



Piping Times

Vol. 16. No. 11 August, 1964



1/6



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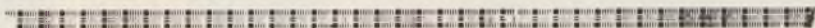
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Piping Times

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COVER PICTURE :

The late Pipe-Major Donald MacLean, Lewis.

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Editorial

With the major piping competitions still to come, but the majority of them behind us, we have once again reached the stage of feeling that the summer has somehow slipped through our fingers. Perhaps if the weather were better at this time of the year in Scotland we would feel that the gap between the end and the beginning of the winter activities was considerably longer. All our plans for the long recess seem always to be more extensive than the time available to fulfill them.

In one respect at least the achievements appear to have been up to expectations, and that is in the realm of summer schools of piping. The three places involved—Invermark, New York; St. Ann's, Nova Scotia; Dunvegan, Isle of Skye—all reported full enrolments of students, and it seems that successful courses were held at all three.

A surprising feature of these schools is the wide area from which they draw students. All have particular attractions to offer of course, but it is amazing, to us here at least, to think that Americans and Canadians will by-pass their own countries' efforts and come to Skye, and that Americans will go to Canada. Distances on the American continent are not the barriers we tend to look on them here, but it is still with a sense of wonder that we read of pupils travelling 8,000 miles for lessons at Invermark each year.

The really amazing thing about summer schools is that there are not more of them. How strange that New Zealand and South Africa, for example, ignore the best way to teach piping. What a handicap it is to their young folk to have no opportunity of getting really ahead with their piping. We may not have invented the idea in Scotland but at least we did not delay following it up.

Pipe-Major Donald MacLean

We deeply regret to report the death of Pipe-Major Donald MacLean of Lewis. Donald was taken suddenly ill at Cowal Games on Saturday, 29th August, and died almost immediately. The funeral, to Barvas cemetery in Lewis, was held on Wednesday afternoon, the 2nd September.

The Sovereign's Pipers

By Pipe-Major John MacLellan

Queen Victoria was the first sovereign in relatively modern times to have a personal piper and, indeed, she went so far as to ensure that he also had an assistant. In 1842 she visited the Marquis of Breadalbane at his home in Taymouth Castle, which stands at the head of Loch Tay in Perthshire, where she was much impressed by John Ban MacKenzie who held the position of 1st Piper to Breadalbane. John Ban appeared before her in full Highland costume, his breast glittering with his many prize medals and playing the gold mounted bagpipe provided by Campbell of Breadalbane for the use of his chief piper. The Queen was much taken by John Ban, for apart from his magnificent appearance, his playing was superb, and on her return to Windsor Castle, she wrote to Breadalbane saying she wished to have a piper on her household establishment and would his Lordship find for her a piper like MacKenzie. Breadalbane offered the post to John Ban, who declined saying, "I do not want a better master than yourself". The Queen, on hearing that MacKenzie would not join her service wrote once more to Breadalbane, this time saying she would be happy to accept John Ban's son Donald into her service instead, but Donald's mother decided he was much too young to leave home as he was only ten years old, but was already quite an accomplished player. (He won the Northern Meeting prize pipe when aged 15.)

It was in the following year that the Marquis of Breadalbane was able to recommend to Her Majesty that Angus Mackay (Raasay), who had been Piper to Campbell of Islay join her service. Angus composed the piobaireachd, "Farewell to the Laird of Islay", in 1840, although he was being still described in July 1841 as Piper to the Laird of Islay, but it was in 1843 that Angus Mackay became Piper to Queen Victoria and the first personal Piper to the Sovereign. He remained in her service until 1854 when he developed mental trouble and had to go into hospital, firstly in London and later in the Crichton Royal Institute, Dumfries, where in the records it is noted that "He had delusions of grandeur and he also maintained that he was related to the Royal Family". On 21st March, 1849, he ran away from the hospital and while attempting to cross the river Nith was drowned. Much has been written elsewhere about the piping achievements of

Angus Mackay, and it will be sufficient here to say that but for him piping today would have been much poorer. His manuscripts are the backbone of most of our published piobaireachd music.

