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Piping Times

Vol. 5, No. 11

AUGUST, 1953.

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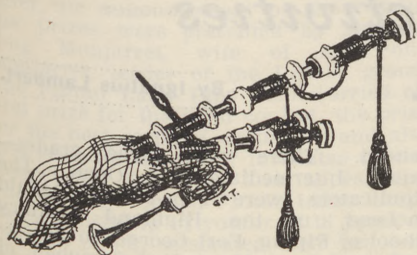
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Piping Times

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AUGUST, 1953.

EDITORIAL

The results of the first few of Scotland's Highland Games this summer have given us food for some quiet, complacent thought, revealing as they do the progress of some of our younger players. Searching back over the last few years, we can see the change which has taken place in the character of the piping events at Alloa, Airth, and some of the other Highland Gatherings. Before the war these contests formed an important part of the activities of our best pipers. After the war we saw the perplexity of pipers in trying to reconcile the unchanging conditions at these games with the vastly changed circumstances of our Scottish every-day life—and trying in vain.

This period of struggle and dissatisfaction gave birth to the Professional Pipers' Association which, it is safe to say, has succeeded in clearing up the difficulties and leaving all the people concerned—promoters and pipers alike—if not exactly jubilant, at least satisfied with the conditions now prevailing. All the results of anybody's efforts may be classed as either successes or failures, and the same may be said of the P.P.A. Most Gatherings agreed to their requests, looking on them eventually as legitimate and representative of the bulk of the pipers. The P.P.A. displayed a high degree of statesmanship, however, with the meetings which were unable to come up to their standards. Instead of declaring a cold war, or climbing down on their own standards, they proposed that these contests should be reserved for local or younger players, and although the promoters concerned did not immediately take to the idea, the pipers themselves have made it so.

The function of these games has

developed, in the years since the war, into practice grounds for young lads about to graduate to full professional status. To a certain extent they also encourage young players. We may now look with a benevolent eye on all Highland Gatherings in Scotland, knowing that each is fulfilling a useful function in the scheme of piping affairs—a thing we could not have done a few years ago.

THE COLLEGE OF PIPING.

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The Braemar Royal Highland.

Glasgow Highland Gathering Association.

Govan Ceilidh.

The Lewis and Harris Association.

The Piobaireachd Society.

The Professional Pipers' Association.

The Uist and Barra Association.

Tostal Piping Activities in Dublin.

By Ignatius Lambert.

The tourist season in Ireland is of much shorter duration than on the Continent, due to causes of climate; the period of peak traffic covers the three months of June, July and August. To extend this period by inducing an earlier start to the influx of visitors, the Government sponsored a three-week festival commencing on Easter Sunday, 5th April, to be held continuously all over the country. It was called "An Tostal," from the Gaelic word "Toicheastal," or in a contracted form "Tostal," meaning primarily "Arrogance, showy display," and hence the secondary meaning of "Festival," involving pageantry exhibitions and so on. The programme was planned to encourage people to visit the country and was widely advertised abroad. With other private and public bodies, the Irish Pipe Band Association co-operated in this experiment and organised a massed pipe band parade and pipe band contest—the Tostal Pipe Band Championships—for Saturday, 18th April.

Once more the I.P.B.A. is indebted to our old friend the weather clerk for his gift of a glorious day, perhaps stolen for the purpose from the summer to come. The risk of inclement meteorological conditions was serious, due to the earliness of the date, so that this surprise was all the more to be appreciated. Sixteen bands assembled in Parnell Square, Dublin, and at 2 p.m. set off in column of route to march through the centre of the city via O'Connell Street, College Green, Grafton Street, and thence to the Iveagh Gardens, venue of the contests. No fewer than seven provincial pipe bands had travelled up to Dublin for the event, these including the Limerick City Pipe Band, the Carrigaline Pipe Band (County Cork) and the Sean Treacy Pipe Band of Moycarkey, Thurles, County Tipperary. The parade was headed by the Breton Pipe Band, followed by its group of dancers and singers, all in traditional costume; the Bretons had just completed a fortnight's tour of Ireland. This parade, the first of its kind here, proved a complete success, attracting a vast crowd of onlookers and causing no small dislocation to the city traffic.

Shortly after 3 p.m. the contests com-

menced. There were three grades—Junior, Intermediate and Open. The adjudicators were Pipe-Major Donald MacLeod, of the Highland Military School of Piping, Fort George, Inverness-shire, and Drum-Major Neil Campbell, of Glasgow. Between the contests the Bretons gave displays of piping and traditional dancing which evoked much applause, the magnificent traditional costumes of the girls, each distinctive of the particular locality from which the wearer came, arousing both wonderment and delight. All the dancing was performed to the accompaniment of the pipe and bombarde playing together. The Breton pipes (biniau) are indistinguishable from the piob mhor except for their rather greater elaboration in the beading of the drones and in the trapping, although the chanter is constructed to give a somewhat higher pitch in order to effect the requisite harmony with the bombarde, an instrument resembling the chanter of the pipes, but carrying a key worked by the pinkie of the low hand and sounded with the reed in the mouth and thus allowing pinching with the lips and tongue under increased pressure to produce a second and higher octave, so increasing the range. The bombarde player takes up the tune intermittently and introduces numerous variations and embellishments in harmony with the basic air played on the biniau. Instead of one piper executing the movements for both simple melody and the super-imposed gracenotes as on the piob mhor, these functions are divided and appear to be each assigned to separate pipers, thus permitting a much more elaborate and complicated rendering of the tune. The Breton Pipe Band itself consists generally of eight pipers, eight bombarde players and the usual corps of drummers. This formation preserves the traditional Breton custom, going back hundreds of years, of biniau and bombarde always being played together, never individually, as at bridal processions, weddings, feasts, religious ceremonies and such like.

Midway through the proceedings, the concourse of about 1,300 people was addressed by the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Senator Alderman Andrew S. Clarkin.



