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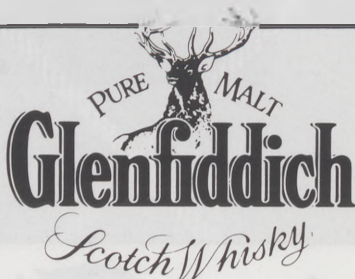
Piping Times

Vol. 50, No. 8

May 1998



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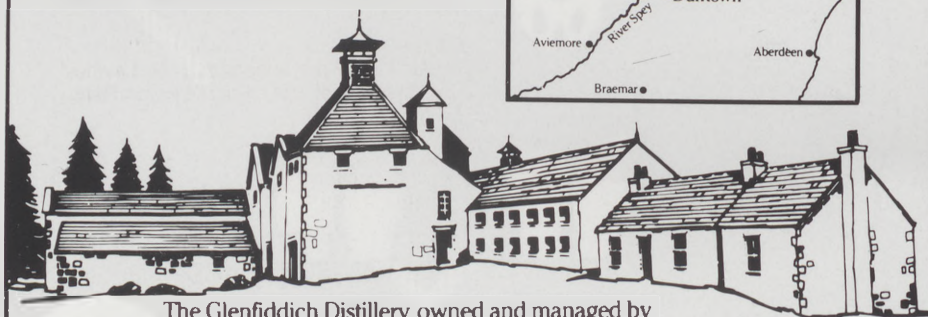
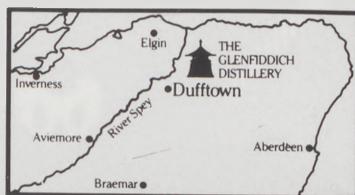
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Morning Mail

Blackburn.

Dear Sir,

Pipeline on BBC Radio Scotland

As you correctly state in April's Piping Times the timing of the broadcast of Pipeline has been changed to 17:15 hrs. on a Sunday.

The problem is that concurrent with the change of time there has been a change in the broadcasting frequencies. Pipeline is no longer transmitted on the Medium Wave, which effectively limits its listeners to people in Scotland within the range of the FM transmitter.

Listeners in England have been able to receive the broadcast on MW and, even with attendant problems of break-in from a Spanish station, we were able to enjoy the programme. Alas, no more!

Radio Scotland operate an information line on 0800 077 077. Readers could 'phone and register their displeasure and vote for a change in policy. After all there is a very large piping fraternity in England, performers and listeners, and they are not all expatriates like me.

Yours faithfully,
Mr R. Macauley.

Germany.

Dear Sirs,

First of all I would like to thank all the people who make something like the College of Piping possible. Every time when I am close to surrender and my desire to throw the pipes in the corner has grown to huge dimensions I remember the prologue of your Tutor 3 – 'Your own resolution to succeed is more important than any other thing . . .'. The German poet Hermann Hesse said something similar: 'Always make efforts which seem to be impossible in order to reach possible aims.'

with the best regards,
Friedrich Füß.

Pennsylvania.

Dear Mr. MacNeill,

It was my pleasure to recently visit the College again for the sixth time.

Over the years I have had the pleasure of having expert tuition from Seumas MacNeill and Angus MacLellan. Because of this expert



advice my standard of playing has improved and the enclosed photograph is submitted as proof. It was taken on 16th July '97 at Garnraig, Ayrshire, and is entitled "IN THE MOOOOOD".

yours in piping,
Rodney E. Owens.

We are impressed with your effect on the cows in Ayrshire but do not think that the Institute of Piping examiners will take it into account in assessing you for their certificate.

Newfoundland.

Dear Editor,

It is commonplace these days to find pipers and pipe bands at ceremonies such as weddings and funerals, bonspiels etc. Recently

I found the following item in the *Prince Edward Island Register* for 5th August 1825:

"The Brig *Hibernia*, 300 tons register, belonging to Messrs A. & H. Macdonald, Three Rivers, was launched at their Ship-yard there on Saturday last. She glided off the stocks in the finest style, a Highland bag-piper who was on the deck, in full costume, playing enlivening airs until she was safely moored."

The Macdonald shipyard was at Georgetown, the centre of the Three Rivers district, at the eastern end of Prince Edward Island and in the midst of predominantly Highland settlement. It is a pity that the piper was not identified by name. Do any of your readers know when the custom of launching ships with a piper aboard began? What is the earliest record of this particular ceremonial practice?

best wishes,
Alan G. Macpherson.

Fhir-deasachaidh,

The article by **Reedmaker** in the February issue of the PT is an over-simplification of the piob mhor chanter reed. This is because every bit of the tube "cane" (*arundo donax*) is different, so the profile scrape for every reed also differs slightly. While the statement "long vibrators make flat sounds" is grossly true, there are other factors which will affect the pitch of a reed...apart from its effective blade length. For example, I can make two reeds from the same piece of tube-cane whose effective blade length and tip width are identical, but I can "scrape" the profile on one reed using the classical transitional scrape, but on the other one I'll use the "heavy sound-box" scrape. Not only will the two reeds pitch differently but their tonal qualities will be different, too. Also, if I make one reed from French cane, and the other from Spanish cane, all other features being equal, they will be different in pitch and tone. And we do have some evidence that the internal diameter of the staple can affect the pitch. Obviously, a contra-bassoon double reed is going to pitch lower than a piob mhor chanter reed but equally obvious is that trying to play even a bassoon reed with its dimensions in a piob mhor chanter will not produce a recognisable scale if, indeed, it will produce any sounds at all! And if I put a piob mhor chanter reed in my smallpipe chanter, it will not "go" at all. Other factors involved in making a double-reed sound a modal scale are: 1) a cylindrical bore



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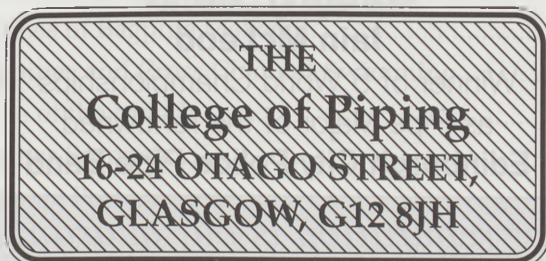
versus a conical bore in the chanters, 2) the dimensions of the reed seat cone, 3) the siting of the sound-holes, and other factors which may be unknown to us.

All the orchestral players I've known scrape their blades with a reedknife – not just once, but frequently, because the reeds change as hours of playing are put on them. If pipers are taught how to scrape a reed, they can avoid the discomfort of playing hard reeds and the “hernia” syndrome. BUT, as Reedmaker correctly points out, GO GENTLY. I tell pipers who ask me about the scrape what I was taught by an orchestral double-reed player; scrape away from the centre-line and towards the shoulder of the blade, leaving a “spine” along the centre-line; and the tips should be “feathered” just enough so that the reed has an almost immediate response when blown in the bag. Because we pipers do not have an embouchure, our chanter reeds will have to be strong enough to be able to maintain their shape when blown in the piob. And “setting” an easy reed is much more difficult than setting a strong reed.

Another Reedmaker.

The Piobaireachd Society

The Piobaireachd Society's publications - Books 1-15, the *Kilberry Book of Ceol Mor*, *Sidelights and Further Sidelights to the Kilberry Book* and *Joseph MacDonald's Compleat Theory* are distributed on behalf of the Society to retailers throughout the world by:-



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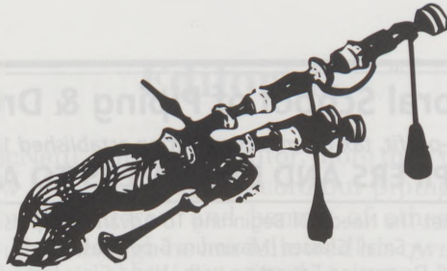
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Editorial

Seumas MacNeill, our former editor, more than once made a plea that as we grow older we should record our piping knowledge and experiences for the interest and benefit of others and posterity. Strangely enough, although he has followed his own precept and left a rich store of writings and recorded radio broadcasts there are many, many occasions when we search in vain for information that he did not write down. There are many things that we know he knew and would like to ask him. This is in spite of the huge amount of detailed information in past editions of the Piping Times or perhaps because of it since the more you know of history the more you want to know. A wonderful example of good recording of pipers and piping is Bridget Mackenzie's new book *The Piping Traditions of the North of Scotland*.

Following these thoughts people have asked the question, who is continuing the great work originally compiled by Lieutenant John MacLennan, revised and added to by Major I. H. MacKay Scobie and subsequently by Archibald Campbell and Captain D. R. MacLennan? This work was entitled a *Dictionary of Pipers and Piping*, but is better known as *Notices of Pipers*. These notices appeared in the Piping Times from August 1967 to September 1975 and had last been revised in 1948 when this magazine first appeared. There is therefore fifty years to catch up. We are glad to be able to report that the task has begun. Before we begin to assemble all the data required it has been recognised that there is great interest in bagpipe makers some of whom were identified in the *Notices of Pipers*. Jeannie Campbell has undertaken this task and the first of the list of bagpipe makers, in chronological order appeared in March's edition of the Piping Times. It is surprising to learn how many of them there were and as always how little we know of them. As they are published readers are invited to add to or correct these notices.