There is a little confusion as to who followed Angus Mackay as piper to the Queen. Robert Meldrum in his reminiscences says that the Prince Consort, on hearing of Mackay's death, sent to the 79th for the black bearded Pipe-Major (Hardy, a native of Skye), and that Hardy was dismissed for thrashing two English footmen who had been making fun of his Highland accent. William Ross was appointed Queen's piper in 1855 and, as Angus Mackay died in 1859, Ross was already in the post. There is no record in the Royal Archives of Hardy having been appointed to the Queen's service, but this extract from her diary shows that he certainly was. "Windsor Castle, April 8, 1864 . . . Saw Mr. Anderson about my band and how to replace poor Hardy who died suddenly yesterday . . ." It is reasonable to surmise that Angus Mackay carried the appointment to his death, when Ross would be appointed 1st Piper and Hardy engaged as 2nd Piper, and probably re-instated after his dismissal for dealing drastically with the sassenachs. William Ross had been Pipe-Major of the 42nd before joining the Queen's Household, and continued in her service in the post of 1st Piper until 1883, and it was from this date until 1891 when he died that he was called the Head Piper. Having got settled in London in 1855, he obtained permission to live outside the Palace and, setting up in business in the bagpipe trade, he was soon in a position to fill orders from the Highland Regiments. Robert Meldrum notes that the pipe he won at the Northern Meeting in 1884 was made by Ross, and that it was mounted in ivory. An extract from the records of the Privy Purse shows that Ross was employed as Gentleman Porter at various residences, and that he was also Groom of the State Chamber. He was paid £80 per annum as Piper, £50 per annum as Groom, and also had an allowance of £5 per annum for the upkeep of his pipe. This, in addition to his keep, and having annually—1 morning suit, 2 dinner dresses of Highland clothing, 3 bonnets, 3 pairs of brogues—amounted to a fair remuneration for his post in those years, and in 1883 he was getting £90 per annum for his employment as Piper. He retired from active duty in 1883, and was appointed Head Piper. This extract shows his appointment, duties and wages.

Vic. P.P. 16911. Note by Sir H. Ponsonby on a letter dated 19th April, 1883.

"Ross to be Head Piper. To receive wages, £80; house

allowance, £30; for pipes, £10; clothing, £20”.

And in the Letter Book of the Master of Horse. Accountant. Jan. 1881 - Mar. 1897, page 26, the memo is confirmed as follows :—

“Mr. William Ross, on being promoted from 1st July next to the place of head piper to Her Majesty, will receive—salary, £80; allowance for apartments, £30; allowance for clothing, £20; allowance for pipes, £10; making £140 per annum.

“He will not be required to be in constant duty or will he receive board wages. He will have to play at State Balls and, if required, he will have to play during dinner at Windsor Castle. He will have leave to play at the public places he has usually played at.

4 June, 1883.

Sgd. G. A. Haude, Crown Equerry.

Ross to have his state clothes renewed every twelve years.”

It would appear that the State was more generous in the allowance for upkeep of the bagpipe in those days than they are at present, as the present allowance for Army pipes is £2 per annum. When William Ross died in 1891 the Queen deplored his death.

In 1881 James Campbell was engaged as 2nd Piper to the Queen at a salary of £55 per annum, and he was able to have the same clothing as was granted to Ross. He also got £5 per annum for “...Keeping his pipes, ribbons, etc., in repair...” His duties required him to take charge of the Gun Room at all the Queen’s palaces and to keep the guns, fishing rods, skates, etc., in good order. He was to take his orders from Mr. Brown and to make himself generally useful. Campbell was a native of Kintail, and had served seven years in the 42nd, which had also been William Ross’ regiment. In 1883 he took over Ross’ duties as Gentleman Porter and his salary was raised to £80 per annum. He was to rank next to and after the Serjeant Footman, and it was in 1891 when Ross died that Campbell was appointed 1st Piper to the Queen so that he carried out all the duties of 1st Piper from 1883 until 1891 although officially 2nd Piper, but was paid as if he was 1st Piper. When Edward VII came to the throne on Victoria’s death in 1901, Campbell continued as Piper to the Sovereign until 1910 when he retired. He lived the last years of his life in Fort Augustus where he died about 1930.

