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Piping Times

Vol. 22, No. 7.

April, 1970.



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Piping Times

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COVER PICTURE :

10,000 ISLANDS GAMES, 1969.

Left to right—John Wilson, John MacLellan, John MacFadyen,
Sam Scott, Seumas MacNeill.

PIOBAIREACHD

CLASSICAL MUSIC OF THE HIGHLAND BAGPIPE

SEUMAS MACNEILL

PIOBAIREACHD, the classical music of the great Highland bagpipe, has been described as Scotland's major contribution to world culture. Yet despite its acclaimed musical merit and the almost universal acquaintance with the instrument, piobaireachd is played and understood by only a small minority.

To interest and educate a wider audience, the BBC has commissioned *Piobaireachd*. Published on October 24, 1968, this book will not only contribute to the literature of the bagpipe but will help both the listening and the reading public to understand and enjoy this ancient classical music.

Piobaireachd is the first full treatment of the subject. Written by Seumas MacNeill, Joint Principal of the College of Piping, it traces the history of the bagpipe and of bagpipe music and describes in detail the unique characteristics of the instrument itself. The main body of the book is devoted to a close analysis of selected tunes representative of each category of piobaireachd. Finally there is a summary of the present position and a review of future prospects for this great musical tradition.



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Editorial.

One facet of piping—which never fails to amaze those who meet it for the first time—is the way in which interest in our national music is spreading so rapidly throughout countries all over the world. It used to be looked on as slightly surprising that the Scots clung so tenaciously to their bagpipes when they went off to foreign parts, but now this is accepted as one of the inexplicable customs of an uncomprehensible race.

What is really unexpected is the interest shown in the Highland bagpipe in countries which seem to have little else in their culture in common with the Scots. French, Germans, Belgians, Dutch, Norse, Swedes, Danes and Italians, all—in increasing numbers—are learning to play the bagpipe. Of course to the Highlander at the beginning of last century this would appear no more unlikely than that people who speak English as their only language should become enamoured of the great Highland pipe.

Of all the countries which have taken to the bagpipe, the one we have for some time considered most likely to reach the top is the United States of America. All over that vast country, but particularly on the east and west coasts, the numbers of pipers have shown a tremendous increase in the last twenty years. Our instrument has an appeal—musically, emotionally, visually and physically—which is appreciated by Americans probably more than by any other race, and their well-known drive and gift for organisation is doing the rest.

Two years ago a young American piper in Scotland was asked how long he thought it would be before nine bands from his country would equal the standard of the Scottish bands. His reply was that it would take a very, very long time, probably four years. In fact, parity has been reached much sooner—in one respect at least. The U.S. and Scotland now rank together as the only two countries in the world where piping is officially frowned on by government bodies. Only sheer natural laziness has stopped the College of Piping officials from moving the whole she-bang to Ireland or France or Canada, where they would at least escape the hypocritical excuses of those who walk the corridors of power.

Now, we are not alone. Welcome to the club, fellow sufferers of the U.S.A. At last you have reached the high plateau of piping, and life will never be quite the same again. In the rosy dawn of government disapproval you can look forward to the spiky joys of the martyr, realising that the way of the piper—like that of the transgressor—is hard and weary.

What has happened, of course, is that the American Air Force

pipe band has been sentenced to death. After April 1st it will no longer exist. This, in the interests of—wait for it, lads, it's almost unbelievable—economy! It cost the United States nine thousand million pounds to put two men on the moon, and now to save £16,000 they propose to disband seven pipers and four drummers. By a strange twist of fate this was the very band which the Apollo crew requested to play in their tickertape parade in New York.

So passes away the glory of the world. In our case—so the story goes—a titled lady lost £72,000 at cards in London and went straight home and sacked the piper. Maybe it's just that pipers are the whipping boys—nobody really means to do us down, it's just that we're too conspicuous when hard times come.

Ceilidh in South Africa

by Capt. D. M. MacLennan.

In this modern age of pop and rock 'n roll the idea of holding a ceilidh, especially in South Africa, remote from the land of its origin, seemed something of an anachronism, but the Scottish Piping Society of the Witwatersrand decided to go ahead with its concept, which resulted in an eminently successful ceilidh held in St. George's Presbyterian Church Hall, Johannesburg, on Saturday evening, 21st February, 1970.

After a year of intensive tuition which culminated in the "Best Piper of the Year" competition in November, 1969, it was realised that the standard of piping was extremely high, especially in piobaireachd which had been judged by T. H. Johnston, Esq., of Leeds, England, and it was felt that other people should enjoy the virtuosity of some of our younger pipers in the relaxed atmosphere of a ceilidh.