When we come to bring up to date the *Notices of Pipers*, then it is a much greater task and arbitrary decisions will have to be made about who is worthy to be listed. Even with a hard line being taken against including most ordinary pipers it is bound to be a very long list. Readers' co-operation is very important and we will try to give warning of the pipers to be profiled a few months before publishing so that readers can contribute the odd nugget of information that makes reading such notices much more interesting. The very first entry on the old list was Aitken, William, fined in 1595, and cautioned for playing his pipe on the Water of Leith on a Sunday. It would be interesting to have more details.

Crunluath a Mach

by *Neville T. McKay*

The two forms of crunluath a mach on B and C as illustrated in the Piping Times of January 1998, page 27, have been questioned by a correspondent in the March issue. The point in question is whether an intermediate B or C should be sounded in the movement from these notes. The Kilberry book of Ceol Mor shows the movement:



whereas the Piobaireachd Society books print:

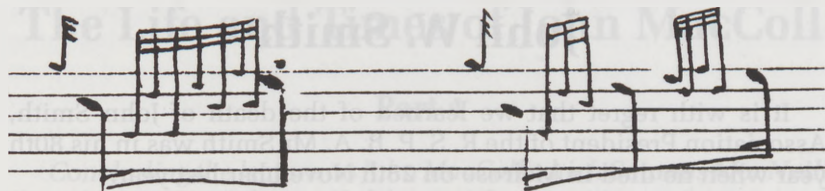


Back in 1948 I was receiving instruction in New Zealand from Pipe Major Robert Thomson (ex A and SH) and Pipe Major Murdo MacKenzie (ex 4th Seaforth). Pipe Major Thomson, who had received some instruction from MacDougall Gillies, taught the movement in two sections, which when played at full tempo allowed the intermediate B and C to be distinctly heard.

Pipe Major MacKenzie was unable to use staff notation and could not demonstrate in slow motion. As well as I can recollect his crunluath a mach sounded more like the first version above, without the intermediate note. Murdo MacKenzie had won both gold medals in the 1890's and John MacDonald, Inverness, spoke highly of his playing.

I wrote to the late Archibald Campbell of Kilberry about the timing of these movements, and he replied on 10 May 1948 as follows:

“MacDougall Gillies taught me to play (or at least to practise in the initial stages) the crunluath a mach **without** an intermediate C at all, and I have written it thus in my book, *The Kilberry Book of Ceol Mor*:



In playing it, I doubt whether I avoid sounding a middle C, but, as Gillies used to say, there are so many more important things in piobaireachd playing than the precise fingering of the mechanical wind up, and so many tunes which can be regarded as finished before you begin the taorluath, that I never paid very close attention to this point. But there should be a distinct pause on the final E and none on either C. I have heard plenty of people play a comparatively long middle C and a short E, thus cutting the movement in half. I daresay Yardley did. He was another pupil of Gillies, one of his best, and Gillies may quite possibly have left him to his own devices in the crunluath a mach.

In regard to the crunluath a mach on the D, also shown above, both Gillies and Sandy Cameron said definitely that there should be a distinct hang on the D quaver before doing the crunluath note, and a short E at the end. From this point of view the D crunluath a mach is performed defectively by most competing pipers, who never give the D long enough. The same in the taorluath a mach, which is:



There is certainly no middle C here, and as in the crunluath the first D should be hung upon."

I began receiving instruction from John MacDonald, Inverness, in 1949. He taught the intermediate B and C notes as very short, carrying the emphasis through to the final E. In the case of D it was as described by Kilberry. However he did not describe the other styles as incorrect; rather he aimed at the best overall rhythmic interpretation.

Perhaps too much is being made by some players of the mechanical detail, without sufficient regard for the musical effect.

John W. Smith

It is with regret that we learned of the death of John Smith, Association President of the R. S. P. B. A. Mr Smith was in his 80th year when he died in Melrose on 28th November last year.

Originally from Renfrewshire he began his piping in the Boys Brigade in Elderslie. After the 2nd World War he was a founder member of the Johnstone Burgh Pipe Band and was a member for 20 years ultimately as Pipe Major.

In the course of his employment he moved to the North of Scotland where he settled in Dingwall and again entered the pipe band scene where he was involved with the Invergordon Distillery Pipe Band. Through this he became a member of the North of Scotland Branch of the R. S. P. B. A. and was its Chairman for many years and National Council representative for close to 10 years. After retiring in 1982 he moved south again, this time to Peebles-shire and still continued to take a very active part in the activities of the R. S. P. B. A., being elected Chairman that same year. He took over as President in 1993, a position he held until his death. During that time he guided the pipe band movement through the many changes that have taken place in the ever-growing pipe band world.

His wife Nancy survives him and on behalf of all our members worldwide we extend our sympathy to her.

Guide to the Games – Update

Because of popular demand and to facilitate forward planning our Guide to the Games feature was published in the April issue, a month earlier than usual. However this meant that a few games' secretaries were unable to reply to our questionnaire before the magazine went to print. In these cases we assumed the games would be held on the equivalent date to last year.

We have now had confirmation that **Helmsdale and District Games** is being held on **Saturday, 15th August**.

Please note however that **Killin Games** will be held on **Wednesday, 29th July**, and not as previously published.

The Life and Times of John MacColl

Part 4

Concluding the lecture on John MacColl which Seumas MacNeill delivered at the Piobaireachd Society Conference in 1991.

Piping however did not occupy all of this time. He was a singer of note, winning a gold medal for Gaelic singing at the Luss mod. He was a more than competent violinist, and even if he had never played pipes he would be remembered in other spheres – as John C. MacColl relates:

"In the games off-seasons he played shinty – his brothers and he excelled at the game – also football, and in later years, golf. As a youngster I was very proud of his Scotland jersey – he played shinty for Scotland against Ireland in 1887. At football he played for an Oban team (Glenmore) in local competitions and for the District of Lorne in district matches. Golf I suppose was a natural follow-on to shinty, and trophies now in my possession show that he was the Oban club champion in 1895 and 1896. His club handicap was plus two at the time.

"He was a member of the Renfrew Golf Club with me and I have a little token he received for holing out in one stroke at the fourth hole when he was 71."

But in spite of his talents, piping was far and away his principal interest.

His piobaireachd playing was a worry to many enthusiasts of his day – not because he was unsuccessful, but because he was not a strong link in the traditional line. One said of him, "In ceol mor he lacked expression as compared with MacDougall Gillies, but played very correctly, and in consequence seldom failed to secure prizes". John MacDonald of Inverness however said "In his playing of the *Kiss of the King's Hand* he once gave one of the most harmonious performances I ever listened to. On that occasion he seemed to be carried away by his playing. That was at Birnam."

Whatever his piobaireachd background he did manage to compose three pieces of ceol mor, two of which won first prizes in piobaireachd composing competitions.

At last however the long, long summer had to end, and John MacColl left the life of a free piper and settled for something more mundane. In 1908 the Glasgow firm of R.G. Lawrie decided to start making bagpipes, and they asked John MacColl to take charge of this branch of their work. So ended the touring of the games. He was then 48 years of age and no doubt quite happy to settle down. Glasgow was now a thriving place for pipers, with John MacDougall Gillies in charge of Peter Henderson's – and the two used to meet and exchange ideas.

In Glasgow he continued to take an active part in piping affairs, teaching many aspiring players and attending regularly the Saturday night meetings of the Scottish Pipers' Association.

He retired from Lawrie's in 1925, but continued actively composing and teaching, for many years. In 1933 he produced *Captain Duncan McGregor*, a modern bagpipe strathspey of considerable technical difficulty. His last great composition was *The Clan MacColl* which he wrote for the clan in 1934.

Perhaps his years in Glasgow were something of an anticlimax for him after the adventurous life of a free and independent piper, but they were valuable years none-the-less. With MacDougall Gillies he built piping in Glasgow to a level from which it is now unlikely to descend, and the magic of his music has been transmitted by pupils, so that now probably all of us have a little of it in our make-up.

He died on the 8th of June, 1943. At his funeral John MacDonald of the Glasgow Police played the *Lament for the Children*.

The tune however which professional pipers always associate with his name is not a lament, but a march, and personally *The Argyllshire Gathering* is the one for me. His best memorial is the playing of it every year in Oban on Games day, by the cream of the pipers, as they parade through the town which was his home for so many years.

I should perhaps mention my own slight and tenuous connections with John MacColl, which weren't all that many. I used to think I'd never seen him except once when he judged in the MacLellan Galleries before the war. He was then a little round bald headed man sitting in the gallery judging, while the pipers were playing on the platform below. But John MacFadyen pointed out to me that I had seen him on many occasions. He said "Do you not remember the little well dressed gentleman first on the left inside the door of Room 7 in

the Highlanders' Institute on a Saturday night? That was John MacColl." And I never knew that. I didn't go to the Club all that regularly, but every time I went that man was always sitting in that place.

So my contact with him was rather small, but I was very friendly with one of his best pupils, I suppose, Donald MacLean who went to John MacColl for a very long time and also went to my uncle for lessons. Tommy Pearston and I recorded for posterity Donald MacLean's memories of piping and of course John MacColl featured



John MacColl's Centenary Gold Medal won at the Northern Meeting in 1888 and now in the College of Piping Museum.

quite a bit. I don't remember much of it off-hand, but I do remember that Donald MacLean said that John MacColl taught the open C to pupils that he thought would never be any good, but if he thought they were going to be decent pipers he taught them to play the closed C right from the beginning.

