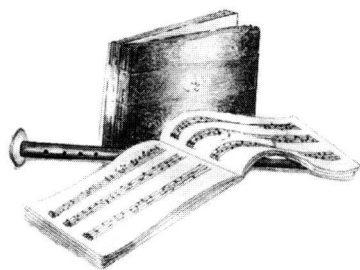
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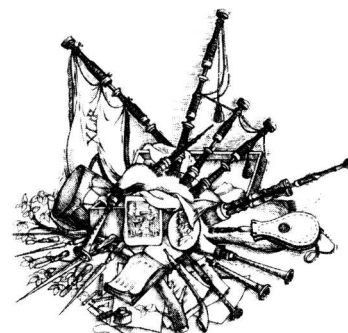


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# Piping for bulls and bears at the NYSE

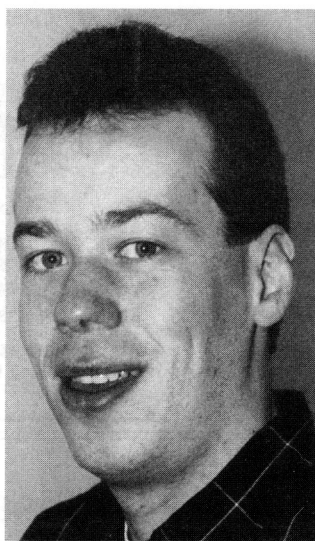
**W**HEN ScottishPower Corporation stock made its debut on the New York Stock Exchange on 8 September 1997, it was to the sound of pipes.

The piper was fourth generation Irish New Yorker Brian Meagher who had spent the summer of the previous year with the ScottishPower Pipe Band in Scotland.

"It was great," he said. "The guys on the floor loved it. I led the ScottishPower executives around the floor then over to the trading booth where ScottishPower was to be traded. Everyone was clapping and whooping and hollering."

Piping is popular in New York, but many new Yorkers see the pipes as Irish cultural property. "There's a lot of bands," he said. "But most of the pipers are of Irish background and, I would say, most New Yorkers probably see pipe bands as Irish."

Brian Meagher, back in Scotland for two months preparing his repertoire for the competitions season, was brought up on piping in New York. "My great grandfather immigrated to the Bronx," said Brian Meagher. "He thought piping would be a good way to keep his connection with Ireland. So he learned the pipes and he taught all his kids and it kept going."



**BRIAN MEAGHER ...**  
"Everyone was clapping and whooping and hollering."

Thomas Meagher, Brian's grandfather was the New York City Fire Department Pipe Band's first instructor; an uncle, Pearce Meagher, founded the New York Police Department Pipe Band. Brian's father Brian snr, a retired police sergeant, and brother Justin, a serving police officer, are both current members.

Brian Meagher's first instructors were his father and grandfather. He joined the Clan Na Vale Pipe Band in New Jersey when he was 13, then moved to another New Jersey band: Parlin and District. "It won the grade 2 in the North American championships at Maxville, Ontario and the following year placed third in Grade 1," said Brian Meagher. "It was a good band."

It had been started in the early 1980s, a revival of the Kenmure Pipe Band by the son of the earlier band's Pipe Major, George Bell, who still teaches piobaireachd in the New York area. At the same time, 1987-1991, Brian Meagher piped with and became pipe major of his college band, Iona College in New Rochelle.

When, after only seven or eight years, the Parlin and District band folded, Brian Meagher joined the City of

Washington Pipe Band. With Iceland Air sponsorship, the City of Washington band has been a regular grade two competitor at the World Pipe Band Championships. In 1998, it was the runner-up in Grade 2; in 1997, 5th; in 1996, second.

Brian Meagher instructs the New York City Fire Department Pipe Band and teaches piping at New York University. On the United States competitions circuit, he was promoted to the open grade two years ago but the pressure of law studies has kept him away from the competition boards.

Newly graduated, he begins work in September as an assistant district attorney in Brooklyn. Until then, he is getting in as much piping as he can. "It's a great experience coming to Scotland," he said. "You see so much when you come over and we just don't have that opportunity in the States."



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Dr Angus MacDonald

## What's to find in a fiddle

**D**R ANGUS MacDonald's pipes lie beside him on the table; in his hands is the fiddle.

Increasingly, says this eminent piper, he finds himself reaching for the fiddle when he wants to have fun with music.

"I always wanted to play the fiddle but, until I was about 30, it didn't occur that it was possible. The thinking was that you played one instrument and, if you tried to play two, you'd spoil yourself for the other," he says: "...absolute nonsense."