An excellent balanced programme of piping, Hebridean and country dancing, violin playing and singing was arranged, much to the appreciation of a large and enthusiastic audience of members of the Society and their friends. The piping consisted of competition marches, strathspeys and reels, and jigs and ceol meadhonach by Society members and pipers of the Transvaal Scottish Regiment who avail themselves of the tuition afforded by the Society.

Pipe-Major George Ackroyd, the Society's piping instructor, completed the piping contribution with a standard selection and a sympathetic rendering of the well-known and favourite piobaireachd, "The Battle of the Birds".

The Hebridean dancing of the attractive MacMillan sisters, Cheryl and Beverly, to the music of a piper, was sincerely appreciated. This is a form of Highland dancing in classical ballet form new to South Africa, introducing a smooth rhythmic flow and delicate toe work extremely well suited to the lissomness of the female form. Cheryl is the champion Highland dancer of Southern Africa and, with her equally talented sister Beverly, they were well able to express the grace and rhythm of the dances and to capture a great deal of the implied spirit behind them.

No ceilidh would be complete without a fiddler, and memories of Neil Gow and Scott Skinner were aroused by the nimble fingers and expert bowmanship of Jimmy Brownlie on his fiddle. A modest performer who has been liberal with his undoubted talent over the long years for the pleasure of his countrymen, Highland and Lowland.

The country dancing of the 51st Club was quite outstanding. The dignity of the dancers was enhanced by the attractiveness of their dress—tartan sashes over white dresses, and the kilt worn with white shirts. The calm, controlled rhythm of the dances was reminiscent of another age and contrasted favourably with the aimless cavorting of the present day.

Although the emphasis of the ceilidh was naturally on piping and dancing, due regard was also paid to vocal items, and suitable songs to suit all tastes, both Highland and Lowland, were interspersed with the main items. There was an excellent atmosphere of togetherness throughout the whole ceilidh which was particularly manifest during the interval when the ladies of the Society served tea and cakes.

The consensus of opinion was that the Society has more than justified its work over the past 24 odd years to improve the standard of piping in South Africa, and that the medium of the ceilidh could not be bettered as a means of initiating the public to piping at its best. Thanks are due to the members of the ad hoc sub-committee who were responsible for the arrangements and to the ladies for the refreshments, but special mention should be made of the work done by John Farmer and Jimmy Cumming, and the compere, Jock Perrie.

Over the years the Society has had the honour and privilege of inviting many of the outstanding pipers in Scotland to visit South Africa as the guests of the Society to give tuition, recitals and talks on piping. This year it looks forward to the visit of Pipe-Major R. U. Brown, the Queen's piper at Balmoral, who has had special permission from Her Majesty to make the trip. The ambition of the Society is in the not too distant future to have some of its younger members competing at Inverness and Oban.

As is usual with all successful ceilidhs, people are reluctant to depart at the end, but the time does come when it is necessary to sing *soiridh leibh 'us oidhche mhath leibh*, and with many promises of a repeat performance this was done.

Donald MacDonald

Bagpipe Maker
and compiler.

by James E. Scott.

While all pipers pay a lot of attention to Angus MacKay's collection of piobaireachd, only a few take any notice of a collection compiled by Donald MacDonald, MacKay's predecessor in the same field. Except for their common interest in piobaireachd these two men had nothing else in common. MacDonald's father, who had not a word of English, recognised the value of education. He sent his son to the parochial school where he received a thorough grounding in the three "R's" as it was called, reading, writing and arithmetic; from there he went on to the higher parts, mathematics, music and Latin, etc. Thus it was that MacDonald had an excellent education while MacKay was illiterate. MacDonald also attended the MacArthur school of piping where he proved himself an apt pupil and became a very proficient performer of piobaireachd.

Donald MacDonald was born in Skye as far as I can judge, in or about 1748. His father being John MacDonald who held a croft at Glenhinisdale, a few miles from Kingsburgh, the home of Flora MacDonald. He was employed by Flora as a handyman about her home. The son's life seems to have flowed along the even tenor of its way, but his father's had one or two interesting incidents in it. As a boy he met Prince Charles and had the honour of receiving a shilling from him in return for a slight service he did him. He remembered the visit of Dr. Johnson and Boswell to Kingsburgh. "I only saw him once. One morning the big Englishman and the Rev. Dr. MacQueen of Kilmuir were walking after breakfast in front of Kingsburgh House, and evidently admiring the splendid scenery all round. He was a lusty, stout man, somewhat like my son Donald there, but probably stouter. He had on the most strange hat I ever saw, and he did not seem inclined to walk about much. When I had an opportunity I asked Dr. MacQueen who that strange looking gentleman was, with the broad brimmed hat. 'Sin agad, Iain, an Sasunnach Mor a rinn a' Bheurla'. Thubhairt mi fein, ma ta, a' Mhinisteir, bha gle bheag aige ri dheanamh. (That John is the big Sasannach who made the English. I replied and said, well, Minister, he had little to do)." Flora ordered John to go to Loch Leathann to catch some trout for Dr. Johnson's breakfast.