My cousin Alex who is a bit older than me emigrated when he was twenty years of age to Montreal where he still lives. He was sent by my uncle to John MacColl for two or three years to learn piobaireachd.



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Alex gave his reminiscences recently in the Piper and Drummer magazine of Canada and in it he mentioned that his hour for instruction was, I think, 8.30 to 9.30. Certainly it finished at the time the pubs closed in Glasgow, and Alex said he was always cut short because John MacColl finished ten minutes before the pubs shut in order to get down quickly for a large one, in the normal fashion of lots of pipers.

Our John MacColl had four children, two girls and two boys. Dugald MacColl was the elder of the two boys but according to my cousin Alex, Dugald was a hopeless piper. Alex and Dugald served their time in Lawries making bagpipes. Dugald could barely just get along but John was a first class player, according to Alex. I think he was indeed a very good player. He played in the City of Glasgow Pipe Band before it became the Clan MacRae. He also played in the Territorial Band, he was Pipe Major of Glasgow Academy band when he was a boy and he once competed as a professional. His father got him up one morning and they went to Crieff (this was after John MacColl senior had stopped competing). He got John C. MacColl to play and he got two third prizes in the professionals. But when he got back his mother said that's the last time you are going to play in a piping competition. She said one piper competing in the family is enough. She'd had 25 years of hardly seeing her husband so she didn't want to lose her son in the same way.

So John C. MacColl then sort of went into the academic life. He was an engineer and eventually he became manager of Babcock and Wilcox at Renfrew. Sadly none of John MacColl's grandsons play – but we have Angus MacColl, a grand-nephew who has recently shown strong indication of becoming one of our best players.

ARRAN FOLK FESTIVAL PIPING COMPETITION

SATURDAY 13TH JUNE

Grounds of Heathfield Hotel,
Brodict, Isle of Arran

- 10.30a.m. Practice chanter – Beginners – 2 or 4 part march
- 11.00a.m. Piping – Beginners – 4 or 8 part march
- 11.45a.m. Piping – Open under 18 – 4 or 8 part march

Shield to be awarded to best Arran player

- 12.15p.m. Piping – Open – March, Strathspey and Reel

Judge: Angus J. MacLellan

Scottish Pipers' Association

71st Annual Professional Piping Competition

by Angus J. MacLellan

The above competition took place on Saturday 18th April in Glasgow Academy, Kelvinbridge, Glasgow, and sad to say despite the excellent efforts of the S.P.A. committee, for the second year running the competition did not enjoy the best of fortune or get the support it deserves. As the school had been closed for the Easter holidays two weeks prior to the competition and with the prevailing weather, the rooms/hall used for the various competitions and tuning facilities were rather cold. This did not lead to bagpipes sustaining a full



Some of the prize-winners.

Left to Right – Roderick Weir, Robert Wallace, Gordon Walker, Andrew Mathieson, Willie McCallum, Douglas Murray and Stuart Shedden.

balanced tone for the duration of performances (especially in the piobaireachd events) and some competitors had problems with execution due to the coldness.

Entries were a little down on previous years and with the usual number of call-offs, competitors not appearing and even withdrawing

THE COLLEGE OF PIPING

on the day all the events were a little shorter than usual and the whole competition was over by 17.30 hrs. The days of still playing late into the evening are long gone.

In the Grade A Piobaireachd event 13 had entered but on the day 10 pipers took part. The winner was Robert Wallace with a very good performance of *MacDougalls' Gathering* on an excellent bagpipe. Second was Willie Morrison playing *The Old Men of the Shells*. Willie's playing was a bit deliberate and careful at times but he put the tune together well. Third prize went to Willie McCallum with *The King's Taxes* which suffered a little through execution problems – a very rare thing for Willie – and fourth prize went to Stuart Shedden with a repeat performance of his Uist and Barra tune *Lady Margaret MacDonald's Salute*.

Others who played were Gordon Walker – *MacKays' Banner* – drones going well out. Gregor Speirs – *The Little Spree* – a little slow and square but a good effort for his first senior competition. Iain Speirs – *Lament for Colin Roy MacKenzie*. Euan MacCrimmon – *Stewarts' White Banner*. Alan Minty – *Park Piobaireachd No. 2* and Allan Russell – *Earl of Seaforth's Salute*. Most of the above had technical problems or note errors.

The judges were James Young and the writer.

Other results: **B Grade Piobaireachd:** 1. Andrew Mathieson, Lochgelly, 2. L/Cpl Roderick Weir, R.S.D.G., 3. Brian Mulhearn, Troon, 4. Louise Hay, Blairgowrie. The judges were Ronald Morrison and Neill Mulvie.

A Grade March: 1. Andrew Mathieson, 2. Willie Morrison, Glasgow, 3. Sgt. Gordon Walker, R.H.F.

A Grade Strathspey and Reel: 1. Andrew Mathieson, 2. Douglas Murray, Glenrothes, 3. Willie Morrison.

B Grade March: 1. Chris Armstrong, Bathgate, 2. Neil Walker, Dunblane, 3. Gregor Speirs, Edinburgh, 4. Graeme Roy, Blanefield.

B Grade Strathspey and Reel: 1. Chris Armstrong, 2. Louise Hay, 3. Neil Walker, 4. L/Cpl. Donald MacKay, The Highlanders.

The judges for all four light music events were Barry Donaldson and Harry McAleer.

Former Winners M. S. R.: 1. Gordon Walker, 2. Willie McCallum, 3. Andrew Mathieson.

The judges were Jimmy Young and Neill Mulvie.

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Lunchtime Recital at Edinburgh University

During the academic terms it has been the policy of the Science and Engineering Faculty for some time to hold lunchtime Talks or Musical Recitals and the Faculty very kindly made available March 18th for a Piobaireachd recital. The venue was the Michal Swann Lecture Theatre, a new building which has a large theatre with state of the art facilities and excellent acoustics, ideal for such an occasion.

We were delighted to obtain the willing assistance of Dugald MacNeill and Pipe Major Bruce Hitchings for the occasion to present to a very distinguished audience of professors, lecturers, staff and students a brief outline of the great music before the performances.

The meeting was chaired by Dr Martin Lowe, Secretary to the University, himself a keen soloist. Martin presented Dugald MacNeill who gave an excellent briefing on the ground of *The Company's Lament* and with the aid of the projected score had the whole audience singing the ground, not once but twice! Dugald with customary skill demonstrated the pentatonic scales and gave examples of their use, this was much appreciated by those who were present and possibly hearing these things for the first time.

When Pipe Major Hitchings came on and the sound of his pipe was heard in such an excellent atmosphere one realised that at last we had accomplished something of real excellence in the Recitals. Having played several lighter tunes to the delight of the audience the pipe was set and we listened to a magnificent rendering of *The Earl of Seaforth's Salute*.

It is quite difficult on these occasions to time performances accurately and this left Dugald rather pressed when he came on to play *The Lament for the Earl of Antrim*, however with rather less tuning time than might have been appropriate we enjoyed yet another performance of the great music on a superb sounding instrument.

Response from many of those who listened has been very encouraging and it is hoped that this may be just the first of many such performances in this University.

John C. Dow.

The Lament for the Union: Do the Variations Make Sense?

Roderick D. Cannon

The Lament for the Union was one of the more popular tunes offered at the early piobaireachd competitions in Edinburgh, but by the time it came to be published by the Piobaireachd Society in 1936^{1,2} it had fallen by the wayside and was essentially unknown. A comment made at the time was that "the variations at first sight may seem monotonous and uninteresting, but the piper who perseveres with them may find that they have a certain attractiveness of their own, and that they have a definite meaning of some kind . . .".¹ Since the tune has again become well known, and always in the setting of Angus MacKay which was the only one published, it seems that the variations did indeed prove to have "a certain attractiveness". The purpose of this note is to put forward another version of the variations, possibly more attractive, and certainly with a more definite meaning in that they have a clearer relationship to the Ground.

It is true that the piece is unusual in several respects. The Ground consists of two lines of equal length, eight bars, the second line almost a repeat of the first; and the variations seem not to be related to the Ground nor to each other. In fact the variations form three separate strands running through the tune: Dithis 1, Dithis 2, Dithis 3; Dithis Doubling 1, Dithis Doubling 2, Dithis Doubling 3; and so on through to Crunluath Mach 1, Crunluath Mach 2, Crunluath Mach 3. None of the three strands picks up the sequence of melody notes in the Ground in the way that piobaireachd variations usually do.

This lack of connection between variations and Ground is not unique but it certainly calls for some explanation; or to put it less ambitiously, it challenges us to understand it, since the composer presumably had an idea in mind, and those who first learned the tune presumably understood the idea even if we do not.

One explanation could be that what we play now is not what the first composer intended: this is thought to be the case with *The Desperate Battle*, in which the present Ground and variations seem to have come from two different tunes.^{3,4} Another possibility is that the Ground and variations contain the same basic musical idea which has been developed in different ways. This description applies to

The Lament for Colin Roy MacKenzie, in its original form before it was revised by Angus MacKay.^{5,6} In the present case the Piobaireachd Society editors suggested yet a third possibility: that the Ground and variations were by the same composer but deliberately made different to show that Scotland and England, like oil and water, could not mix.¹

Puzzles of this kind can sometimes be resolved by applying theories of composition to decide between what is regular or intentional and what is irregular or unintentional. One theory that has proved very useful is that there are standard metrical forms which were once known and used by composers. In this theory we have "even-lined" and "three-lined" tunes, and the latter include "primary", "secondary" and other less common types. Recently there has been an advance in our understanding of these forms, and this advance makes it possible, I suggest, to understand the true form of the *Lament for the Union*.