In the Moidart-Lochailart area where he was brought up, Dr MacDonald recalls that there used to be a number of fiddlers. Few remain, or still play. "I wish now I'd picked it up from them," he says.

Instead, he began learning the fiddle during the 11 years he spent as a GP in Cape Breton.

He found that the pipe tradition there was in a decline. "At a concert, people would tend to go for a smoke or a pee if you got up to play the pipes because they were used to a bit of howling and squealing and poor musicianship. The way to get in among the scene and learn the tunes was to get the fiddle out and get at it."

He took several formal lessons but, he says, "quickly realised that was the wrong way to go about it."

Instead, he invited local fiddlers to get together every Tuesday night — "and, although there were nights I thought 'I just can't, I don't have the time', I'd go down and we'd play tunes and it was a great experience."

Dr MacDonald believes that, in the case of any of the traditional instruments, the tradition is best served when musicians learn, first of all, by ear. "I'm totally convinced about that now," he says.

"When I was young, people who were known as 'ear players' were often seen as second rate because they didn't have the right technique, yet

they often had far more music to present to people to make up for the deficiencies in technique. But being an ear player doesn't have to make you deficient in technique," he says.

"The important thing with the ear player is that you hear far more forever; you're far better trained to pick up what you should be playing and you hear how to play a tune rather than just to move your fingers in the right way."

"Now that the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama have traditional music students, they should be getting them out into the community and looking at these points, seeing what is going to preserve our culture. And I think that the methods we have for teaching it should be closely looked at."

He says an academic study of fiddling in Cape Breton found that traditional fiddlers who had been taught at home or in their own communities, usually by a friend, neighbour or close relative — and who had learned first by ear — were the musicians most likely to hand the music on to the next generation. They were also more likely than formally taught musicians to compose successfully.

**DR MacDonald sees what he is doing with the fiddle usefully feeding back into his piping.**

"It gives me access to a lot of new tunes that can be put on the pipes, tunes that were once on the pipes and versions of tunes that have been improved and sanitised for the pipes but still exist in the raw form on fiddle.

"There's a whole body of music there ready to be explored. You can adapt them to pipes and put the wildness and naturalness back into them.



**DR ANGUS MacDonald ... "You can put on the fiddle what you hear in Gaelic song, you can do what the human voice does without being restricted by holes in a piece of wood."**

You can put on the fiddle what you hear in Gaelic song, you can do what the human voice does without being restricted by holes in a piece of wood; you can slide up as a voice would do naturally in a song.

"Sometimes this gives you a bit of understanding to take back to the pipes in different way, to get a more musical interpretation."

"In the case of the pipes, what I play often doesn't belong to my culture.

"Piping can be far too much competition. If I tried to play reels as I hear reels being played (and sung for that matter) in the Gaelic tradition — in that round fashion — I'd get condemned in piping competition circles and told that it was wrong.

"You get fed up with that until you almost want to put the pipes aside and get on with the music you feel belongs to you.

"When I heard older musicians in Cape Breton — playing tunes like *Caberfeidh*, and the likes of that, the pìirt a beuill, *Nead a Circe Fraoch* (the

***“Ireland is way ahead when it comes to that. They’ve recognised the value of their music and culture and it’s come from the people themselves, from ground-swell organisations ... It came from promoting the music within communities — and their music industry is now an important part of the Irish economy.”***

Muileann Dubh) — they followed the words that I’d heard my father singing. I could hear the words going through my head.

“That was important to me. I know that gave me a passion for trying to play the fiddle and to try to put that feeling back on the pipes.”

Dr MacDonald sees problems within the piping world itself. “A lot of times, when the pipes are presented to the public, it’s competition.

“The piper is not there to entertain, he’s there to prove to the judges that he’s technically able and sounds good.

“When — it was probably technology as much as anything which allowed pipes to be played in a folk scene and along with other instruments — when that started to happen, the snobbishness in the conservative piping world condemned it. And it’s only lately that that is changing.

“But the established piping scene is not concerned with teaching people, or encouraging people, to be good at entertaining with the pipes.”

When it comes to “entertainment” involving traditional music, Dr MacDonald sees the conventions having been largely defined by television.

“Even with Gaelic television, the

programme has got to be acceptable to the mass audience, so you have to be able to wrap it up in two minutes, not be ‘boring’, keep it lively and entertaining. They have the backdrop, the musicians are dressed up to make them look good. And you’ve got to make them look active.