It is not clear whether John played the bagpipes or not; he certainly had a great knowledge of piobaireachd and the stories connected with the tunes, and was an excellent performer of canntaireachd. There is no doubt that it was from his father that Donald learned the tales about the tunes that he afterwards left in

manuscript. John acknowledged that the MacCrimmons were more famed for their musical talent, but still they could not surpass the beautiful and systematic playing of the MacArthurs.

Flora MacDonald died suddenly at Peinduin while on a visit to her friends there; his wife being dead, John felt very lonely. He had lost his best and dearest friends. His son Donald, to cheer his later days, carried him off to Edinburgh to live with him, and there he died thirty years later at the great age of 107 years, in 1835.

Donald MacDonald appears to have left Skye soon after his education generally and musically was completed, and set up in business in the Lawnmarket as a bagpipe maker. Through the influence of Sir John Sinclair he was appointed piper and bagpipe maker to the Highland Society of London.

Donald published his "Ancient Martial Music of Caledonia" about 1806; we find that at the annual bagpipe competition of that year "Sir John Sinclair, by desire of the Highland Society of London, called upon Donald MacDonald and informed him that a prize had been voted to him by the judges for producing the greatest number of pipe tunes, set to music by himself; and it was recommended to him to continue his good work in that way, and to instruct others as might apply to him to be taught."

There seems to have been three editions of his "Martial Music" published during his lifetime; the third edition being published in 1831. This work was republished by Messrs. J. and R. Glen in 1855.

Macdonald intended publishing a second volume of "Martial Music" with historic notes to the tunes. He completed his manuscript but died before it could be published. It later passed into the hands of Major-General Thomason. It contains the promised notes. Donald's education enabled him to do all this work without the aid of assistants, i.e. ghost writers.

Donald was married and had a family of sons and daughters but, sad to say, they all died before himself. Of his sons, three at least were good performers; his son John won third prize at the competition of 1806; James won fifth prize in 1820; Donald gained the fifth prize in 1821.

In appearance Donald was of low stature, thick set, a very stout man; he weighed over twenty stones. He seems to have lived in comfortable circumstances; indeed he appears to have had a successful career financially. At his death, having no heir or relatives, his effects went to the sale room for the benefit of some charities.

We do not know the exact year of his death, but it was five or six after his father, making him a nonagenarian, possibly aged 94 years.

It may not be without interest to say that Donald's father had his portrait painted and that it had an honoured place in the home at Edinburgh. This portrait, within living memory, was in private possession in Inverness of a well known citizen.

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"The Highland Piper"

It seems that, at last, the record companies have realised that there is a small but profitable market in bagpipe records. At least this would appear to be the case, as in the past few months a piobaireachd record has been produced by BBC Radio Enterprises, an L.P. by John Burgess, and another by the Shotts and Dykehead Pipe Band (both on the Waverley Label), and most recent of all, an L.P. by James Ross Matheson from Lairg.

The title of the record is "The Highland Piper" and while to some the use of the definite article might suggest arrogance, knowing the modesty of James Matheson I can assure readers that none is intended.

The front cover of the sleeve has a magnificent photograph of the player accompanied by Angus Macpherson, M.B.E., who directed the playing. This is the first time to my knowledge that an individual piper has used the services of a director while making a record.

The record itself consists of thirteen marches, three strathspeys, three reels, one jig and one slow march—according to the information given on the sleeve, but in fact there is another strathspey and reel, "Arniston Castle" and "Mrs. Macpherson of Inveran", played but not acknowledged.

Those of us who have endured the trials and tribulations of making a record realise more than most how much the performer is in the hands of technicians, and how much the ultimate sound produced is determined by such things as the balance of drone against chanter, quality of machinery, and probably most important of all, the emotional state of the player playing in what is essentially an artificial situation. These things considered, I think the playing in this record is quite good. James Matheson is barely known as a piper outside of his own part of the Highlands, and the idea of presenting a local piper in this way is new—but it has its attractions, showing as it does the pleasant standard that can be achieved away from the fires that burn in the centres of piping.

Like all records, some tunes come over better than others, but I must say that I am surprised at the preponderance of marches, and simply fail to understand why "The Meeting of the Waters" and "The Back of Benachie" should be played twice through when playing them once through and adding two tunes of similar duration would have, in my view, been much more effective.