After the announcement of the results, the prizes were presented by Madame Zoig Monjarret, wife of M. Polig Monjarret, leader of the Breton group. The Fintan Lalor Pipe Band carried off first prize for the open contest, the prize for the best corps of drummers and also first prize for the newly instituted special competition for style and appearance. The recently formed Fintan Lalor Junior Band, consisting of youths of 18 years of age and under, celebrated their debut in the competition field by winning first prize in the Junior Contest as well as the prize for the best corps of drummers. When all was over, the mobile recording unit of Radio Eireann interviewed Messrs Donald MacLeod, Tim Keogh (Pipe-Major of the Fintan Lalor) and I. Lambert (Hon. Secretary of the I.P.B.A.). The talks were broadcast later that evening. Parts of the parade and contest proceedings were filmed and were included in the news-reels shown in the cinemas the following week.

On Monday, 20th April, an inter-Celtic concert was held in the Arcadia, Bray, Co. Wicklow, at which the Bretons contributed pipe selections, traditional songs and dances, as well as a very entertaining rendering of Breton airs by an accordion and bombarde duet. Pipe-

Major Donald MacLeod's recitals, including some of his own compositions, received great applause. His pipe arrangement of an Irish reel he heard many years ago whilst listening in to Radio Eireann and so named by him "The Athlone Reel" was rewarded by the discovery of the original name of the tune "The Blackberry Blossom," several members of the audience immediately recognising the air. Pipe-Major Tim Keogh and Mr. Jimmy Bairsns (late Clan Macrae Pipe Band) combined to give a pipe and drum ensemble. For the various Irish dances so superbly performed by the MacCaffrey Troup, Mr. Alex. Meikle provided the pipe accompaniment in his usual inimitable style. An interesting item was the selection on the Uilleann pipes by Mr. Sean Seery, a great friend of the Bretons, whose country he has visited several times and where he is now very well known. Pipe-Major Tim Keogh displayed his enviable versatility by an impeccable and inspiring rendering of Irish melodies and dance music on the violin. Finally, an unique and memorable evening for the four or five hundred people present was brought to a close by singing the Breton National Anthem, followed by that of Ireland.

THE GLASGOW HIGHLAND GATHERING

By Archie MacNeill.

THE PIPE BAND CONTEST.

Through the kind efforts of Mr. Alan Marshall, Hon. Secretary of the Glasgow Highland Gathering Association, and with the co-operation of the S.P.B.A., I was privileged once again to have a close-up hearing of the pipe band contest in Glasgow on Saturday, May 30th. For the normal observer at band contests it is not easy to hear all the finer points, especially if a strong wind is blowing such as it was on this day, so the pleasure which I got from hearing at the ringside, as it were, is one which I appreciate very much.

The Competition this year was, of course, entirely different from any previous band contest, since the judges were judging the composition and not the playing of the tune. The marches in each case were played twice through, and I think the judges did an excellent piece of work when one considers that they had to take in the merit of the tunes and try not

to be influenced by the playing of the bands.

The tunes in 6/8 time were most successful in the prize list, possibly because most of the tunes in 2/4 time were composed with 8 semi-quavers to a bar and this tends to make the tune not so easily discernable. I even heard one tune which introduced a triplet in a bar, thus cramming 9 notes into the bar. The winning tune, which was played by a first-class band, seemed to be in the key of B minor and as such was quite a melancholy air. In my own private judging I had three of the winning tunes out of the first four, and therefore was in fair agreement with the official judges. It seemed to me that some of the bands lacked practice in the playing of their new tune, and accordingly it was sometimes difficult to make out what the tune was supposed to be.

Finally, I would like to put on record that the playing of the three bands together at the end was the best I have heard for a long time.

MAINLY ABOUT REEDS

(Continued).

By Robert Thomson, M.A.

CHOOSING A NEW REED.

These are the two methods recommended when dealing with new reeds, as they are the safest and do not involve tampering with the actual structure of the reed. Sometimes, however, certain alterations must be carried out. The reason for this is obvious. No reedmaker can produce reeds which will be ideal for each individual piper and chanter. The best he can do is to offer a reed which is well-made and approximately correct in pitch and strength. The piper must modify this reed to meet his own requirements.

At this point I must re-emphasise our previous review of reed lore and it is probable that I shall repeat myself.

Having found a reasonable reed and having tried out either of the methods already described, we may find that the reed is just a little too stiff to blow. In fact, if the reed is a good one this is a certainty. If so, "ease" the reed by rubbing on very fine (No. 0) glasspaper. This rubbing should be carried out near the tips of the blades, care being taken not to rub too much at any one point or to disturb the symmetry of the reed mouth. A good idea, if one is inexperienced in this, is to rub twice on one side then twice on the other. Now test. Repeat process until a satisfactory stage has been reached. The operation, like all reed operations, must be carried out **gradually**. This is important. When actually rubbing, place index finger over the blade of the reed. This will avoid undue stress being placed on the reed. All through, keep a strict watch on the tips. They **must** be of even thickness throughout and free to vibrate **all the way** across the mouth. This "easing" by rubbing should be carried out several times in the life of a reed and **always** after shortening the blades.

Reverting for a moment to the "bridle" method; perhaps I did not explain

sufficiently clearly in the last notes. When tying this bridle, use a thin waxed hemp and work spirally from the tying and up the blade. As the reed settles down, the bridle can be removed—one spiral at a time—as required. (Again, by easy stages!) It may be several weeks before all the binding is unwrapped. This binding, as I have mentioned, will sharpen the reed—a point which must be kept in mind when choosing a reed.

THE "SQUEEZING" METHOD.

First, remember that squeezing the blades will (a) weaken, and (b) sharpen the reed. Periodical squeezing, therefore, will have the effect of sharpening the reed and that the reed will become flatter in the course of each playing. In actual practice this sharpening/flattening is not unduly pronounced. The reed may be "eased" in the manner already described, but I am averse to a too ready interference with the body of the reed.

THE EFFECT OF PLAYING ON A NEW REED.

This is a very difficult point to discuss, as the effect can be either of two extremes. A reed may open or close according to its build. In my experience and during my experiments with reeds of different weights, I have reached the following conclusions:—(1) a lightly made reed tends to open after playing. It becomes flatter, therefore, and must be cut to restore the pitch. Its playing life, on the other hand, will be of short duration. (2) The heavily built reed tends to close, hence the importance of choosing a reed which is slightly flat and also the importance of keeping the mouth undamaged. (See earlier diagram). In brief, the better reed tends to close (and sharpen). If left alone, the reed will eventually correct itself, but this can be hastened by careful manual manipulation or by passing a mandril through the reed—from the staple end. This tendency on the part of a good reed is most unfortunate, as many really first-class reeds are discarded at this point. If such reeds were given the correct treatment at the correct point—or left alone—much disappointment would be avoided.