Until recently, piobaireachd metres were only analysed in terms of repeated phrases. For example, the Ground of *The Red Speckled Bull* has been analysed as follows

A A' B A' B' B A' B

where each letter stands for two bars of music.⁷ Phrases A and A' are similar to each other, and phrases B and B' are similar to each other but different from A. The new insight is that, in some tunes, the scheme is not one of repetition of units of melody.⁸⁻¹⁰ Sections which correspond to each other may have different melody, as long as they share the same tonality, or it might be said, the same harmony. That is to say, they could be imagined to be sounded over the same note in the bass, if a bass part existed in the music. This is not the only way of describing the relationship, and it is not suggested that the pieces of music were necessarily designed with a bass part in mind: it is simply a way of stating a relationship that exists, but is not a simple matter of exact repetition. As an example,¹⁰ the second half of the Ground of *The Park Piobaireachd, No 2*, runs

1 0 1 1 0 0 1 1
0 1 0 0 1 1 0 0

Here numbers 1 and 0 are used in place of letters. Each number corresponds to one bar of music. But the second and third occurrences of the number 1 do not stand for repetitions of the first bar. They stand for a two-bar phrase which uses some of the same notes. Similarly

with later repetitions, and with the repetitions of the number 0. In summary, the bars labelled 1 tend to emphasise the notes B, E and G, while the bars labelled 0 emphasise the notes A, D and F(sharp). We can hear the same two tonalities contrasted in modern tunes. In the first part of *The Little Cascade*,¹¹ the first three bars have a strong flavour of the notes B, E and G; but the fourth bar is in the contrasting tonality of A, D and F sharp. In terms of implied harmony, 1 is the "key" of E minor while 0 is the "key" of D major. We can avoid using terms like "key" which may be foreign to the theory of pipe music if we simply say that 1 is based on the note E and 0 is based on D.

How does it apply to *The Lament for the Union*? First we must look at all the available information on the tune. We have five sources, the manuscripts of Donald MacDonald, senior,¹² and of his son¹³; Niel MacLeod's printed collection of canntaireachd;¹⁴ and the manuscripts of Angus¹⁵ and John¹⁶ MacKay. In the Ground, the MacDonalds and MacKays largely agree, and so does Gesto as far as the melodic content goes, though his pattern of repeats is different.¹⁷ In strands 2 and 3 of the variations, they all agree.¹⁸ Moreover, the Ground has a certain regularity about it, as already mentioned; and strands 2 and 3 are of a well known regular type. Strand 1 is the odd one out, as it varies from one setting to another, and in at least three of the five it does not conform to any known pattern.

My suggested explanation is simply that strand 1 is corrupt in all sources, but it is possible to reconstruct a version that is more correct than any of them. When this is done the result makes musical sense, and also agrees with the Ground.

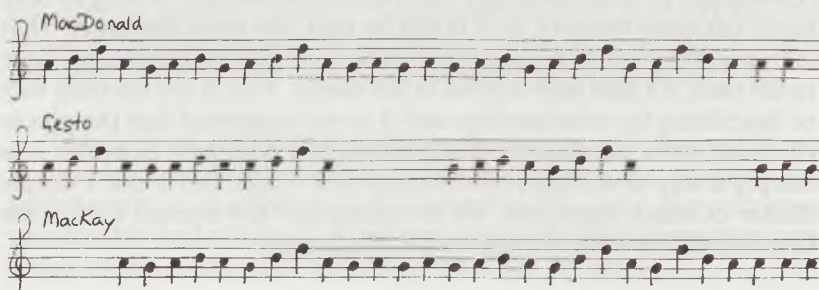


Figure 1. Melody notes of the first variation of *The Union* as recorded in original sources. MacDonald = Donald MacDonald, senior and junior (1826); Gesto = Niel MacLeod of Gesto (1828); MacKay = Angus MacKay (c. 1840) and John MacKay (c. 1848). The first variation, "Dithis (1)" can be read off these notes by adding the note low A to



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each one as shown in Figure 2 below. For further details see Note 19 below.

Figure 1 is a comparison of the melody notes of strand 1, in all the sources.¹⁹ To get the best correspondences between them it is necessary to shift parts of them along and leave gaps, especially in the Gesto and MacKay versions; also there remain some disagreements as regards the notes A and G.

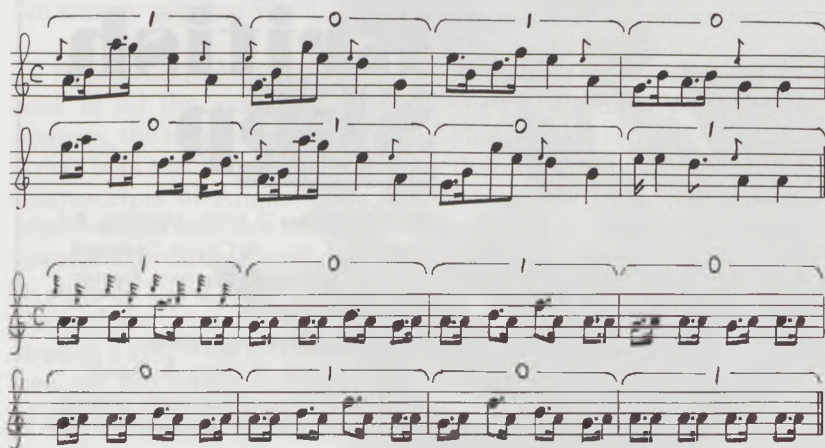


Figure 2. *The Union; line 1 of the Ground and proposed reconstruction of Variation 1. The Ground is an abstract of the melody only, based on A. MacKay, but omitting nearly all grace notes. For performing versions see references 1, 2. For editorial comment see note 17 below. In the variation, grace notes are played throughout as marked in bar 1.*

The numbers 1 and 0 indicate the suggested tonal structure. Bars labelled 1, although not all identical in melody, are all founded on the tonic note A; bars labelled 0, are all founded on the note G.

Looking now at the Ground, as shown in Figure 2, the first bar is a phrase beginning and ending on low A, and the next bar is much the same phrase, repeated lower down the scale to begin and end on low G. Bar 3 uses quite different notes but it starts on E and ends strongly on low A, and overall it too has a "flavour" of A. Bar 4 begins and ends on low G. It is not the same as bar 2, but like bar 2 it has a flavour of G. If we try to analyse the metre in terms of melody, there is no repeating pattern; but in terms of flavour or implied harmony, it is a scheme of two flavours only, in the order A G A G. Continuing in this

way, bar 5 starts on high G and ends on D: it is another bar "in G"; bars 6, and 7 are repeats of previous bars; and the last bar which is different again, features mainly notes E and A and is "in A". Thus the second half of the line runs G A G A. Expressing it again in numbers, the pattern of the whole Ground is.

1 0 1 0 0 1 0 1

where each number stands for a bar, numbers 1 are all based on low A, and numbers 0 are all based on low G.

Can we find this pattern in the variations? Certainly not in strains 2 or 3. Their patterns are the classic primary piobaireachd.

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where the difference between **1** and **0** is in one note only, low A in **1**, low G in **0**. But strain 1 is a different matter. With only moderate editing the different sets can be adjusted to give the version shown in Figure 3. It is the MacDonald setting which needs the least amendment,²⁰ while in the others we have to assume that sections have been missed out. The final version falls into quite well marked phrases of four bars each, and each one begins with either low A or low G, in the order A G A G A G A. To my ear the phrases each have a strong flavour of these notes, and the scheme of the variation is the same as that of the Ground:

1 0 1 0 0 1 0 1

whereas before the number **1** denotes an emphasis on low A, number **0** denotes an emphasis on low G.

Finally and significantly, this is also the scheme of a group of other tunes which have already been recognised.²¹ There are at least sixteen examples. They vary greatly in melodic character, some featuring the note C and some not, some with the note D and some not. They include laments, gatherings and salutes, but what they all have in common is the tone pattern summarised above. It is also noticeable that the phrases **1** tend to emphasise the note low A which is in consonance with the bagpipe drone, while the phrases **0** emphasise other notes, usually B or G, which are dissonant with the drone.

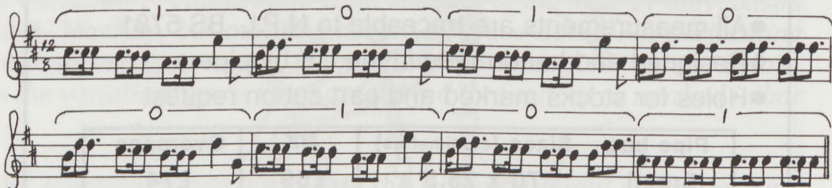


Figure 3. *Ground of War or Peace.* This is an abstract of the melody only, based on Niel MacLeod of Gesto (1828), omitting all grace notes. For performing versions see references 22, 23.