Some excellent marches, such as "The Marchioness of Tullibardine", "Parker's Welcome to Perthshire", "Angus Campbell's Farewell to Stirling" and "The Pap of Glencoe" are played in flowing style. Few concessions are made to the modern hornpipe and jig brigade, and this, in the eyes of some may be a welcome state of affairs, but I fear that, in the long run, it may well affect sales. For 19/11d. the record may be had from the recording company, Spectrum 5002, Colortone Record Co., 1-2 Royal Parade, Dawes Road, London, S.W.6, or from all music shops.

The Scottish Piping Society of the Witwatersrand

"BEST PIPER OF THE YEAR"—1970.

The Executive Committee of the Scottish Piping Society of the Witwatersrand has agreed upon the following arrangements for the set tunes for the "Best Piper of the Year" competition and the Royal Scottish Gathering in 1970, for the three events of piobaireachd, marches and strathspeys and reels :—

PIOBAIREACHD.

Competitors will be required to submit three tunes of their own choice. The settings of such tunes should as far as possible, be taken from the books of the Piobaireachd Society, but other settings will be accepted, although the judges will reserve the right to consider the merits of such settings. All tunes must, however, include taorluath and crunluath movements. The judges will nominate the tune to be played.

MARCHES, AND STRATHSPEYS AND REELS.

Competitors will be required to submit three tunes/selections of their own choice, and the judges will nominate the tunes/selections to be played. All tunes will have to be at least four-part tunes, with marches in 2/4 time.

The Highland Bagpipe Competition will probably be held during the period October/November, 1970, whilst the Royal Scottish Gathering will be held on 5th and 7th September, 1970.

The Society has also recommended to the Royal Scottish Gathering Committee that the open slow marches competition should be discontinued and be replaced by an open jigs competition confined to four-part jigs. This competition will not count towards qualification for the overall winner at the Gathering.

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U.S.A.

Air Force Band Axed

The stories were just beginning to build into a saga when the blow struck. Reports from visiting pipers last summer claimed that the American Air Force band was a Grade 1 combination, those who heard them recently in Edinburgh confirmed the theory, and an excellent (not for sale, unfortunately) record gave the final touch. Now comes the sad news that the band is to be phased out before the summer.

The excuse given by General John T. Ryan, Air Force chief of staff, is that the United States cannot afford to maintain a pipe band. This is manifestly untrue, considering the other things the U.S. can afford to maintain, and considering the size of other bodies which do support pipe bands.

The St. Andrews Society of Washington, D.C. (which successfully supported the drive to abolish tax on bagpipes) is launching a letter-writing campaign. James Welsh of "The Evening Star" (Washington) supports this idea but suspects that the decision to disband is a personal idea of General Ryan's. The "Air Force Times" rather naturally takes a canny line, and points out that piping is "clearly not essential to the basic mission", but makes a plea for activities which will generate goodwill for the military establishments.

It can confidently be claimed that the decision has created a furore, not only among pipers, and not only among Americans of Scottish descent, but among the very many people who rejoiced in the pageantry for which they could feel partly responsible. John Macree of Scotia Magazine has no doubts on the matter. "If it's a matter of money, it would be far better to keep the pipe band than to spend thousands of dollars on those awful uniforms for the White House police". Russell Kirk, columnist with General Features Corporation, writes, "At least we might retain martial music, for when all the picturesque glory has been drained out of a fighting force, valor may follow".

What of the feelings of the band? Jim Neary says, "It's an irony that will long plague my memory that the day we were officially informed of our impending debacle was the same day I received the issue of the "Piping Times" with the picture of our Pipe-Sergeant, Donald Lindsay, on the cover and the boost for the band inside."

Seldom can a topic of this nature have caused such widespread indignation. It's to be hoped that wiser counsel will prevail and that this excellent band will be allowed to continue with its good work.

Pipe Bands Organise

The advancement of pipe band music took a step forward recently with the formation in Moose Jaw of "The Prairie Pipe Band Association". The organisation, formed by representatives from bands in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, will help promote competitions and assist with judges, rules and contacts with bands.

Membership is available to any active band having at least six pipers and three drummers. Individuals may also be enrolled, and the address is 1306 First Avenue N.W., Moose Jaw. An annual meeting will be held in October of each year. Officers elected for this year are: President, Hugh Scott of Moose Jaw; vice-presidents, John Pollock, Manitoba, Angus Spence, Saskatchewan and George Reid, Alberta; secretary, C. A. Peterman; treasurer, Jim McWilliams.

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A PROPOS DU BAGAD.