(To be continued).

Notes from Tasmania.

By James Girvan Fraser.

I am sitting here, 12,000 miles from the home of piping, and before me is a letter, dated 19th January, 1951, in which my father had promised that I would contribute a few notes on piping items in Tasmania. My only excuse for this delay is that the path of the exile is not always spread with roses and I have had a few ups and downs, as Aussie has had in the last two years.

To matters of more general interest.

Regarding the "Times," for my own part, and also young Ken MacLean of Launceston, a personal friend of mine who is devoted to pipes, we honestly don't know what we would do without it; especially the issue which contained the Gaelic-English of "Cumha MacCrimmon." The "Times" is a real god-send. The articles are so universal, which is a great relief in this insular and insulated country. I have enjoyed so much the articles by T. Pearston on the MacCrimmon question, regarding their origin, and I enclose a snip from the Geographical Magazine of April, 1937, which portrays a piper—Basques, I presume—at a wedding in Spain. It may be of use to him.

I have accumulated such a mass of cuttings, items and news from home, abroad and the "Times" that I propose to give a general summary of facts, my own impressions and references to various letters to the Editor. When you receive and print this (?) I shall not want any acknowledgment from you as I shall be shortly without a permanent address since I hope to be in New Zealand by the middle of July—Wellington or Auckland, I expect—and then make my way down to Timaru, Invercargill and Dunedin.

I hope you will find the following data and ideas of some interest to your readers. The notes include the foundation of Launceston St. Andrews Caledonian Pipe Band, give a small item re the price of reeds, which should occasion some laughter.

EXTRACT FROM MINUTES OF LAUNCESTON PIPE BAND.

Scrap Notes Regarding Pipes and Scottish Interests in Tasmania.

Wednesday, 18th March, 1903.—Scottish Bagpipe Association formed. Some of the people present were Messrs. Murray

(father of present Pipe-Sergeant Launceston Band), MacVean, Campbell, MacNiven, Robertson, MacPherson, Dalglish.

24th March.—Second Meeting.—Constitution formed. Patron, Col. Cameron; James Boag, president; Capt. Livingstone, vice-president, and E. G. Boyes. The meeting closed with "a copious supply of Mountain Dew and skirt of Pipes."

First Annual General Meeting of Scottish Pipers' Association of Tasmania, held at Launceston Hotel, 30th March, 1903.

Membership, 5/-; under 21, 2/6.

Fortnightly meetings to be held, and the services of the band to be gratis to the Caledonian Society. Balance at end of first half-year, £9 7/-.

1904.—Passed for payment, 31st May. "The supply of reeds having been exhausted, it was decided, on the motion of Messrs. MacBean and Dalglish, to purchase the following from Peter Henderson of Glasgow:—

" 36 Chanter Reeds	£0 18 0
" 24 Pipe Chanter Reeds.....	0 18 0
" 12 Sets Drone Reeds	0 9 0
" Postage on same	0 1 0
	£2 6 0

1st October, 1904.—Master of Ceremonies, Pipe-Instructor MacVean and Norman MacKenzie (father of present Pipe Major of Launceston St. Andrews Caledonian Pipe Band, who is still alive).

1905.—Caledonian Pipe Band and Caledonian Society Pipers amalgamated to form present-day pipe band.

1908.—An order was sent for 5 Sets drone reeds, 5 sets pipe chanter reeds, the balance to be made up in practice chanter reeds, to value of £1.

These are just a few extracts which I have picked up more by good luck than anything else, but interesting. Tasmania was originally very Scottish, and at one time, about 1911, the best Highland Games in Australia were held in Queenstown, West Coast. They had putting the shot, caber tossing, etc., dancing and piping. To-day the blood is a lot thinner here, as it is mostly second and third generation Scots, and also the fact that it is a small island (about the size of Scotland) and cut off from the mainland mitigates

against progress. We have here in Tassie at the moment 5 pipe bands—"Queens-town Highland," "Nurnil Highland," "Launceston St. Andrews Caledonian," and "Hobart Highland," and also in Hobart the "Derwent Scottish." There is no interest in piobaireachd in this island. We have only one instructor—Jim Dall, ex Pipe Major Argylls of 1914 war. He has a fine interpretation, but is about 70 and (he instructs Queenstown Band) does not pipe much as he suffers from "half-dust" (silicosis), which he contracted in Castlemain, N.S.W., where the ex Pipe Major of Glasgow Corporation Band, Alex. M'Diarmid, has gone. When you mention piobaireachd here they betray no interest at all, with the exception of Ken. MacLean. By the way, I am fervently interested in all Scots History, tradition and piping, but I am only an ordinary band piper, formerly of 4th Renfrew Home Guard (Rolls Royce), present Pipe-Major George Campbell, but I do appreciate all the notes and criticisms in the "Times." I can understand how W. J. Wallace (Letter to the Editor, December, 1952) feels when he says it is hard to get tuition in the ceol mor and that "piobaireachd players are as plentiful as hens' teeth." I can sympathise with him. There are so many pipers out here who, as the Kiwi's say, "have never supped porridge." I enjoy John Allan MacGee's letters from New Zealand and his observations on timing, execution and expression. Actually my own opinion is that a piper can not fully give expression, execution or interpretation to pipe music unless he has some experience of ceol mor. He need not necessarily be an expert player, but if he has had enough contact with ceol mor it will give him

that grand air, the slow grand easy stride of the piper in control of his instrument, and the confidence and the background that ceol mor gives. I think this opinion has been borne out in my experience here, where, as a rule, the tempo is too quick in dancing and marching, and there is not one among them who has the grand air. I well remember (how could I ever forget), the tuning up on numerous occasions at Cowal. It could be seen there all right. I can see John MacGee's (N.Z.) point when he is annoyed at New Zealand pipers who go to soccer for 6 months and then start off from scratch to a new season's piping. Much of that idea applies here too. They also have much the same idiom when questioned about playing. In New Zealand it is "She's right"; here it is "She'll come good" or "She's apples." Generally here the bands play for and to the public, not to pipers. I maintain that the older generation had very small audience, played for personal satisfaction and maintained piping when it was at a dangerously low ebb. Their efforts were not in vain and I do not believe in lamenting pipe standards or altering timing to suit public favour. Actually, I think by this time I have said enough, but I do hope that there will be something of interest in these pages to be of some use in the "Times."