The numbers **1** and **0** indicate the tonal structure. Bars labelled **1** are all founded on the tonic note A; they begin and end only on the notes A, C(sharp) or E. Bars labelled **0** are founded on the notes D, G; they begin and end only on low G, B or D.

As an example, Figure 3 is the *Ground of War or Peace*.²²⁻²⁴ This tune uses a very different selection of notes from *The Union*, but the contrast between the consonant and the dissonant phrases is just as

clear. The opening phrase **1** starts from C sharp and ends on the E-A cadence; in modern terminology it is "in the key of A major"; the next phrase **0** plays mainly on the notes B and D and ends with the D-low G cadence. Then comes a repeat of phrase **1**, then a new phrase consisting entirely of B's and D's. It is not the same as the previous phrase **0** but it has the same dissonant effect and it too can be labelled **0**. The tune proceeds in this way until it ends on a phrase consisting entirely of repeated low A notes, consonant with the drone and labelled **1**. The pattern again is

1 0 1 0 0 1 0 1

Conclusion

With the amended variation 1, *The Union* is still an unusual tune, but it makes more sense than before. It could be said that the whole piece is a play on the two tonalities of A and G. The same is true of many other tunes of course, but what is special about this one is that the composer makes a point of deploying several standard compositional techniques when normally only one would be enough. The tonal scheme **1 0 1 0 0 1 0 1** is used in the Ground; then it is used in the first variation in a significantly different way. The variation is more formal and less melodic than the Ground, using fewer notes; bars 1 and 3 have the same melody in the variation but different melody in the Ground; bars 2 and 7 are different in the variation but the same in the Ground. After that, as has been noticed already, further variations are sandwiched in, again using the A-G contrast, but even more formal and less melodic, and in the familiar "Primary" metre.

Much more has been, and still could be said about the structures of these tunes.^{8,9,21} But the point of this short note is not to give a general account of piobaireachd composition. It is simply to propose an improved version of one tune. I suggest that this amended version of the variations of *The Lament for the Union*, which is essentially that of Donald MacDonald, makes much better artistic sense than the version which is usually played today.

NOTES

1. Piobaireachd Society, Book 6 (1936), pp. 190-191.
2. See also A. Campbell, *The Kilberry Book of Ceol Mor*, The Piobaireachd Society, 1948. Tune 52, p. 53.
3. Piobaireachd Society, Book 7 (1938), p. 195; editorial note, p. 196.
4. R.D. Cannon, "The Battle of Harlaw' – a lost piobaireachd?". *Piping Times*, 26, No. 12, pp. 7-13 (September 1974).
5. Piobaireachd Society, Book 3 (1930), p. 79.

6. R.D. Cannon, "Lament for Colin Roy MacKenzie". *Piping Times*, 31, No. 8, pp. 23-27 (May 1979).
7. S. MacNeill, *Piobaireachd*, BBC Publications, Edinburgh, 1968. p. 57.
8. F. Buisman, "Towards a syntax of piobaireachd melody". Lecture at Symposium in honour of Peter Cooke, Edinburgh University, 30 April 1994.
9. F. Buisman, "Melodic relationships in pibroch" *British Journal of Ethnomusicology*, 4, 17-33 (1995).
10. R.D. Cannon "A note on the construction of even lined piobaireachd" *Piping Times*, 48, No. 1, pp. 29-35, No. 2, pp. 25-31 (October-November 1995).
11. *The Cairngorm Collection of Highland bagpipe music. Book 1. A collection of the works of Pipe Major George S. McLennan 1884-1929*. Exile Publishing, Suite 12, 22 Trafalgar Road, Kingston 10, Jamaica, West Indies, 1997, p. 27.
12. D. MacDonald, *A selection of the ancient martial music of Caledonia, called piobaireachd*, 1826. NLS MS 1680. Pages 190-198, entitled "The Union".
13. D. MacDonald (junior). Piobaireachd manuscript, 1826, ff. 19-21. The original MS is lost but a copy of the tune is in the Kilberry papers, NLS MS 22103, folder 148A, entitled "The Union".
14. N. MacLeod. (Niel MacLeod of Gesto) *A collection of piobaireachd or pipe tunes as verbally taught by the McCrummen pipers in the Isle of Skye . . .* Edinburgh, 1828. Tune VI, pages 13-16, entitled "The Union of Scotland with England, composed by a Scotch Piper, commonly called Molluch na Piperin".
15. A. MacKay. Piobaireachd manuscript, vol 2. NLS MS 3754. Pages 86-88, entitled "An Co-aontachadh, Lament for the Union".
16. J. MacKay, Piobaireachd manuscript, c. 1848. NLS Acc 9231. Tune 44, pp. 116-118. The original title has been overwritten, but it can be read as "Cumha an Aonachd".
17. Donald MacDonald junior gives only line 1 of the Ground. An important difference between the sources is that in the MacDonalds the last note but one in bar 4 is D, whereas in the MacKays it is low G (or E if the E grace note is read as a melody note).
18. Donald MacDonald junior gives only strands 1, 2, 3 of Dithis and strand 1 of Dithis Doubling. In strand 2 he has low G instead of D, the last beat but one; in strand 3 he omits the notes corresponding to bar 6 of the eight-bar measure. John MacKay ends with the Taorluath Mach.
19. In D. MacDonald senior the score is in 2/4 time with two beats to each bar. In D. MacDonald junior the notes are written without time values or bar lines. In Gesto, the vocables are set out in lines containing respectively 3, 4, 4, 4, 4, 2 vocables. A. MacKay writes the variation as 12 bars of 2/4 time but bars 5 and 12 are marked "Bis", and a punctuation mark of two sloping lines above the stave is placed after bar 7. The barring is the same in the later parts except that from the Taorluath onwards it is bar 6 that is marked "Bis." John MacKay writes all the melody notes, with no repeat marks; he has bar lines but not time values.
The Gesto canntaireachd vocables on low G, low A, B, D are respectively *hundan*, *hindan*, *hiochin*, *hiachin*. In later variations the notes are distinguished as follows: [Dithis Doubling] *hundan*, *hindan*, *ho ho*, *ha ha*; [Taorluath] *hu-*, *hie-*

(also *hiu-*, *hi-*), *to-*, *ta-* followed by *-rieren[e]*, *-rerin[e]*, *-renin* or *-ririn*; [Taorluath Mach] *hundinin*, *hindirin*, *hodroho*, *hadraha*; [Crunluath] *hundatiri*, *hindatiri*, *hodatiri*, *hadatiri*. The ninth beat is low A in Dithis singling, low G thereafter.

20. Compared with Donald MacDonald's version, the last beat of bar 7 is changed from low A to low G, and two extra low A beats added to bar 8.
21. R.L.C. Lorimer "Studies in Pibroch". *Scottish Studies*, 6 (1962), pp. 1-30; 8 (1964), pp. 45-79.
22. Piobaireachd Society, Book 10 (1961), p. 304.
23. R.D. Cannon, "War or Peace", *Piping Times*, 33, No. 7, pp. 24-27 (April 1981).
24. This setting is based on N. MacLeod, *A collection of piobaireachd or pipe tunes* . . . Edinburgh, 1828. Tune III, pages 6-8; reprinted in Ref. 22, p. 306.

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Tutor for Piobaireachd Tape with Canntaireachd

The audio cassette to accompany Seumas MacNeill's Tutor for Piobaireachd is now available from The College of Piping at £6.00 plus 50p. postage in the UK or £1 airmail.

The Tutor was first published in 1990 and has been well received by students. Teachers who have beginners in piobaireachd are strongly advised to have their students read the Tutor since Seumas does describe so well in words what piobaireachd is. The cassette does not dwell on these descriptive passages but goes through all the exercises, movements and the four tunes. Angus J. MacLellan does this in canntaireachd and on the practice chanter. The style of canntaireachd used is the Nether Lorn as interpreted by Capt. John MacLellan and Seumas MacNeill and it is very effective. No doubt there will be experts who will be able to suggest other forms of vocables but the simple truth is that in the last 60 years none of the top teachers, apart from John MacLellan and Seumas used a consistent form of canntaireachd in teaching.

Apart, then, from being a valuable teaching aid for piobaireachd players this cassette is a milestone in introducing a consistent form of canntaireachd. More mature players, especially those who aspire to teach should get hold of this cassette.

The tunes introduced in the cassette are *The Company's Lament*, *Mackintosh's Banner*, *Lament for Alasdair Dearg MacDonnell of Glengarry* and *Glengarry's Lament*. Dugald MacNeill plays the tunes on the pipes.

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Hints for Beginners

For many pipers, and, certainly for almost all beginners, tuning a set of pipes seems to be a black art. It is so important and yet so often neglected by teachers. When beginners begin to play the bagpipe, typically the teacher tunes the instrument when present. At other times the pupil is alone with the problem unless there is some experience in the house. As Archibald Campbell of Kilberry once said 'the difference between a good piper and a bad piper if not greater, is certainly more blatantly conspicuous than in the case of most other instruments'.

Most of us, at one stage or another have probably given good reason to perpetuate the truth of this statement. We should all try to make it as easy as possible for beginners to learn how to tune the bagpipe, increase their enjoyment, and lessen its very often fully deserved reputation for being a loud discordant instrument.