A very interesting publication consisting of twenty-four pages of quarto duplicated, arrived on our desk the other day. This is a treatise compiled by Mr. L. Stephan of Ecole Saint-Joseph, Landerneau, France. Although Mr. Stephan is neither a piper nor a drummer, he has put together in a most condensed form all the available technical information on scales, chanters and reeds.

That this publication should appear at all is further indication of the expanding interest in the bagpipe. That it appears in the French language shows that we no longer have a monopoly of knowledge on our national instrument. Of course there is no less reason why it should appear in French than why this magazine should appear mainly in English.

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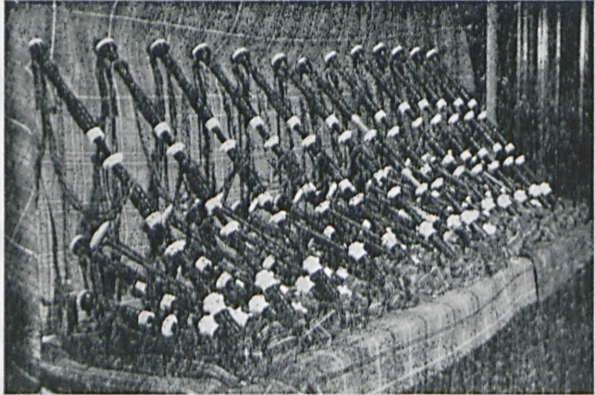
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Facal 's a' Ghaidhlig

Tha co-fharpaisean na bliadhna againn a rithist, le co-fharpais Uidhist agus Bharraidh an Glaschu, co-fharpais an Dun-Eideann agus co-fharpais an Lunnainn a dh'aithghearr. Tha co-fharpais an SPA am bliadhna air a chur air ais gu mìos a'Ghiblein. Gun teagamh, thig bruidhinn a rithist am measg luchd-eisdeachd agus co-fharpaisich air cho math no cho dona agus a bha na britheamhan. Am bu choir Ruairidh Mor a'cheud duais a chosnadh anns a'cheol mhor, no mar a fhuair Seonaidh Dorch duais ged rinn e mearachd anns an Taorluath. Thoisich an SPA air doigh ur an uiridh air breith a thoirt air co-fharpaisich. Bha aig na britheamhan ri na comharran a bha iad a'toirt seachad a shealltainn nuair a sguireadh co-fharpaiseach a chluich. Bha cuid riarichte le so, agus cuid nach robh riarichte.

O chionn bliadhna no dha air ais bhiodh daoine ag radh nach robh na britheamhan iad-fein fiosrachail gu leoir, nach robh iad cho math air cluich ri moran de na piobairean. Thoisich Comunn Rioghail nam Piobairean air iarraidh air piobairean a bha iad-fhein 'nam "professionals" agus a bha air am bonn or a chosnadh a bhith 'nam britheamhan. Bha duil gum biodh gach duine riarichte le so. Cha robh, agus tha uiread de ghearan agus de bhruidhinn mu dheidhinn na cuis agus a bha ann a riamh.

Gu fortanach, chaneil an argumaid a'deanamh cus dragh do na piobairean fhein. Tha aig an am, gun teagamh, nuair a gheibh caraid duais agus e air mearachd a dheanamh, agus nuair nach fhaigh thu-fhein duais idir, ach air la-arna-mhaireach, cha bhith cuimhne air, agus tha sin cho math. Faodar a bhith cinnteach gun tionndaidh na piobairean an airde am bliadhna a rithist mar a b'abhaist—gach fear dhiubh a'sireadh an fhortain a dh'aindeoin co bhios 'na bhritheamh.

Mar tha na bliadhnaichean a'dol seachad, tha an t-airgiod a tha maille ris na duaisean a'dol 'nas fhearr agus 'nas fhearr, agus tha sin gle iomchuidh agus gle choltach anns an la anns a bheil sinn beo. Tha e coltach gum bheil duaisean ro-mhor gu bhith air an tairgse aig a'Mhod Naiseanta 's an Oban as t-fhoghar—ach fagamaid sin gu la eile.

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1967

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Muirhead and Sons
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Pipe-Major
JOSEPH KERR,
1st Battalion The
Gordon Highlanders

On his father's advice, he first took up the Pipes at the age of ten. Upon achieving a decent standard of playing, he joined the Montrose Pipe Band. Studied under capable teachers, until at the age of seventeen and a half enlisted in the Gordon Highlanders at Aberdeen. Served for a number of years as a Piper with a junior rank, until selected for the Pipe-Majors' course in 1962-63. On his return to the Regiment, was promoted to Pipe-Corporal, and in March, 1965, took over the Pipe-Major's job.

The Gordon Highlanders: This famous regiment goes back to 1787 —when the 1st Bn. of the 75th was raised. In 1881 it was linked together with the 92nd (raised in 1794) to form the present regiment.