Please accept my deepest and sincerest best wishes for the work you are doing at Kelvin House. Hundreds of pipers can cause a lot of acclamation and noise, but one good piper will further the cause more. That is your aim in the College, I believe, and I congratulate you on your efforts.

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ONE SET OF BAGPIPES, excellent condition—£17. Write—Currie, 32 Dunbritton Road, Dumbarton.

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A PIPER'S DIARY

By "THE CHIEF."

S.A. AND BACK.

At one time a piper looked on a tour of the Games as seeing the world—unless he happened to land in the Army and could see some of the foreign lands at the Government's expense. Now-a-days, however, pipers seem to be getting around the globe in ever increasing numbers, showing that the appeal of the pipes is growing in every corner of the world. The Edinburgh Police Pipe Band returned home last month after a successful and enjoyable trip to Rhodesia, and were full of praise for the excellent reception which they had out there.

VISITORS.

The Coronation also contributed towards the transfer of pipers, and in the aftermath of the celebrations Glasgow had a visit from Pipe-Major James M'Grady before he returned to the Middle East. Other visitors were Pipe-Major Archie Cairns of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, Hamilton, Ontario, and Pipe-Sergeant Ross Stewart of the 48th Highlanders, Toronto. These two paid a visit to the College of Piping and also called in at Glasgow University to watch some bagpipe experiments in progress, and to renew acquaintanceship with Seumas MacNeill. Their stay in Scotland was, unfortunately, brief, but we hope they will carry back pleasant memories with them.

FROM CANADA . . .

Visitors from Canada seem to be on the increase this year, and the College of Piping visitors book contains also the names of Bob Abbott from Montreal and his two sons. They arrived about the middle of June, and Bob has been busy showing off the native land to his two sons. This month we expect also to see Jack Gilmour from Toronto, with young Bill, who has been doing so well in the piping competitions in Canada. Bill Gilmour is intending to compete at one or two of the Games in Scotland and we are sure that Scotland will be interested to hear the playing of this most promising Canadian youngster.

. . . AND TRIESTE.

Everyone will be glad to hear that we

are to be favoured once again this summer by a visit from Major Archie MacNab, who will be home for the month of August. We did not expect to have the pleasure of a return visit from Archie so soon, but it would appear that he enjoyed himself too much last summer to allow another to slip past. He will take in a number of the Games, starting with South Uist on 3rd of August.

SIGNED-ON.

An up-and-coming band in Glasgow is the Corporation Transport. When Alex. MacDermid and others left last year for Australia, the band suffered a temporary slump, but under the guidance of Donald MacLean it is now rapidly on the road to the top. Donald, like many other pipers (such as Donald Ramsay) realised the value of new blood, and he has already enrolled Duncan Johnston in addition to young Angus Campbell. We now hear that he has secured the signature (at a record fee, no doubt) of Ronnie Lawrie of Oban, who was one of the outstanding competitors at the Games last summer.

TOUR IN FRANCE.

In keeping with the tradition of the travelling pipers, 50 members of the College of Piping are going off this month for a three-weeks tour of Brittany. This is at the invitation of the Breton Pipers' Association, and is part of the celebrations of the first ever International Congress on Piping.

RADIO HIGHLIGHTS.

Monday, 3rd August.—6.45 p.m., Radio Eireann. Fintan Lalor Pipe Band.

Friday, 7th August.—6.40-7 p.m., Recordings made at World Championship Pipe Band Contest.

Friday, 14th August.—10.30-10.50 p.m., Piobaireachd, played by Andrew Bain. "The End of the Great Bridge."

Friday, 21st August.—6.40-7 p.m., Pipes and Drums by the Dalzell Highland Pipe Band. (Pipe-Major David Ross.

COLLEGE OF PIPING A.G.M.

The Annual General Meeting of the College of Piping was held at Kelvin House on Tuesday evening, 23rd June, 1953. Hector A. MacKenzie, Chairman, opened the proceedings with a brief account of the work being done by the College, and made an appeal for financial assistance.

Mr. MacFadyen, presenting the Annual Report, drew attention to the fact that 147 students had been taught at the College during the year by 13 instructors. The standard of playing had risen considerably and the number of elementary and preliminary certificates awarded reflected great credit on the instructors who worked so assiduously throughout the year. College pupils were now prominent in the prize lists of all amateur competitions. Mr. MacFadyen reviewed the series of recitals which had been held and stressed the need for greater attendance at these functions. Two more Societies had given their support to the College, bringing the total to eight in all. The new members were The Argyllshire Gathering and the Braemar Royal Highland Society. He congratulated the Hon. President, Dame Flora MacLeod of MacLeod, who had been made a Dame Commander of the British Empire in the recent Birthday and Coronation Honours List. Mr. MacFadyen also mentioned the visit of Mr. Seumas MacNeill, Joint Principal of the College, to Canada, and stated that he felt that the tour would knit closer together the piping interests in both countries.

Mr. Pearston, Joint Principal of the College, then gave a report on the teaching and building work undertaken over the year. A considerable sum had been spent on interior decoration, including the installation of fluorescent lighting and tartan curtains. It was reported that plans were on the way for a course of

piping instruction on gramophone records and the College Tutor would be published in a few months' time. As for the future, it was hoped to have films made which could be used as a further aid to instruction.

The Honorary Treasurer, Mr. Iain Dewar, reporting on the accounts for the year ended 31st May, 1953, stated that, due to the heavy expenditure on decorations, equipment, teaching and certification, a deficit of some £135 had resulted, leaving the College in a less favourable financial position than at the last Annual Meeting. He emphasised the need for members' support at all College activities, and said that too much hope could not be placed on support from Government and other sources.

The following officials were elected for the year 1953-54 :—

Hon. President—Flora, Mrs. MacLeod of MacLeod, C.B.E.