One of the problems is that blowing and squeezing (all the time with constant pressure) with the arm is difficult enough without trying to tune a drone as well. At the beginning, with no expert available, it is worth asking a sister, brother, or parent to help. Although they may not be pipers they can usually tell what sounds reasonable. What you have to do is play low A and concentrate on keeping the pressure steady. If you allow the bag pressure to vary with each cycle of blowing then no one can tune your bagpipe. If no help is available you can do the following. Remove the chanter and one tenor drone from their stocks. Do your best to set the chanter reed so that the scale is true and then play low A several times until you have memorised the sound or pitch. Then blow the tenor drone with your mouth (taking care not to touch the epiglottis with the tip of the drone reed which can precipitate vomiting). Vary the tuning slide until the sound seems the same as the chanter low A. When you find the position of the tuning slide which is exactly an octave below low A (or half its frequency) it will sound very like low A. Cork the remaining tenor and bass drone and blow up the pipe with chanter and the one tuned tenor. If you have had some success in matching them separately when mouth blown they should be fairly close when blown together from the bag. You can try tuning it to be closer, but unless you keep the pressure in the bag very steady then this will be difficult. One quite successful technique is to play low A and increase the pressure deliberately but gradually. This sharpens or raises the pitch of low A but hardly affects the drone. If the drone was a little higher in pitch than required then the higher pressure should

improve the relationship. If the effect of raising the pressure makes it sound worse it means that the drone has to be shortened to raise or sharpen its pitch.

Try not to be discouraged; it can take a long time to "hear" the coming together or harmonising of the drones with chanter and with each other. If you have a piper who can keep a steady pressure you will find it rather easier to tune that person's pipes and this is a very useful way to learn to "hear" the difference when you move a tuning slide. Incidentally, it is useful to use a screwing motion of the tuning slide and move it slowly and gradually. The importance of steady pressure cannot be over-emphasised. Varying the pressure has a similar effect to an old turntable gramophone varying in speed. In both cases the different frequencies vary by different amounts and therefore their relationships and consonance is destroyed. Once you can tune one tenor you can "set" the other drones as above, this time to match the first tenor. Many teachers believe in playing drones only at this stage, and it certainly makes it easier to tune them to each other without the chanter.

As the reeds warm up in your moist breath they change a little and so after a few minutes you will require to re-tune. Normally this requires the drones to be shortened slightly.

Dugald B. MacNeill.

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Turakina Caledonian Society

by Bruce Cameron

The 133rd Turakina Caledonian Highland Games on January 31st were held in morning showers and afternoon sunshine. A good crowd of over 1,100 adults and many, many children saw excellent solo piping, drumming, dancing, field events and pipe bands upon the Village Domain.



*Bruce Cawood, new life member and Nigel Foster, President,
Pipe Band Association.*

Ian MacKay judged the North Island Open Piobaireachd which was won by Stewart MacKenzie who also won the Wellington Centre Championship Jig and Hornpipe, the A grade Strathspey and Reel and the A grade March. The other championship for the North Island events went to Adam Hall winning the Under 21 Strathspey and Reel, while Stewart Easton won the B grade Slow March.

Some of the results in the solo events were:-

North Island Championship Open Piobaireachd – 1. Stewart MacKenzie. 2. Straun Murgatroyd. 3. Graeme Bilsland. 4. David Oldershaw.

A Grade Strathspey and Reel – 1. Stewart MacKenzie. 2. Graeme Bilsland. 3. David Oldershaw. 4. Iain Robertson.

A Grade March – 1. Stewart MacKenzie. 2. Graeme Bilsland. 3. David Oldershaw.

Notices of Bagpipe Makers

by Jeannie Campbell

Part 3

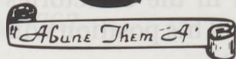
DONALD MACDONALD 1806-1840 EDINBURGH

The career of Donald MacDonald has been covered in the foreword to the reprint of his 1822 book and in the article by Keith Sanger (*Piping Times* Vol. 49 no. 1). There is also a lot of information in Roderick Cannon's *Bibliography of the Bagpipe*, mainly concerning the publication of his books.

Donald MacDonald was born in Skye, possibly in 1749. His father John MacDonald was herd to MacDonald of Kingsburgh and was a piper but not thought to be an expert. Donald may have had tuition from the MacArthurs who were pipers to Lord MacDonald and had a College of Piping. He competed seven times at the Edinburgh competition. In 1801 he was placed third and is described as Piper to the Caithness Highlanders. In 1806 he was given a special award of five guineas for the writing of pipe music scientifically. In that year the third prize was awarded to his son John who is described as John MacDonald son of Donald MacDonald now pipe-maker in Edinburgh. At the 1808 competition John MacDonald son of D. MacDonald the pipe maker received a premium for setting to music a collection of ancient pipe tunes. In 1811 Donald MacDonald got second prize and is described as Pipe Major Argyleshire Militia. In 1817 he won first prize, the Prize Pipe and so had to retire from competition. He is described that year as piper to the Argyleshire Militia.

Donald MacDonald appears first in the Edinburgh directory of 1806-07 as Pipemaker at Canongatehead. In the directories for 1808-09 and 1809-10 he is listed as Donald M'Donald pipe-maker Lawnmarket. In 1808 he advertised his business as instrument maker, teacher and producer of a tutor for the bagpipe. The address

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is given as Head of Lawnmarket. In 1817 he advertised a new tutor for the bagpipe. In 1822 he published a book of pipe music containing a tutor, 12 pieces of light music, 11 airs and 23 piobaireachds in the MacArthur style. It was re-printed in 1855 and 1974. In 1828 he published a collection of light music containing 120 tunes. He compiled a second collection of piobaireachd but it was never published. From 1810 to 1822 he is not listed in the directories. Perhaps he was busy at this time with his book and his position with



Bagpipe stamped MacDonald, Edinburgh. Taken to U.S.A. 1848.

the Argyleshire Militia. From 1823 to 1831 he is listed every year as Donald M'Donald pipe-maker to the Highland Society of London, 567 Lawnmarket. In 1831-32 his address is given as 408 Castlehill and in 1832-33 and 1833-34, 529 Castlehill. The directory of 1833-34 contains the first classified section and he is listed under musical instrument makers as well as in the alphabetical section. In 1835-36 he is listed at 529 High Street and in 1836-37, 529 Castlehill. Lawnmarket and Castlehill were both part of the High Street and the addresses seem to be interchangeable. In 1837-38 the address is given as 529 High Street. This is his last appearance in the classified section but entries continue in the alphabetical sections for 1838-39, 1839-

40 and 1840-41 still as Donald M'Donald pipe-maker to the Highland Society of London, 529 Castlehill. In the street directory section of the 1841-42 directory the same occupants as previous years are listed at numbers 527 and 531 but there is no name at 529 so presumably the premises were unoccupied after Donald's death. This occurred on 11th October 1840, the cause of death was given as ossification of the heart and his age at death 73 years. This would indicate a birthdate of 1767.

The rev. Alexander MacGregor heard Donald MacDonald play in 1831 when he was said to be aged 82. He described him as a short very stout man weighing about 20 stone. The tune he played was the *End of the Great Bridge* and his father who was present and aged 103 criticised him for playing his crunluath variation too slowly. Father died aged 107 and his obituary is quoted by Keith Sanger in his article.

'6 August 1827, died at Castlehill 2nd inst John McDonald (father of Donald McDonald pipemaker to the Highland Society of London) aged 107 years. This venerable old man was able to walk about till within a few weeks of his death and retained possession of all his faculties almost unimpaired to the hour of his dissolution. Yesterday he was followed to the grave by an immense number of friends among whom was a great grandson.'

Donald MacDonald had three sons who were pipers and all predeceased him. John has already been mentioned, he was third at the competition of 1806 and given a prize for writing music in 1808. Donald got 5th prize in 1821, 4th in 1823, 3rd in 1824 and 2nd in 1826. James got 5th prize in 1820 and 3rd in 1826. He appears in the 1822-23 and the 1823-24 directory as James MacDonald silversmith and musical instrument maker 396 Castlehill, later in 1831, 1832 and 1833 he is at 263 Canongate. He is listed in the first classified directory under musical instrument makers in 1833-34 along with his father, but does not appear after that year.

JOHN MACGREGOR c1806-1822 LONDON

According to the Notices of Pipers John MacGregor was born in 1780 and was the son of Patrick MacGregor, piper to Edradour. He was piper, pipe-maker and flute-maker to the Highland Society of London. At the Edinburgh competition in 1792 he was awarded the 3rd prize being described as a boy twelve years of age son of Patrick MacGregor piper to Edradour. He obtained the 2nd prize in 1798 as son of Patrick MacGregor and the first in 1806 as Piper to the Highland Society of London.

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He officiated with great applause at the meeting of the Highland Society and was also piper to H.R.H. the Duke of Kent, Earl of Strathearn.

He was probably the writer of the Highland Society of London piobaireachd MS which was dictated by Angus MacArthur at the time of the latter's death. He had a flourishing business in London where he died suddenly from apoplexy on the 1st January 1822 after playing at a dinner given by the Highland Society. He was Pipe-Major to the Loyal North Britons, a volunteer corps formed in London, which existed from 1803 to 1813.

Archibald Campbell, in his article The MacGregor Pipers of the Clann An Sgeulaiche (Piping Times Vol 2 nos. 10-12 and Vol 38 no. 5) quotes his obituary notice which appeared in the Edinburgh Magazine Vol 10 March 1822.