In the Punjab Frontier Campaign of N.W. India, at the storming of the Dargai Heights on October 20, 1897, Piper G. Findlater (75th Regiment) was shot through both feet, and refusing to be moved to a place of safety, sat up under a terrific fire and continued to pipe the Regimental March ("The Cock O' The North") in order to encourage his comrades in the charge. The encouragement he gave had much to do with the heartening of his comrades and their eventual success. For his remarkable conduct he was decorated with the Victoria Cross at Netley Hospital by Her Majesty Queen Victoria.

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WICK GIRLS PIPE BAND

Dear Sir,

I enclose a picture of the competitors at our December contest.



This is not the whole entry, as some of the non-winners did not consider it worthwhile having their pictures taken. You will notice in the second row from the back I have two Pakistani girls. They are doing quite well, and there is no racial problems here. The The youngest is six years.

J. M. CHRISTIE.

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Double Toning

This entry in our contest to explain the strange behaviour of reeds is by Edmond Maciag of El Paso, Texas.

The reed is elastic, its frequency depends upon the velocity of air over the lips of the reed and upon the natural resonant frequency of the chanter. The chanter, in turn, has its own natural resonant frequency and several "partials" or resonant points of lesser volume.

At normal velocities the pipe frequency is dominant. At higher velocities the pitch of the reed reaches the second partial and the chanter sounds at that frequency.

A more detailed explanation is as follows:—

The reed and resonant pipe, chanter in this case, forms a coupled system with the reed acting as the closed or stoppered end to the pipe.

The chanter (we shall assume that all the finger holes are closed, i.e. low G) has a natural or fundamental resonant frequency determined by the length, etc., and as many as seven partials or lower volume frequencies that are propagated within it. These partials are normally noticed as "brilliance" or "mellowness" in the tone until the velocity of the air is increased.

The reed is "elastic", that is, it can be made to vibrate at many different frequencies depending upon the length of the chanter. Outside of the chanter the reed's own shank forms the pipe.

The pitch of the chanter is dependent upon both the natural resonance of the chanter and the pitch of the air moving about the reed. This natural frequency is predominant because of the relatively great mass of air moving within the chanter as compared to the mass of air moving about the lips of the reed.

When sufficient velocity, a function of pressure in this case, is attained, the reed begins to "sneak" or vibrate at the natural frequency of the chanter. As the velocity of the air around is increased the pitch reaches the second partial of the chanter. At this time the chanter responds by suddenly jumping an octave to the second partial, thus producing the double toning heard.

Thank you for consideration of my entry in your competition. I hope that I am not too late, but the pony express delivered the December issue only last week.

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The Customers Always Write

Dear Seumas,

Peebles.

In your January issue of the "P.T." John MacKenzie refers to the "Long Reveille". This is very interesting. In my time serving in a Lowland Regiment we played Long Reveille once a month marching through the married quarters. The bugler sounded off, and we immediately struck up "Granny Duncan", "Greenwood Side" and "Hey, Johnnie Cope" round the quarters and finished up on the barrack square. Our duty calls at that time were—reveille, "Hey, Johnnie Cope, are ye wauken yet"; breakfast call, "Brose and Butter"; dinner call, "Bannocks o' Barley Meal".

The Officers' Mess calls were, "The Drunken Piper" (or "The Inebriated Highland Musician" as our old pipe-major used to call it). Then the second Officers' call, "MacDonald's March to the Wars"; then the last post call, "Highland Soldier"; lights out, "Alone I'm weary"—an old Gaelic air.

I remember, after the first World War, a piper of the Gordons playing a piobaireachd, as an Officers' Mess call in Maryhill Barracks, that would be sometime in 1920.

I remember the first issue of pipes from the Government—it was five sets, one set for each company, A,B,C,D and H.Q. Before that, our money used to come out of the P.R.I. fund, tho' I daresay the Highland regiments had an issue before then.

After the first World War, when we were playing massed bands, we often had to change our style of playing because regiments had different ways of playing a tune. After that they brought out the "Army Manual" acknowledged by Mr. A. Campbell of Kilberry and the Piobaireachd Society, suitable for massed band playing, and standardised by the chairman of the Army Piping Committee, A. R. Cameron.

I attended the miniature pipe band contest at St. Mary's School, Bathgate, on the 31st January. Edinburgh Police played grand and got 1st, but I was disappointed at the 2nd winner, as Shotts and Clan MacRae Society played excellently. The 2nd prize went to Muirheads. There were 14 bands in the 1st Grade, 4 bands in 2nd Grade, and 7 bands in Grade 3.