William Campbell, nephew of James, was appointed in 1891 as 2nd Piper to Queen Victoria and assistant to his uncle. The circum-

stances of his appointment are noted as under by Sir Fleetwood Edwards at Balmoral Castle.

“Campbell (James) knows of no soldier piper that he thinks would do, but no doubt he says there are plenty of good men in the various regiments—but it appears that he has a nephew, an excellent piper who took the prize at Inverness—he is a teetotalter and at present with a Major Allenby at Ardrishaig as a piper. Campbell, on hearing a soldier was required, was reluctant to mention him: but Sir Fleetwood thinks Your Majesty may wish to know of him: he is 20 years old, unmarried.
13 June, 1891.”

(The prize won by William Campbell was 2nd in the Gold Medal, 1890.) His clothing allowance was to be the same as the others and his salary £55 per annum, plus the handsome allowance of £10 per annum for “Repairing the Pipes and keeping them in order”. His duties were to assist James Campbell—now 1st Piper, wait at Her Majesty’s table, and to play Pipes at all times when required. He too, was “required to make himself generally useful”. He won the Gold Medal at the Northern Meeting in 1897. On the Queen’s death in 1901 it seems that the post of 2nd Piper was done away with, as it was in that year that William Campbell left the Royal Service. He went to Canada in 1913 and died, after a distinguished piping career, on November 1st, 1960.

When King George V came to the throne in 1910 he already had a personal piper. Henry Forsyth had been in his service since 1905, thus, presumably, James Campbell (who would be aged 59 in 1910) was compulsorily retired to make way for Forsyth who was an ex-Scots Guardsman and had been Pipe-Major from 1899 until 1905 when he retired and became Piper to George, Duke of York, later Prince of Wales and George V. Pipe-Major Forsyth continued in his position as Piper to the Sovereign with Edward VIII and George VI, and it was during his tenure of office that King George V engaged Robert Brown and Robert Nicol as Pipers at Balmoral, and it is well known how these distinguished players, who are still in Royal employment, have enhanced the art of piping.

When the post of Sovereign’s Piper became vacant in 1941 (presumably on Forsyth’s death) the post was held in abeyance until the end of the war. In 1945 Pipe-Major Alexander MacDonald, who had just retired from service in the Scots Guards, was chosen to fill the position. He had, like his predecessor, been Pipe-Major in his Regiment, but for a longer term—fourteen years. At the time of

writing he still holds the appointment, and wherever the Queen is in residence, Alex MacDonald will be found in her household carrying out the duties of Piper to the Sovereign. (Details of his career appeared in the "Piping Times" Vol. 16, No. 8.)

In conclusion it is interesting to note that the late Pipe-Major John MacDonald, M.B.E., was appointed honorary piper to King George V, King Edward VIII, and King George VI, an honour which he greatly valued as a mark of successive sovereigns' interest in pipe music.

Roll of Pipers to the Sovereign—

1843—1854	Angus Mackay (Raasay)
1855—1891	William Ross
1891—1910	James Campbell (2nd Piper 1883-1891)
1910—1941	Henry Forsyth
1945—	Alexander MacDonald

Extracts from the Royal Archives are by Gracious permission of Her Majesty the Queen.

Pipes Wail Watery Tune

The above heading and the following newspaper report were sent to us by Harold MacLeod of San Diego. They help to show the dangers of playing bagpipes in England. Even Tobermory was not so tough.