'1822, Jan 1. In London, Mr John MacGregor, the celebrated Scottish piper, in consequence of having fallen down a stair in the residence of Mr John Wedderburne in the Albany, where he had been exercising his professional talents for the entertainment of a party. Mr MacGregor was a native of the Highlands of Perthshire, and one of the Clann is Iain Sgeulish, distinguished from time immemorial as pipers. His father, Peter MacGregor, who is still living at Fortingall, gained the first prize pipe ever given by the Highland Society of London, when the competition of pipers was held at Falkirk. The deceased, while yet very young, accompanied his father to London, and such was his proficiency in his profession that he was soon after appointed piper to the Highland Society of London, and to his Royal Highness the Duke of Sussex. In passing through Perth last season, on his return from the Highlands for London, he was prevailed on to give a concert under the patronage of the Perth Gaelic Society in the Salutation Hall. Although the entertainment had scarcely been twenty four hours advertised, Mr. MacGregor had a pretty good house, and all who heard him were delighted at his superior execution upon the Great Highland Bagpipe, Union Pipe, Flageolet and German Flute.'

I have been unable to obtain a London directory before 1816 but have searched the directories for 1816 to 1822 and found no entry for John MacGregor. The only J. MacGregor listed was a goldsmith and jeweller who was still trading in 1844.

(to be continued)

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Bagpipes and Cross Channel Swimming

In March's editorial we talked of the need of a piper or at least recorded rowing tunes to keep up the spirits and stroke rate of trans-Atlantic rowers. Little did we know that a former long distance swimmer used a piper to sustain him in his efforts to swim the English Channel? If any readers can help Mrs. Kennedy, the author of this interesting piece, with information about the Nicolls and piping especially with regards to Alfred Nicoll, she would be very grateful. Her article appeared in the Journal of the Aberdeen and N.E. Scotland Family History Society February 1998, pages 20-22.

There is more to family history than searching for names, dates and places. It is the putting of flesh on the bones which gives one the most pleasure. My maternal grandfather, Alfred Nicoll was born at South Lodge, Skene, Aberdeenshire on May 18th 1873 and died in Hull on September 23rd 1935. Stories about him abound – some more difficult to substantiate than others. Here is an attempt to prove one of them.

Alfred was a chemist by occupation but he was also an ardent player of the bagpipes. My eldest cousin remembers that the carpet in the living room of our grandfather's home in Hull was neatly bisected by a path made by him marching up and down while playing the pipes – goodness only knows how he got on with his neighbours! This passion seems to have run in the family for in the obituary of his father, William Swan Nicoll, gamekeeper at Skene, the Aberdeen Daily Journal on Friday 20th November 1903 mentioned that one of his sons was piper to the Clan Mackenzie in the United States of America.

Several years ago a friend of my cousin's returned from a trip to the library with a book by Margaret A. Jarvis published in 1975 by David and Charles entitled *Captain Webb and 100 years of Channel Swimming*. In this she mentioned the many unsuccessful attempts made by Jabez Wolffe who was sometimes accompanied by Pipe Major Nicholl's bagpipes to maintain a stroke rate of 29-32 a minute. This story rang a bell in the minds of my mother and those of her brothers and sisters who were still alive. They were convinced that despite the different spelling of the surname and the title of Pipe Major that this man was their father. There was talk of a bible which they remembered seeing as children which had been given to Alfred

Nicoll by Jabez Wolffe and bore some inscription linking the two men together. Unfortunately this bible was never found. In 1991 I wrote to Margaret Jarvis but she was unable to give me any more details about the piper and so for several years I put the matter to the back of my mind.

Then one summer I was in Kent for a family wedding and decided to spend a day in the library at Dover examining the local newspapers to see if I could find anything more to substantiate the story. First of all before I left home I contacted both Folkestone and Dover libraries, as I was not exactly certain where cross channel swims from England started. A librarian in Folkestone sent me a photocopy of a list of unsuccessful swims from a booklet entitled *From Across the Straits* which was a record of channel swims published by the *Dover Express*. This made my self appointed task easier as it gave the exact dates of the swims so I could pick out which pieces of the microfilm to examine.

I soon established that Wolffe certainly was accompanied by pipers on these swims, for the *Dover Express* on Friday 20th July 1906 reported that on an attempt made two days previously the swimmer had had with him two pipers who contributed bagpipe screels during the cross channel swim. The swim had been abandoned after nearly 10 hours because of a strained leg muscle. Wolffe himself was Scottish, for a week later the paper announced that the Scotch swimmer after undergoing medical treatment in London had returned to Dover for another attempt. This took place on July 30th and was reported in the paper on Friday 3rd August. There appears to have been only one piper who was referred to as Pipe Major Macpherson. The newspaper reporter commented that the time sped by, the monotony being relieved by the weird squirl of the bagpipes, which if not fully appreciated on the tug may have had a soothing effect on the swimmer! Unfortunately Jabez Wolffe's leg injury caused the swim to be abandoned after only 3 hours and 42 minutes.

The following July it was announced that Mr Jabez Wolffe, the long distance amateur swimmer, had arrived back in Dover on board the steam launch *Sea Wolf* accompanied amongst others by a Scotch piper (no name) and Pilot MacDonald of Shoreham who once again would be in charge of the swim. The reporter, rightly as it turned out, did not think the swim would succeed, as the water temperature was low. On August 5th 1907 Wolffe spent a total of just over 15 hours in the sea and yet still failed. This try was reported in detail in the next edition of the *Dover Express*. It was here I found the name Nichol mentioned in the following lovely account – "At about the thirteenth

hour he (Wolffe) began to tire, but with Nichol blowing away at the bagpipes for all he was worth, the swimmer clinched his teeth and struck out again. The water was beautifully calm and as MacDonald gradually edged him up to the goal all aboard the *Sea Wolf* became very excited." What a shame he failed and from my point of view what a pity the name is still spelt incorrectly and the Christian name not given. Still at least the piper was not given the rank of Pipe Major.

The following summer I found nothing of note although Wolffe made a further two attempts which both ended in failure after swims lasting in the region of 14 hours each. In 1909 he was back in Dover again. On August 26th it would appear that he nearly made it but unfortunately had to give up after hitting a plank. On this occasion I know my possible grandfather was not one of those accompanying him for those on board the *Sea Wolf* comprised: – Messrs S. Whitehurst (Derby), Norman Lester (Sydney, NSW), A. Berg (London), Dr Arthur Bloxonne, Messrs A. Newmark, W. Kellingley (Brighton), J. H. Gibson (Folkestone), T. S. Stephen (Derby), H. Bushell (Dover), Piper Hendrey and the representative of the Dover express.

After this the remaining attempts appear to have been from France where he started from Sangatte – near to the French end of the Channel Tunnel. According to both Margaret Jarvis and the list of unsuccessful swims altogether Jabez Wolffe made 22 attempts on the Channel but since his name did not appear in the list after 1909 and I was running out of time I did not search the newspapers after this date. I did not manage to prove that my grandfather was one of the pipers who accompanied Jabez Wolffe but I do not regard the time as wasted for I now have a very vivid picture of these swims and have an admiration for the dogged persistence of this Scotsman. It was reported that he died in October 1943. I did write to The Newspaper Library in Colindale to find out if there was an obituary for him but again was unsuccessful. I am pleased to report that I did read that he trained several swimmers who succeeded. And you never know one of these days that bible might turn up!

Major Pipe Band Dates for 1998

23rd May	European Championship – Ayr
27th June	Scottish Championship – Rothesay
15th August	World Championship – Glasgow
29th August	Cowal Championship – Dunoon
5th September	British Championship – Rouken Glen, Glasgow

Tune of the Month

The image shows a handwritten musical score on aged, slightly stained paper. The title "The Gurkhas' Joy" is written in pencil at the top left. The score is written in a single system with a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature. The music consists of several staves of notes, including eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests. There are handwritten annotations such as "1st" and "2nd" indicating different parts of the tune. At the top right, there is a signature "Lawrie" and the date "2nd June 1915". The paper has some dark smudges and a small tear at the bottom edge.

Going through some books which belonged to John MacColl we found pasted inside the back cover of one a tune written in pencil by William Lawrie. It has obviously been folded up and kept, probably in a pay book, for some time. As far as we know it has not been published before. The tune is a jig called *The Gurkhas' Joy*.

Further Snippets

Good news for collectors of music books. Mrs MacLeod (widow of the late P/M Donald MacLeod) informs us that she is reprinting Books 2 and 3 of Donald's collection and they should be available from early May '98. Book 6 may be reprinted at a later date.



Changes are taking place at the World Pipe Band Championship Grade 1 competitions for 1998. Out is the seeded draw of previous years. This year a straightforward draw will be made in advance but will exclude the six prizewinners from last year. The remaining bands will compete in the morning and the six best will go forward to join last year's prizewinners for the Medley and March, Strathspey and Reel competitions in the afternoon.

"Set up" and "peak" three times on the one day! Quite a task for this year's bands.



Changes at Cowal. All solo piping competitions will take place on one day – Friday 28th August. The Senior Events will be held in the field behind the Grandstand (Tuning park for bands on Saturday) and the Junior Events on the top field where the Senior Events have been held in recent years. This change will make life a little easier for junior competitors who also play with bands and of course for stewarding as well.