“You can’t have a 10-verse Gaelic song, it’s got to be cut to three. It’s got to be in waltz time so people appreciate the beat — so what you end up with really is an English song in Gaelic, there’s nothing Gaelic about it but the words.

“If you listen to the older Gaelic singers, there’s a beat at the beginning of the bar and a beat at the end. In between, it flows with the words rather than with the music. The emphasis is on putting the bardachd poetry across, rather than the beat of the music. It compares with what pipe bands have done to piping: you put the bass drum in there and there’s a steady beat you can’t deviate from. What it’s done to reel playing is devastating but it’s easier to do. To put 20 men together and get them to play on the beat, you’ve lost the whole beauty of the tune, especially when it comes to a slow air.

“Until they decide to present Gaelic

television as the Gaels want to see it, then it’s not going to work. There are hints of it happening, but it’s still determined by the watchers of *Machair*, the mass audience has to be catered for.

“By way of contrast, I was watching a video the other night, a collection of performances on Irish Television going back to the 1960s. They had people in these natural settings. Even if it was inside a studio, they looked natural. They hadn’t told them to dress up with your tie and national Irish costumes: the bothach was in there just as he would be dressed in his home village. They were there to play their music rather than be tarted up for some national show.

“Ireland is way ahead when it comes to that. They’ve recognised the value of their music and culture and it’s come from the people themselves, from ground-swell organisations like Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eirean.

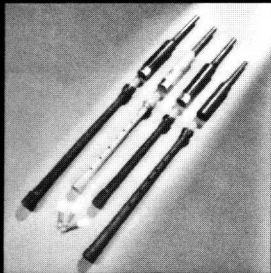
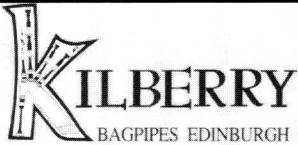
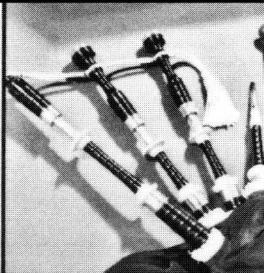


“It came from promoting the music within communities — and their music industry is now an important part of the Irish economy.”

Even in Ireland, Dr MacDonald concedes, country and western is far more popular than traditional music, “but it’s still possible to have a healthy traditional culture existing side by side and feeding other things — like Country and Western music, which I’m sure grew out of traditional music anyway — without destroying the tradition.

“We have lost the method of transmission in the home, but we’ve now got recordings that people can refer to.

“A lot of it is still locked away in places like the School of Scottish Studies and hasn’t been accessed, but that will come,” says Dr MacDonald.

“There’ll be far greater access to some of the older recordings and the ability to keep some of the tradition — depending on how we choose to teach it.”

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# Land of Light (arranged for pipes and pipe band)

— William Jackson

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**WILLIAM JACKSON**, most widely known through his recordings since 1976 with *Ossian* and as a harp soloist as well as a composer, is a highly versatile musician.

Major compositions have included the *Wellpark Suite*, the *St Mungo Suite*, *Corryvreekan*, *Columcille* and *Scottish Island*, all written for chamber orchestra and traditional musicians.

In addition to his concert, recording and composing work, William Jackson is a music therapist, specialising in working with children with cerebral palsy and autism.

*Land of Light* was his winning entry in a competition organised by *The Herald*, Glasgow, to find a possible new anthem for Scotland.

Words to the anthem are:

*O Land of Light  
Ancient and strong  
Land of justice, and hope of the young  
Land of the glen and shining river  
Scotland my homeland forever  
Alba mo dhuthaich gu deireadh mo la.  
Freedom and truth  
Music and verse  
Carried a flame to the ends of the earth  
Dear to my heart, where e'r I wander  
Scotland my homeland forever  
Alba mo dhuthaich gu deireadh mo la.*

*Now dawns the age  
Now comes the call  
Carry science and learning to all  
God, be our guide and leave us never  
Scotland my homeland forever  
Alba mo dhuthaich gu deireadh mo la.  
Scotland my homeland forever.*

William Jackson's Mill Records label, The Lodge, Gardyne, Forfar, Angus, Scotland, DD8 2SQ, has produced a *Land of Light* CD which includes a selection of other Jackson compositions. This is available at £13 in Britain, \$20 from the United States, \$30 from Canada and £15 from other countries.

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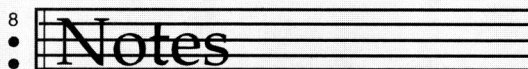
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**• DRONE REEDS**

- Ezeedrone, synthetic (set)
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