SOUTH SHIELDS, England—Members of the Morpeth Highland Bagpipe Band have forgiven an irate Irishman who doused them with water to drown out their music.

"In a way we admire him", Drum-Major Leslie Henderson said Monday. "Pipe music is grand for those who like it, but we can understand why an Irishman might not like it".

"That Scottish bagpipe wailing isn't music", said Terrence MacAllister, 37. "It's just noise—a terrible noise".

He said that after a hard week as a railway porter, he was sleeping late. The band piped toward his house and wakened him.

"I was very angry", said MacAllister. "I jumped out of bed, ran and got the biggest bucket in the house, filled it with water and went after them".

When he reached his front door, the band was passing. He rushed up thne street in front of them, wheeled sharply and let fly with the water.

The drum-major was drenched from bonnet to sporran. Three pipers spluttered to a hush. A drummer stopped drumming.

The pipers went on their way soggily playing "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling" (pianissimo).

Tired Blowing ?

We are indebted to Cpl. Allan Wrighte of the Royal Canadian School of Infantry, Camp Borden, Ontario, for the following interesting communication. Any further contributions on this subject would be welcome.

DESCRIPTION OF PIPE REED TESTING APPARATUS

By F. A. Dunn, Angus, Ontario.

An apparatus for testing and comparing bagpipe reeds was designed by the undersigned, and consists of the following components :—

A $\frac{1}{4}$ horsepower electric motor, belted to a diaphragm type compressor which has a built-in, adjustable safety valve which relieves to atmosphere; a $\frac{1}{4}$ inch rubber pipe leads from the compressor to a sensitive adjustable pressure regulator, of the type used between the fuel pump and the carburettor of an automobile. From the regulator, air passes down a $\frac{5}{16}$ inch metal tube which is soldered onto the top of a two quart glass jar, containing about one pint of water. The $\frac{5}{16}$ inch tube extends nearly to the bottom of the jar, and when air is pumped through the tube, some moisture is carried by the rising bubbles to the top of the jar. When leaving the tightly gasketed jar, the moistened air passes a sensitive bourdon tube gauge which is calibrated from 0 to 20 lbs. pressure per square inch. From there a five foot rubber pipe leads to the bagpipe and is pressed firmly over the end of the blowstick. This rubber pipe can be $\frac{1}{2}$ inch to $\frac{5}{8}$ inch in diameter. The bagpipe may be placed on a table or held in the normal manner.

Although only a limited amount of research has been carried out to date, it appears that the following results and achievements can be obtained :—

1. Novices can practise their fingering, without muscular tension, for long periods, after they have become tired of blowing.
2. Beginners can practise tuning chanters and/or drones under conditions of even pressure which they cannot themselves duplicate.
3. Chanter reeds can be set true at between $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 lbs. pressure per square inch and pipers taught to blow accordingly.

It is noted here that the lower notes require a larger volume of air than the higher notes. Also, if the drone reeds are not correctly adjusted, the pump cannot maintain pressure, even though the bag is properly tied in and well seasoned.

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Best Bagpipes

Hastings Highland Games

NEW ZEALAND.

The annual Easter meeting at Hastings was held on Saturday, 20th and Monday, 30th March. As usual there were very large entries for all events and the judges—Angus MacAulay, W. A. Robertson, Angus Shaw, M. Thomas—had their hands full.

Results were as follows:—

Saturday.

Piping A Grade—

Greater Hastings March, strathspey and reel—A Stewart (Hamilton), F. McKinnon (Wellington), A. Fox (Nelson).

Ryrie Challenge Cup (most piping points on Saturday)—Frank McKinnon (Wellington).

City of Hastings march—Allan Dodds (Dunedin), Frank McKinnon (Wellington), Douglas Thoreson (Hastings).

New Zealand championship march—Alister Fox (Nelson), Mervyn Appleton (Otago), Robert Loan (Wellington); 96 points.