Hon. Vice-Presidents—Dr. Calum MacCrimmon ; Col. J. P. Grant of Rothiemurchus, C.B., M.C., T.D., D.L., J.P.; Captain Charles A. Hepburn ; Major Ronald Orr-Ewing ; Major David Manson, V.D.R.O.

President—Archibald MacNeill.

Hon. Secretary—John MacFadyen (re-elected).

Hon. Treasurer—Iain Dewar (re-elected).

Committee.—Messrs. R. Bennett, D. Carmichael, R. G. Hardie, Duncan MacFadyen, senr., H. A. MacKenzie, Donald MacPherson, Hugh C. R. MacRae, and Captain Muir.

A motion was then put before the Committee altering the constitution and allowing societies connected with the teaching of piping to become members of the College. The resolution enabled such societies to become affiliated to the College and provided for cross representation of each body on the Committee of the other. The motion was unanimously agreed.

Canadian News Letter.

By Steve MacKinnon.

Although the Canadian tour of Seumas MacNeill, Pipe-Major John MacLellan and Dancer James L. MacKenzie ended in May, it is still a lively topic of conversation over here. Some details have been reported in the Canadian "Piper and Dancer Bulletin" for May, but additional news of the trip will doubtless be of interest to readers of "Piping Times."

The fact that all three visitors were well known, at least by reputation, as competitors at the Scottish Games, made it almost a foregone conclusion that the trip would be a success. In addition, Seumas MacNeill had built up quite a name for himself as a frequent contributor to "Piping Times," sometimes on controversial aspects of piping and drumming.

The latter, travelling with James L. MacKenzie by Royal Canadian Air Force transport, arrived ahead of Pipe-Major MacLellan, and had a few days' stop over in Montreal. This gave them a chance to rest up, but they took the opportunity, too, to get pipes, fingers and legs limbered up in one or two impromptu sessions with Black Watch, R.C.A.F. and Canadian National Railways pipers. These easy-going "Get Togethers" are far more interesting both for performers and audience than the formal affairs.

The tour, organised by the Pipers' Association of British Columbia, took in the cities of Victoria and Vancouver in British Columbia, Edmonton in Alberta, Toronto and Ottawa in Ontario, Montreal in Quebec, and Washington, D.C.—the only U.S. city. Everywhere the visitors were received enthusiastically. In most places, piping, dancing and other groups joined forces to stage one big rally, but there were many small affairs where visitors and audience got together to pipe, dance and talk shop. At these, inevitably, there were discussions on pipes, pipers and piping, dancing and dancers, reeds and reedmakers, etc. Seumas MacNeill gave informal talks, illustrated by tunes played by Pipe-Major MacLellan, and James L. MacKenzie demonstrated correct positions and footwork of various Highland dances,

for the benefit of both dancing teachers and their pupils.

An ancient two-drone bagpipe, said to be 250 years old and to have been played at Culloiden, was exhibited at the various meets, and created a great deal of interest. There was no chance to get this instrument going until the very end of the tour, at Washington. Up to this point the visitors had all they could do to keep their own pipes in playing condition in the dry Canadian air.

Although the Washington meet was something of an afterthought, it proved to be one of the most successful of the tour. To quote a report of Mr. T. S. T. Henderson, registrar of the St. Andrew's Society of Washington, organisers of the meet, "The performance of the visitors at their recital was magnificent, as was their brief appearance at the Washington Folk Festival, the following night, before an audience of about a thousand. The history and mechanics of the bagpipe were explained, with illustration and by the playing of tunes by Mr. MacNeill and Mr. MacLellan. These were divided into groups of "Little Music" (Marches, Reels and Strathspeys), "Middle Music" (Slow airs, etc.) and they also played excerpts from Ceol Mor.

"Mr. MacKenzie performed the three classic Highland dances and a medley of his own composition, with a style, precision and agility that completely captivated the audience, which included music critics and representatives of allied arts.

At the invitation of Dr. Harold Spivacke, head of the music division of the library of Congress, Mr. MacNeill and Mr. MacLellan made a two-hour recording of the history of the bagpipe from 1500 on, including illustrations and two complete piobaireachds. The library officials were quick to recognise both the quality of the music and the efficient way the pipers arranged their performance, and to mark the historical importance of the occasion, the library took an official photograph of the pipers. Mr. MacNeill and Mr. MacLellan were greatly impressed, not only by the implied honour, but also by the faithfulness of the recording, as well as

by the technical competence and the courtesy of the staff. Examples of the finest contemporary exposition of one of Scotland's most characteristic arts are now preserved for the future, in the world's greatest collection of traditional music. That recording, rather than the recital itself, is perhaps one of the most important contributions to the propagation of Scottish culture yet made under the auspices of the St. Andrew's Society of Washington."

The powers behind the Edinburgh

Festival might well note the concern of our kinsmen over here to preserve the contemporary expression of one of Scotland's most characteristic arts.

Montreal Caledonian Games on May 30th were again, as usual, first meet of the season here. Fine weather and a good attendance favoured the meet, although Coronation parades cut down the number of both bands and individual competitors taking part.

THE SCALE OF THE HIGHLAND BAGPIPE

LECTURE IN HOLLAND.

At the end of June the annual International Congress on Electro-Acoustics was held in Delft, Holland. An interesting feature of the Congress this year was the paper prepared by S. MacNeill and J. M. A. Lenihan on "The Scale of the Highland Bagpipe," and read to the members of the conference by Seumas MacNeill.

The Congress is divided into six sections, one of which is entirely devoted to the measurement of music by electrical methods and the development of musical instruments which employ electric devices. The paper on the bagpipe was one which had been specially invited in this section, and it evoked considerable interest, both because of the method used to determine the scale and because of the results which were obtained. The work of previous people in this field was mentioned briefly, but it was pointed out that these fall under one of two categories, either the man who made the measurements was a piper with little knowledge of scientific method or he was a scientist with no knowledge of the pipes and was therefore dependent on others for guidance as to what he was measuring. The investigations reported had been the measurement of 20 pipe chanter scales played in every case by first-class pro-

fessional pipers. Some little variation had been noted, but on the whole the chanters approximated very closely to a scale which was neither diatonic nor equal temperament nor, in fact, any scale used by any other musical instrument. It was, nevertheless, a scale which had all the requirements demanded by musicians.