The judge for piping was J. Crichton, and the president was Gordon Stobo. I think the S.P.B.A. should get their judges from the College of Piping as your top men are all first-class pipers. They could get their pipers' labourers (drummers) from the S.P.B.A.

Yours aye,

SANDY MITCHELL.

Dear Sir,

Cranleigh, Surrey.

I was interested in Mr. Scott's letter concerning Maria MacKenzie, widow of John Ban MacKenzie, in your September, 1969, issue.

My great-grandfather bought the Applecross estate from a MacKenzie who must have been related to the MacKenzies of Hartfield House.

When I used to go there in the early 1920's, Hartfield House was occupied by the head stalker, one Finlayson, and the area was still difficult to approach. Few cars could tackle the rough road from Strome Ferry, over the Bealach na Ba with its 7 hairpin bends and impossibly steep gradients. We always travelled by sea, disembarking from the Stornoway steamer into a rowing boat off Milltown.

At the time of which Mr. Scott writes, Applecross must have been very much cut off from the outside world, and the local chieftain therefore wielded considerable power. My great-grandfather used to tell of a crofter who came to him with a request for a divorce from his wife. Not unnaturally the landowner disclaimed jurisdiction over such matters. "Och", said the crofter, "A MacKenzie would have done it".

Yours truly,

R. G. L. OLIPHANT.

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Dear Mr. MacNeill,

Exeter.

Thank you for putting a notice in the Piping Times for a tutor for myself.

Mr. John Galloway of Seaton contacted me and, about the same time, I heard of Mr. MacDonald-Bell of Exmouth. We have all three got together and are meeting in Exeter once a fortnight. I have now the benefit of two very good instructors.

We are hoping that things will develop and that we shall be able to form a Pipers' Society or a Pipe Band. Many thanks indeed for your help in getting us started.

Yours sincerely,

S. ELLIS.

Dear Sir,

San Francisco.

While practising recently, I came across two composers and two titles for the same tune. In the Queen's Own Highlanders Collection, the tune listed as "The 72nd Highlanders' Farewell to Aberdeen" by N. Mathieson appears to be almost identical to the tune listed in the Glenallan Collection as "The Boy's Lament for his Dragon" by William MacKay.

Could someone please inform me which is the proper title and who is the actual author of this tune? It seems a shame to have the modern malady of "identity crisis" applied to pipe music.

Sincerely,

ROBERT ROSER.

Can anyone help with this mystery? In "Notices of Pipers" N. Mathieson is described as "the composer of an excellent march, 'The 72nd Highlanders' Farewell to Aberdeen'." —*Editor*.

Transvaal,

Dear Sir,

South Africa.

Your article about the pipe chanter is interesting and has merit. I have played the following makers' chanters:—Lawrie, Henderson, Robertson, Sinclair. My last two chanters have been Hardie. The first of these had the top hand fingering alright, but the bottom hand needed a right hand like a No. 12 size shovel. The holes were so large and spaced so wide that I gave it up.

Now the second chanter (both bought here) is much more suitable. It seems to be the case that what is one man's meat is another man's poison, but I would fall in line with the new chanter

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every period.

I still want, of course, to read in the home papers where you are going to hold the bonfire to burn the old chanter.

Now, with regard to chanter reeds, if you have a good one, keep a gun handy, just in case anyone should go near it. That reminds me of an idea. Should your chanter reed begin to wear a bit and you are thinking of putting in a new one, you should tie or use a small rubber band to hold the new reed alongside the one you are blowing. It helps quite a bit (my own experience) in this country.

I hope the "polis" keep away from the C. of P. I have two sets of pipes—one set I personally have had for fifty years and they were second-hand at that. (Different chanters of course.) The second set was made from Stinkwood with ivory mounts, and the last time I was home I bought cased tuning slides (silver) from Hendersons. These pipes were made by F. S. Sandeman in Rhodesia and gained a medal for best tone with a pupil playing them—myself. Ronald Lawrie of Glasgow Police gave full marks for a good going pipe.

The foregoing apart, I have 50 new drone reeds, 20 bass drone reeds new and each and all of them are too big in diameter to suit the bore of the pipes. If I could have the bore counter-bored to suit the bigger reeds I wonder if that would affect tone. What do you think?

Talking of drone reeds, some are like walking sticks, made of poor cane with the tongues split like a banana. The length of tongue—some are short and some long. Please note also that these reeds were bought in Glasgow and Edinburgh, but no names, no pack drill. It's time these reed-makers were waking up and producing a better quality—we cannot be mugs all the time.

In the August edition of the Piping Times, the article about the Glen family is interesting to me. I have had in my possession eight books, including the Tutor, arranged and published by David Glen of 8 Greenside Place, Edinburgh. There are no dates printed, and I wonder if they are of any value, either historically or sentimentally.