B. Grade—

New Zealand Championship march, under 21—Alister Fox (Nelson), Mervyn Appleton (Otago), Robert Loan (Wellington); 96 points.

Novice board, march under 18 years—Nigel Foster (Wellington), Wayne MacKay (Christchurch), Darryl Jephson; 74 points.

Slow march—Malcolm Gracie (Tauranga), Robert Loan (Wellington), Neil Andrews (Te Aroha); 96 points.

J. Wattie Challenge Cup (most points piping B grade)—Robert Loan (Wellington), Malcolm Gracie (Tauranga); 8 points.

Hastings Highland Games march—Malcolm Gracie (Tauranga), Mervyn Appleton (Otago), Brian Toms (Eltham); 89 points.

Drumming:

New Zealand championship, solo drumming, 2/4 march, strathspey and reel (A section)—James Berkett (Hastings) 94 points; John Morris (Hastings) 93.5 points; John Craig (Whangarei).

Monday.

Piping A Grade—

City of Hastings strathspey and reel—L. Turrell (Auck), A. Dodds (Dunedin), A. Fox (Nelson).

North Island championship march—A. Stewart (Hamilton), A. Dodds (Dunedin), R. Wallace (New Plymouth).

Jig and Hornpipe—Douglas Thornsen (Hastings), Lewis Turrell (Auckland), John Hanning (Wellington).

B. Grade—

Novice board, march—Rodney Jamieson (Stratford), Michael Wilson (Waipukurau), Graeme Coughlan (Waipukurau), 69 points.

Novice board, strathspey and reel—Peter Bell (Christchurch), Beverley Cross (New Plymouth), Graeme McKenzie (New Plymouth); 87 points.

Greater Hastings strathspey and reel—Mervyn Appleton (Ota-huhu), Brian Toms (Eltham), Robert Syme (Palmerston North); 85 points.

John Steele Contest

Two years ago at South Uist Games there was inaugurated the special competition for the John Steele Cup. This event, for prizes presented by John MacLennan in honour of the late John Steele, consists of a march, strathspey and reel chosen by the judges from set lists of the favourite tunes of John Steele.

The lists alternate from year to year, and for the interest of all readers (and for the benefit of intending competitors) we give the two lists here.

For the “even” years, that is, 1964, 1966, 1968, etc., the tunes are as follows :—

Marches—1. “The Highland Wedding”. 2. “MacLean of Pennycross”. 3. “Leaving Lunga”. 4. “Stirlingshire Militia”. 5. “Abercairney Highlanders”.

Strathspeys—1. “Blair Drummond”. 2. “Athole Cummers”. 3. “Bob of Fettercairn”. 4. “Shepherd’s Crook”. 5. “Monymusk”.

Reels—1. “Smith of Ghilliechassie”. 2. “John MacKechnie”. 3. “Pretty Marion”. 4. “Miss Proud”. 5. “Mrs. Macpherson of Inveran”.

For the “odd” years—1965, 1967, 1969, etc., the tunes are :—

Marches—1. “John MacDonald of Glencoe”. 2. “The Pap of Glencoe”. 3. “Mrs. John MacColl”. 4. “Leaving Glenurquhart”. 5. “Millbank Cottage”.

Strathspeys—1. “Lady Loudon”. 2. “Piper’s Bonnet”. 3. “MacBeth’s Strathspey”. 4. “Delvinside”. 5. “Arniston Castle”.

Reels—1. “The Man from Glengarry”. 2. “The Rejected Suitor”. 3. “The Blackbird”. 4. “Thomson’s Dirk”. 5. “Caber Feidh”.