At the conclusion of the paper, several scales and simple melodies were played on the pipes, to allow the audience to appreciate the intervals which had been described. Later in the day, a two-man recital was given in the Great Hall of the University by a professional organist playing on an electronic organ and by Seumas MacNeill playing the pipes.

The paper on the bagpipe scale, containing the results of the investigations, will be published in August in the proceedings of the Congress. It will also appear in a more elaborate version, including further work performed by the investigators during July. The pipers who played for the series of experiments were John Garroway, Robert G. Hardie, Nicol MacCallum, Roderick MacDonald, Donald MacLean (Glasgow), Donald MacLean (Lewis), John MacFadyen, Thomas Pearston, Charlie Scott and Albert Sheath. For one of the sessions, Mr. William Gray, Dumbarton, gave his valuable advice.

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Allan
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"Oban
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Journal of a Tour.

By Seumas MacNeill.

OVER THE OCEAN.

It all began in the mind of a genius called Edmund Esson. Ed. is Pipe-Major of the Seaforth Highlanders in Vancouver, and is President of the British Columbia Pipers' Society. They say that a genius is a man whose wild schemes become realities because he has an infinite capacity for doing the hard work to make them so. Ed. first of all dreamed up the idea that a tour of Canada by Willie Ross would be an excellent stimulant for piping there, as well as being an indication of the high regard with which the army Principal is held. Thus came about the visit by Willie Ross and John Burgess last May. Following the success of this, Ed. decided that a yearly visit by two pipers would continue the good work of encouraging piping and raising standards, so last September John MacLellan of the Seaforth Highlanders, Imperial Army (or "the real Seaforths," depending on how you look at it) and I received invitations to make the grand tour. With no hesitation at all we accepted.

Then Ed. had another bright idea, and he invited James L. MacKenzie of Aberdeen, world champion Highland dancer, to join the party, thus widening the interest in the trip. And so it happened that at midnight on Wednesday, 7th April last, I was standing on Carlisle platform waiting for the south-bound train on which I was to join our dancing friend. The less said about that trip the better. We travelled all night, making three changes of train, and eventually arrived at a quiet English country village called North Luffenham in the County of Rutland, to find that for all the difference it made we could have travelled during the day that had just dawned, or the next day for that matter. Ed. and his associates in the B.C. Pipers' Society, through one of their many contacts, had arranged to have us flown over by R.C.A.F., which was the reason for our journey to this remote airfield. John MacLellan had been unable to get away in time, and he had to stick to an earlier arrangement by which we were all to travel by Trans-Canadian Air Lines.

The R.C.A.F. has presumably more important duties to perform than ferrying casual passengers, although we didn't see it that way at the time. Apparently one "North Star" plane is kept crossing and re-crossing the Atlantic from Dorval

Aerodrome at Montreal to North Luffenham, looking after all the spare jobs of carrying men on leave, casual freight and odd pipers and dancers.

The "North Star" runs to no fixed schedule, and although it was expected to leave on Friday morning, 9th April, it did not arrive until Saturday and we were not air-borne till Sunday afternoon. The days of waiting seemed very long at the time, buoyed up as we were with stories culled from the unfamiliar newspapers and magazines which lay around the mess. Perhaps the few days rest did us some good, for it helped us to recover from the rush of getting away and it prepared us for the hectic time which lay ahead. And it served as an introduction to the change in the food situation.

Sunday, a day of drizzle, saw us begin the first leg of our flight. To our surprise and then disgust, we discovered that after flying low over the snow-topped hills of the Lake District, our first stop was Prestwick. Just for the record I 'phoned the College to inform the indefatigable Iain Dewar of our lack of progress. After a quick Scottish tea, we set off for Iceland, flying over the white sands of Calgary in Mull and the well-known township of Lochboisdale in South Uist, then out over the broad Atlantic.

We were informed what to do in the event of the aircraft crashing in the water. The steward, L.A.C. Smith, kindly showed us how to avoid having our necks broken at the moment of impact, and then we were left to our own devices. I played a last tune on my chanter (which I couldn't hear) while James L. checked over the first few verses of "Nearer my God to Thee."

In the gloaming, however, we arrived over Iceland, and made a flood-lit landing at Keflavick. This is a U.S. airport, and we stayed the night there in the American hotel, which was centrally heated to a fantastic degree. The temperature was well below freezing point outside and yet with the windows wide open we could hardly sleep for the heat.

It had been planned that we should rise at 5 a.m. and leave at 6 a.m., but when we were ready to go the weather at Goose Bay, our next stop, was reported to be bad, so we hung on till 9 a.m. This time we flew over the south tip of Greenland in a direct line for Labrador. Again I tried a tune on the feadan to pass the

time, but this time I couldn't find enough wind for the job. We were flying this time at 12,000 feet and it would appear that there is not enough oxygen in the air at this height to allow even this slight effort.

When we arrived over Goose Bay,

nothing could be seen but white mist, but by one of the miracles of modern aviation—Ground Control Approach—we made a perfect landing on an airfield in a cold, frozen land which appeared to be covered with snow-laden Christmas trees. This was our first sight of Canada.

EDMONTON

Edmonton's annual Highland Games attracted more than 4,000 persons to the South Side Athletic Grounds on Wednesday.

More than 200 contestants displayed their abilities in Highland dancing, piping and athletics. Commencing at 9 a.m., the events continued, without stop, until nearly 7 p.m. With the sound of the last pipes, 70 events had been completed, many taking place simultaneously. Twenty-one aggregate trophies and awards were carried away by successful competitors.

Dr. Andrew Stewart, president of the University of Alberta, who officially opened the games during the afternoon, remarked that whether the event was held at Braemar or in Edmonton, it was a unique occasion.

"Through the games," he said, "Scottish persons can cherish in their hearts the customs of their homeland. Gatherings such as this enrich the life of a city," he contended. Dr. Stewart was introduced by Tom Campbell, chieftain of the Edmonton Highland Games Association.

Two past presidents of the Association, Jack Strachan, 1952-53, and A. M. MacLennan, 1951-52, were presented with silver badges in recognition of their services. James E. Carmichael, president, made the awards during the opening ceremony. Officials for the ceremony were led on to the platform by a mass pipe gathering, consisting of the Edmonton Boys' Pipe Band, the Edmonton Girls' Pipe Band, the Canadian Legion Pipe Band and the Second Highland Battalion Pipe Band from Wainwright.