Piping here lost a first-class player when Jimmy Young went home last year, and now I hear George Ackroyd may do the same. When George sat behind that table, the only one you were kidding was yourself, at a competition. Good luck to the C. of P.

Yours faithfully,

DAVIE STARK.

The drones could be bored out just enough to take the reeds, in which case the tone would not be altered.

The Glen books are at present of only sentimental value, but in years to come they will no doubt become historical.

—Editor.

Dear Sir,

Santa Fe, New Mexico,

I would like to add my own few comments to the letter by J. Toth, of California, printed in your November, 1969, issue. My experience in buying bagpipes goes back only 10 years, but in that time I have bought approximately 15 sets of pipes and 40 chanters, both old and new, for myself and for other bandmen or students. It would be easy to say the old stuff is the best, except for the fact that there has been a longer time for the shoddy items to be thrown away, "accidentally" stepped on, and so forth. Hence, survival of the fittest! I think it would be nearly impossible to prove that the "average" bagpipe made 25 years ago was any better than the "average" bagpipe made today, by objective sampling and testing statistically. However, there is absolutely no question in my mind that Mr. Toth is justified in complaining about the quality of the goods he has received. Virtually every new drone I have ever seen has a rough bore with shreds of wood hanging loose; many new chanters are warped, unevenly bored, finger holes roughly drilled or not truly aligned, and in one case, the chanter had been turned down so that the wood was extremely thin and soon cracked. Much of the wood that is used is not aged properly; splitting of the blowpipe is common, but I have even had chanters shrink from drying so that the sole would no longer

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screw on. There is no excuse for this now, as there are methods of impregnating wood with oil in a vacuum which renders the wood completely inert.

I suppose that in the past, pipers could pick and choose, and put the finishing touches on the instrument himself. In this day of the mail-order bagpipe, I think we could expect a little better quality control.

Sincerely,

MARK A. MELTON.

13 Edinburgh Road,

Dear Seumas,

Peebles.

Herewith enclosed my subscription for another year's reading of P.T. I enjoy with interest.

In your November issue of P.T. your remark about "The Piping World"—I attended the "World Pipe Band Contest" at South Inch, Perth, last year. I was confused myself because I thought it was a programme of the events of the day. I was disappointed with the Piping World. You have more interesting news in one page of the P.T. and you know your instrument from A to Z.

The Highland pipe, being a solo instrument, I enjoy the broadcasts but it would be nice to get half an hour on the Scottish T.V. programme of our first class players.

I served as a piper in the regular Army after the first world war. I often wonder about the past history of the old pipe-majors of that time—Pipe-Major Alex. Ross, 1st S.G.; Pipe-Major Andrew MacIntosh, 2nd S.G.; Pipe-Major George Allan, 1st R.S.; Pipe-Major William MacKenzie and Jock Balloch of the K.O.S.B.s; Pipe-Major MacNab of the R.S.F.; Pipe-Major Robert S. Gunn, 1st Cameronians; Pipe-Major Lachie Chisholm, H.L.I.; Pipe-Major Kinnear, G. Hldrs.; Pipe-Major MacLeod, B.W.; Pipe-Major Young, 2nd Cameron Highlanders; Pipe-Major Matheson, Seaforth Highlanders; and Pipe-Major Ancell of the A. and S. Hldrs. I expect some of your older readers will remember them.

All the best to the future of the P.T.

Yours aye,

SANDY MITCHELL.

Any information on these gentlemen would be greatly appreciated.

—Editor.

Dear Sir,

Munster in Westfalen,
West Germany.

Am Faoilteach./26.1.1970.

Firstly! Friendly greetings from this end of the world to yourself and staff of the finest Scottish monthly ever published. Keep the good work up.

Secondly! Could you possibly oblige me by sending on Book 2 of Dr. Roderick Ross' "Binneas is Borerraig". What is not required for postage, etc., please place in your College funds.

Thirdly! It may interest you to know that I have a daughter of 6 years, whom I have been teaching the chanter for about a year now. As it is my wish that she should learn each tune thoroughly (she plays three), I have refrained from setting too much music before her. Now, one of those three tunes is "Piobaireachd o' Domhnall Dubh". Imagine my surprise one evening when I came in from work and hearing the chanter from the floor, I stood quite still and listened. In excess to the four measures I taught her, she played a fifth measure which I immediately wrote down. As father I may be prejudiced, but I really find that the measure has merit.



Lastly! Once again friendly greetings from this end of the world and many thanks in anticipation. Yours most sincerely,

RODERICK MACRAE MILNE.

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