ARMY SCHOOL OF PIPING

The 19th Course for Potential Army Pipe-Majors was held at the School from October 1963 until April 1964. Attending this course were Pipe-Major Archie Cairns from the 2nd Bn. Canadian Guards (with whom he has been Pipe-Major for ten years); L/Sgt. Wm. MacColl, 1st Bn. Scots Guards; L/Cpl. David Pirrie, 2nd Bn. Scots Guards; and L/Cpl. Ronald Harrop from the Gordon Highlanders. The members of this class were able, during their time at the castle, to collect an immense amount of material on piping history and put it into rough draft form for a work eventually to be published.

On April 22nd they sat the written examination, when Pipe-Major Cairns gained a 98½ per cent. mark, while the others averaged 81 per cent. The practical examination was held on 24th April, when they all gained their Pipe-Major's certificate. The board was presided over by L-Col. David Murray, and the members were Capt. D. R. MacLellan, and Dr. Kenneth MacKay, all very well known figures in piping and Piobanreachd Society judges.

CRUELTY TO PIPERS

The other "Times" had some interesting comments to make on the reported statement by Brigadier MacLean, producer of the military tattoo at the Edinburgh Festival. Brigadier MacLean had apparently been advocating the levelling of the esplanade in front of the castle, "Because", he said, "playing the pipes while marching up the slope is a bit of a slog".

The writer in the "Times" was apparently shocked at this reflection on the Highlanders' physique. "If bagpipes were contraptions like bicycles—calling for dismounting, so to say, at the first hump—they would not have been fostered chiefly among the mountain people". He goes on then to remind us that in the poem regarding the relief of Lucknow the Highland girl heard the pipes as a steady continuous increasing chant. There was no time off for inclines.

Personally, as one who has played "MacLeod's Rowing Tune" across Loch Dunvegan—with all possible hindrance from wind and waves—I think that Brigadier MacLean is underestimating the ability of pipers to deal with a slope of one in twenty.

THE MacDOUGALLS

By W. Thomson, Argyll

I have a little to add to the excellent articles appearing in the "Piping Times" recently concerning the MacDougalls, bagpipe makers, Aberfeldy. I knew Gavin, the last member of the family carrying on the business. He was an imposing figure and a first class piper. The last contact with him was at Nethybridge games where he was competing many years ago. He had a fair share of the awards considering he was playing against such masters as the late Pipe-Major John MacDonald, Inverness; George S. MacLennan, Gordon Highlanders; Alex Mathieson, Royal Scots; and, of course, up there John and Donald Macpherson, members of the famous family of Badenoch pipers.

On that day, being a native of Strathspey, and as a mere youth, I was playing amongst the locals when an elderly gentleman approached and asked me if I was learning piobaireachd. I said "I hoped to". "Well", he said, "give me your address and I will send you one of my books". I found that this was none other than General Thomason himself who compiled *Ceol Mor*—a small book containing a series of piobaireachds written down in shorthand notation.

I think the finest toned pipes ever I heard was a MacDougall set. These belonged to the late Ronald MacKenzie, for many years Pipe-Major in the Seaforth Highlanders and subsequently going as piper to the Duke of Gordon, Gordon Castle, Lochaber. Incidentally I might say that he gave me my first lesson on piobaireachd, and at the same time gave me the advantage of hearing those pipes.

It was said of Duncan MacDougall, Gavin's father, that while at Taymouth, he made a set of pipes and mounted them with gold. Breadalbane did not view this with favour and he sold the pipes to one of his guests at a very high figure!

However, any time I am in Aberfeldy I take a walk down, with a nostalgic feeling, to where the pipe making was carried on. There is nothing there now.

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Pipers In The Dark

By Seumas MacNeill

One of our most regular contributors is Harold MacLeod of San Diego, California. In a note received from him the other day (along with the results of the San Diego games) he mentioned that the Cameron Pipe Band was playing on the 3rd of May, in West Gate Park, the baseball stadium of San Diego Padres. The occasion was the Elks Folks Festival, but this really was serving to remind Harold of the night a couple of years or so ago when the Scots Guards and Cameron Highlanders stumbled around in the dark in this same place because some showman was striving for effect. No doubt the bandsmen present on that occasion will still remember it very well, along with the screams of the crowds in the stands for lights.