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Evening Post

Germany.

Dear Madam and Sir,

Many thanks to all volunteers for their work to manage the PT. For such "faraways" from most of the piping events like me the PT is the most important medium to keep in contact with the piping world.

yours sincerely,
Wolfgang Bayer.

More on Burns

Glasgow.

Dear Editor,

Ian Murray's article on Burns Suppers brought to mind some of my own experiences. It is true that pipers tend to stick to a very limited repertoire of Burns tunes but the reciters of poetry, with so much to choose from, are no better. Tam o' Shanter tends to lose some of its charm when heard for the fourth time in the space of a week. Pipers are expected to be note perfect but how many addressers of the haggis are word perfect? Some even make no secret of the fact that they are reading it from the book.

Planning the route in advance as Ian advises is essential but even then things can go wrong, such as the time when some sociable guests decided at the last moment to push two tables together, blocking the only route to the top table. Another time the proposed route between table and wall looked adequate but a projecting wall light hooked on to the drone cord, bringing the procession to a halt until a guest saw the problem and unhooked it.

Chefs too can be unpredictable. One time the chef downed his dram, picked up the haggis, took the shortest and fastest route, and was back in the safety of his kitchen before I had put my glass down and blown up the pipes.

Recently I came across a tourist guide book to Scotland which appears to be produced by Germans for the American market. It

contains several glaring historical errors, for example the statement that the Wolf of Badenoch was an illegitimate son of Robert Bruce, and the information on Burns Suppers is no more reliable. It describes how the haggis is ceremoniously borne in, greeted with the Ode to a Haggis, split open, then glasses of whisky are raised in salute and poured over the haggis which is then sliced and served. This would solve Ian's problem of what to do with an unwanted dram.

It seems the English have taken this a stage further. A piper temporarily resident in the South of England was asked to play at a Burns Supper. He first suspected all was not as usual when the chef appeared behind him pushing the haggis on a hostess trolley. After the address instead of handing out the whisky it was poured over the haggis which was then set alight. A haggis with first degree Burns? Anyone know an appropriate tune?

yours sincerely,
Jeannie Campbell.

Glasgow.

Dear Dugald,

I found the article by Ian K. Murray on piping at Burns' Suppers both entertaining and amusing, especially his comments on the 'piper's dram' and the lack of tuning facilities.

Depending on the generosity of the hosting organisation, I find that the dram is sometimes about a treble in measure, with no water added, which I just cannot down in a 'oner', so my solution is to get to the drams beforehand and re-distribute most of mine into the glasses intended for the haggis-bearer and the haggis-addresser, although this tactic can back-fire seriously if one doesn't get the correct glass.

Another hazard which may be encountered is that the so-called tuning facilities are not only inadequate but also unheated. Even if you tune-up for twenty minutes and your pipes seem settled, when you get into the hall itself, which will have been well warmed up against any "blast o' Janwar' win", with upwards of one hundred bodies exhaling alcohol-laden fumes into the sauna-like atmosphere, your pipe will go out by the time the top table has been piped in.

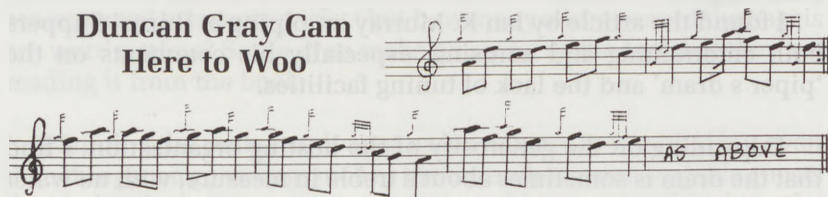
Nevertheless, I suppose we should be grateful that the Burns season provides one occasion in the year when the demand for pipers almost exceeds the supply.

The setting of *Rantin', Rovin', Robin* is much appreciated, and I will definitely learn it up for next year. Mr Willie Gilmour, President of the Glasgow Highland Club, has suggested *Duncan Gray* as another possibility. It goes well when played at the same pace as *A Man's a Man*, and will get your haggis back out again quite nicely. As most audiences will recognise the tune it could become a 'sing along' number, especially if played as it is sung, that is, without playing each part twice. The words of the first verse are:-

Duncan Gray cam here to woo,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't,
On blythe Yule-night when we were fou,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't,
Maggie coost her head fu' high,
Look'd askient and unco skeigh,
Gart poor Duncan stand abeigh;
Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

yours sincerely,
Dugald M. McIntyre.

**Duncan Gray Cam
Here to Woo**



Birmingham.

Dear Sir,

I read with interest Ian K. Murray's reminiscences of playing in the haggis.

I first performed this duty at the age of eleven in 1924 along with my father. I cannot recall a year, with the exception of the six war

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years, when I have not done this. My last performance was this year, 1998. Perhaps I have created a record?

As Mr Murray points out there is never enough room and doors always bar the way. Societies should appoint a steward to ensure a smooth passage. I have often thought I would give them a surprise by just playing the practice chanter! In a few days I will celebrate my 85th birthday – who knows, perhaps I will dine on haggis.

Yours sincerely,
Iain D. Inch.
Honorary Piper
Leicester Caledonian Society.

Edinburgh.

Dear Dugald,

SCOTTISH ANTHEM

Burns Suppers of the Edinburgh Robert Burns Society used to finish with Scotland's National Anthem – "*Scots Wha Hae*", followed by Scotland's International Anthem – "*Auld Lang Syne*". Both go well on the pipes, even if *Auld Lang Syne* has to be played slightly differently from on the piano. Burns apparently intended another tune for *Auld Lang Syne*. It is a fine tune and is adaptable to the bagpipe – with some "octave jumping".

I have never been in doubt that Scotland's National Anthem is *Scots Wha Hae*, which represents Scotland in the "Tunes of the Nations" section of the Scottish Students' Songbook of 1898 – alongside other anthems.

The tune of *Scots Wha Hae*, under the name "Hey Tutti Taiti" was probably used by the Scots Army at Bannockburn in 1314. It was certainly used, as noted in French military records, by Scottish troops helping Joan of Arc at Orleans in 1489. The continued use of the tune by the French military, on ceremonial occasions, as the "Marches des Soldats de Robert Bruce", supports the use at Bannockburn theory.

The present words were written by Robert Burns on the basis of what Robert Bruce is reported to have said to the Scots Army before Bannockburn. Few nations can have such a historic or appropriate anthem – and few would throw it away for a new composition. I hope

we do not. However, we have to recognise that the public have adopted "Flower of Scotland" as our sporting anthem. The people have voted with their voices. I suspect that the new Scotland will have two anthems, as it has two flags – the Saltire and the Lion. We shall not be alone in this situation. Walking home from "Edinburgh's Hogmanay Party", with my bagpipe, I was repeatedly asked for "*Flower of Scotland*". The crowd seemed happy to sing along with my version (after asking me to play it more slowly!). Flattened thirds and flattened sevenths are both possible, if unconventional, on the Highland bagpipe. I have just played "Flower of Scotland" to myself and neither seemed needed – but that may vary with chanters and reeds and players. (I do use a flattened third for "Nag Bin", an Indian tune which I sometimes play on international occasions).

By all means have a competition for new Scottish tunes and lyrics, but let's keep our historic anthem and accept, beside it, what the public has chosen as a sporting one – and play them on our pipes.

David Stevenson.

Isle of Bute.

Dear Editor,

There's nothing wrong with *Flower of Scotland*, it sounded great at Murrayfield against England on Saturday – sung with gusto by thousands and played by the pipe band – it's a real Anthem of the Scottish People.

Yours,
Sandy Calder.

Rosneath and Clynder

Sunday 19th July is the date for this year's Rosneath and Clynder Highland Games where there are solo piping competitions at all levels. Local, Juvenile, Chanter and Professional where the prize money in the Piobaireachd is 1st £200, 2nd £100, 3rd £75 and 4th £50.

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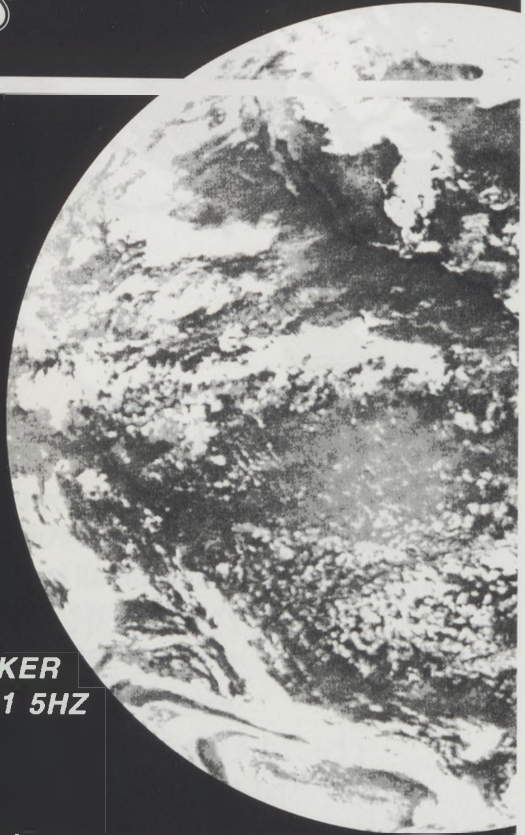
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