Following is a list of aggregate trophy winners:—

Piping (Open).—The C.N.R. Trophy, Robert MacPherson, Edmonton.

Piping (19 and over)—Amateur.—The R. R. Stoker Trophy, Kenneth MacDonald, Edmonton; **Piping (under 19).**—The Mrs. MacDougall Trophy, Walter Muir, Ed-

monton. **Piping (under 16).**—The Arthur Miller Trophy, David Saul, Edmonton.

Pipe Band Contest.—Edmonton Journal Trophy, the Canadian Legion Pipe Band.

Judges for the piping and dancing events were Pipe-Major Neil Sutherland, of Winnipeg, and Miss Mary Isdale, of Vancouver.

Following is a complete list of winners in the piping and dancing competitions:—

Piping—Piobaireachd—Professional.—1, Duncan Rankine, South Burnaby, B.C.; 2, Robert MacPherson, Edmonton; 3, William J. Watt, Winnipeg.

March (under 16).—1, David Saul, Edmonton, gold medal.

March (under 19).—1, Walter Muir, gold medal; 2, Dugald McNiven, silver medal; 3, Jeanette Smiley, bronze medal. All are from Edmonton.

Strathspey and Reel (under 16).—1, David Saul, Edmonton.

Strathspey and Reel (under 19).—1, William D. Reid; 2, Walter Muir; 3, Dugald McNiven, all of Edmonton.

March (Professional).—1, A. M. Smart; 2, Robert R. Stoker; 3, Robert MacPherson—all of Edmonton.

Slow March (under 19).—1, Walter Muir, Edmonton; 2, William D. Reid, Edmonton; 3, Dugald McNiven, Edmonton.

March (19 and over)—Amateur.—1, Kenneth McDonald, Edmonton; 2, Fred Cox, Edmonton; 3, Dennis MacGuldnick, Wainwright.

Strathspey and Reel (19 and over)—Amateur.—1, Kenneth McDonald, Edmonton; 2, James A. Patterson, Wainwright.

Strathspey and Reel (Professional).—1, Robert MacPherson; 2, Robert R. Stoker; 3, A. M. Smart tied with H. V. Hogan. All are from Edmonton.

Jig (Professional).—1, Robert MacPherson; 2, H. V. Hogan; 3, Robert R. Stoker—all of Edmonton.

Pipe Band Contest.—1, Canadian Legion

Pipe Band; 2, Edmonton Boys' Pipe Band; 3, Edmonton Girls' Pipe Band; 4, Second Highland Battalion, Wainwright.

Drumming (under 19).—1, Dugald McNiven, Edmonton; 2, Dell W. Berry, Edmonton; 3, Pte. Edwin Bennett, Wainwright.

Drumming (over 19).—1, Mark MacFarlane Woodward, Edmonton; 2, Chester Orlando Peel, Edmonton; 3, John A. Gerrard, Edmonton.

* * * *

The Boys' and Girls' Pipe Bands of Edmonton, Alberta, joined forces on 6th June to form a guard of honour at the wedding of their two drumming instructors, Miss Joan Armstrong and Mr. Jack Gerrard. The honeymoon was spent in

Banff, in the heart of the Rocky Mountains.

The father of the bride is Mr. Jack Armstrong, a contributor to these pages, who is secretary of the Girls' Band and is a member of the Boys' Band. The tuition in both bands is provided free, the teachers of both piping and drumming giving their services voluntarily in the interests of furthering their respective arts. Uniforms and equipment are kept up by funds raised through the efforts of the very active committees, which stage functions to attract all folks of Scottish descent.

Most of the boys graduate eventually to the Canadian Legion Pipe Band, which is the senior band in Edmonton. This was the band which assured the financial success of the recent visit of the pipers and dancer from Scotland.

PIPING MISCELLANY.

"GUESS THE PIPER."



Above appears a photograph of a group of pipers taken in the year 19 (?). The group contains a number of famous piping personalities. Show yourself how bright you are by identifying as many as you can. There is no prize for this

competition and no entries should be submitted to the College of Piping. This is purely to occupy your odd moments of relaxation and we hope it will bring to some memories of the old days and old piping acquaintances.

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Letters to the Editor

All Letters in connection with the
Magazine should be addressed to—
The Editor, "Piping Times,"
Kelvin House, Otago Street,
Glasgow, W.1.

Dear Sir,

There must have been many pipers
like myself who have been looking for-
ward to the publication of the new Edcath
Collection of Pipe Music. After receiving
my copy and trying out the tunes (?) I
must confess to nothing but disappoint-
ment.

Fifty-eight names on the title page, and out of all these the only ones worth playing could be counted on the holes of a practice chanter. Surely this is not the type of tune popular in Scotland, or has expression given way to a mere "tickling of the chanter"? I can appreciate good fingering as much as anyone, but after all, melody and feeling are the primary objects and finger trips, if used for their own sake, are entirely meaningless. Inflicting this type of junk on audiences cannot be helping to popularise piping either, except to win the same admiration that is earned by a gymnast. Perhaps we could try standing on our heads as an effective variation

Easily the most musical tune in the book, in my opinion, is the "10th H.L.I. Crossing the Rhine," but it is hard to reconcile this march as having been composed by the same person who compiled the book, eminent Pipe-Major though he be. Several of the so-called tunes are, I consider, the most incoherent I have had the misfortune to listen to, there being not the slightest sense or sequence in them. Give me those grand old tunes like "Bonny Ann," "Abercairney Highlanders," "Mrs. John MacColl" and "Lochaber Gathering," with superb melodies and just as difficult fingering.

There may be a reason, but it is hard to understand, why it was not possible to include tunes such as "Mrs. MacPherson of Inveran," "Alick MacGregor," "Jig o' Slurs," "MacLennan's Exercise," "Donald MacLean," "Southall," "Redford Cottage," and many others which, while they may be printed, are not available in any book out here.

Just in passing: I have never seen so many errors in a printed book before, and some of them are repeated several times throughout each tune. Mistakes may be found an almost every page, varying from wrong notes as in "Col. H. H. Burney's Farewell," to dotted crotchets in most 2/4 marches.

New Zealand.

"Swerd Nawt."

Dear Sir,

I have been following with interest the controversy between Mr. G. Pilcher and J. A. MacGee.

It seems to me that anyone with pipe band experience at home will agree whole-heartedly with "John Allan."

Both these men are Pipe Majors of contesting bands of high repute, but have vastly different ideas on how pipe band contests should be run.

On the one hand, Mr. Pilcher maintains that it is necessary in a pipe band contest to perform peculiar marching evolutions at a terrific rate (to the detriment of the music), to attract the paying public.

Mr. MacGee's contention, as I see it, is that a pipe band contest is to determine which band can perform best on the platform, playing a test selection. Such are pipe band contests as we know them at home.

My solution to the problem, and I would put it to Mr. MacGee, is that a New Zealand branch of the Scottish Pipe Band Association be formed. Contests could then be held under S.P.B.A. rules, if a sufficient number of bands were interested.

Then we could leave the fancy kick-steps and snappy movements to the Ladies' Marching Association, where they properly belong, and tear up the N.Z.P.B.A. rule book with its quickstep course and inane hints on how many finger thicknesses our hose should be below our kneecap.

A branch of the S.P.B.A. was formed in Ulster before I left three years ago, and now I see that this year they are to hold the European Pipe Band Championships in Belfast.

With the present trends of faster transport, it is within the realms of possibility that one day the World's Pipe Band Championships may be held in this Dominion, under the auspices of the S.P.B.A. (New Zealand Branch).

New Zealand.

W. J. Bingham.

Dear Sir,

I have been reading your Magazine for some considerable time, and must congratulate you on the amount of highly interesting articles contained therein: "Mana to an exiled Scot." It never occurred to me that these hallowed pages could be approached on the subject of drumming, though at one time, when Seumas MacNeill (I think) had the idea of putting drummers into the centre of the band, I thought: what a grand opportunity for a tenor-drummer to get even, when a piper near him false fingered, or blocked his chanter, or even let out a teeny squeak.

You guessed it! I am an ex-drummer, and now teacher, and have noted with interest the plea of the two Irishmen. Given the chance, I feel, quite informative and interesting articles could be drafted and if included in the "Piping Times" would no doubt increase the sales of this grand little Magazine. I would like very much to correspond with either Mr. A. Rowe or D. Creaghan (or both) on this subject of drumming, and believe we would have lots in common to write about.

Incidentally, I happen to be the same Jock Griffiths mentioned by J. Allan MacGee in his letter to you (of last issue). I have been playing the chanter for the past 20 years, and suggest all good side drummers who have the time should do so too, and it will surprise them to find the difference it makes in the composing of their drum scores.

I am also sending a letter to W. Patterson (addressed through you, as I don't know his address) and would be grateful if you'd send it on to him—W. Patterson, the drumming principal.

Wishing you much deserved success for the future.

New Zealand.

J. T. Griffiths.

Dear Sir,

I wonder if, through your paper, you could appeal to pipers for improvement in their dress.

My pet abomination is civilian pipers in semi-military dress—for instance, hair sporrans and (horror of horrors) white spats.

I should be pleased to hear the opinions of others concerning when it is "the thing" to wear one's bonnet.

Personally I would always prefer to be attired so, certainly out of doors and also indoors, except for informal occasions.

I would also be very pleased if you would draw the attention of those pipers

concerned who regularly appear with dirty, torn and faded drone ribbons, to the fact that they not only let the piper down but also the prestige of his country.

Should you consider my letter worthy of printing, I hope that it will be taken in the spirit with which it was written—a love of piping and the country from which my family sprang.

Leicester.

Iain D. Insch.

Dear Sir,

I am enclosing a bank draft for 10/6 for my annual subscription to your excellent publication.

As a subscriber I am going to take advantage of my rights as such, to make a few comments on your publication. I believe your articles on reeds, your biographies on famous pipers and your histories on bagpipes are very fine. I enjoy your magazine very much and am looking forward to receiving it for another year.

Iowa.

Wm. L. Adamson.

Dear Sir,

**The Late Pipe-Major John MacDonald,
M.B.E.**

During the past few years, everyone who had the privilege of meeting Pipe-Major John MacDonald, M.B.E., at his home in Inverness, had also the added pleasure of meeting his housekeeper and friend, Mrs. Rae.

It was due almost entirely to her care and attention that "Old John's" declining years were spent so happily and peacefully. No task was too great for her and no matter the work on hand, she would greet the visiting friend and pupil with a friendly word and smile.

It is the wish of many of the late Pipe-Major's friends to show their gratitude to Mrs. Rae's devotion to duty in some tangible form.

Anyone who wishes to take part in this can send their contributions to Mr. John MacFadyen 105 Carham Drive, Glasgow, S.W.2, who will acknowledge receipt.

We are, etc.

Neil Angus MacDonald,
Schoolhouse, Castlebay, Bara.

P./M. Donald MacLeod,
Seaforth Highlanders.

Donald P. MacGillivray,
Calrossie, Nigg.

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GAMES RESULTS.

ALVA, 11th July.

March—1, Duncan MacFadyen, College
of Piping; 2, Charles Smith, Glasgow; 3,
Donald Stewart, Larbert; 4, W. G. Brown,
Kennoway.

Strathspey and Reel.—1, Iain Mac-
Fadyen, College of Piping; 2, Donald
Stewart; 3, Kenneth MacLean, College of
Piping; 4, Robert Stewart, Sauchie.

March, Strathspey and Reel.—1, Donald
Stewart; 2, Charles Smith; 3, W. G.
Brown; 4, Iain MacFadyen.

AIRTH, 18th July.

March.—1, Donald MacLean, Lewis; 2,
Charles Smith, Glasgow; 3, John Slattery,
Edinburgh; 4, Peter Forbes, Dundee.

Strathspey and Reel.—1, John Slattery;
2, Donald MacLean; 3, Donald Stewart,
Larbert; 4, Walter Drysdale, Methil.

Amateur March.—1, John Graham,
Avonbridge; 2, Sheila MacDonald,
Larbert; 3, J. Dickson, Dundee.

Strathspey and Reel.—1, John Graham;
2, Sheila MacDonald; 3, Calum Car-
michael, College of Piping.



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