This reminded me of two things. The first was of the night in Sydney, Nova Scotia, when I played the last item of the open-air concert which closed a week of festivities celebrating the 175th year of Sydney's existence. The organisers had obviously heard of the lone piper playing "Lights Out" on the battlements at Edinburgh Castle, for they had built a small platform about 30 feet above the stage for me to stand on when playing this last tune.

Getting up the vertical ladder in the dark was no mean achievement, especially when carrying a valuable set of pipes, and it was with considerable relief that I finally reached the top. According to plan, the spotlight came on at the right moment and I played through the final piece to the apparent satisfaction of the crowd assembled in Wentworth Park. At the final notes the spotlight went out and that was it. The concert was over, the week's celebration was over, and some park superintendent decided that it was time to put the lights on for everyone to go home. The result was that instead of people going home with a memory of the bagpipe in an impressive setting, they went away remembering instead a piper making an undignified descent of a wooden ladder using two feet and one hand only.

The second thing I was reminded of was that if it were not for a handful of people like Harold MacLeod we would all be in the dark about what is happening in the piping world. If you have a little time and the least inclination, please drop a line telling us what is going on in your part of the world. You will probably be surprised to find out how many people are interested in your affairs.

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Letters To The Editor

Dear Sir,

California.

I must say your article covering the Lockheed Band was well received by the Group according to Pipe-Major Calvin H. Biggar to whom I forwarded the issue. I had occasion to visit the "First Salinas Highlanders Pipe Band" in a practice session a couple of nights ago, and they are going great guns; if only they could secure the services of a good tutor locally.

Incidentally, I am still awaiting Jimmy Young's report on the Californian scene.

James MacLachlan.

Dear Sir,

Washington, U.S.A.

Since you are about the only address I know in Scotland I shall write to you. I am an American piper and I wish a pen-pal. I know this letter is not of the usual sort that you get, but I would deeply be ever-grateful to you. I hope you will not write this letter off as plain silly because I mean everything in it.

My name is Elizabeth Ross, I am 14 years of age, a freshman at Holy Rosary High School, and very interested in piping. I am 5 feet 8 inches, have short brown hair, green-brown eyes and wear glasses. I like pipes (bagpipes), reading, chess, art museums and swimming.

I would like it very much if you could get me a pen-pal. Male or female, any age. Thank you.

Elizabeth Ross, 2842 S.W. Dakota, Seattle 98126, Washington, U.S.A.

Dear Sir,

Munich, Germany.

I have been a bit curious as to the origin of the song, "Banks of Sicily" or "The Highlander's Farewell to Sicily". The words to this song were sent to me by a friend who said he learned it from a Scottish couple in the States. I started to transpose the notes that accompanied the words but at once recognised the tune as being "Farewell to the Creeks". The questions I have about the tune and song are as follows: Were "Farewell to the Creeks" and "Banks of Sicily" composed at the same time, or is the music older than the words? If the music is older than the words, on what occasion was "Farewell to the Creeks" written? Would there be anyone in the reading audience who would have any knowledge of the background

of the song "Banks of Sicily" or who took part in the evacuation at that particular instance? If so, would he care to comment on the situation? Could the words be printed in an issue of the "Piping Times"? I would appreciate someone's effort as I enjoy "histories" of pipe as much as the tune itself. It tends to have a bit more meaning then. Possibly the above music could be featured as the "Tune of the Month" in a future issue.

Another question if I may. This question concerns the crest or emblem of the College of Piping. It seems odd that the College should have a silhouette of an individual holding a lance and shield rather than a set of pipes. Is there any particular reason for this? Just curious.

Keep up the fine work. Hope to see you in September.

Bill Gilchrist.

Dear Sir,

Weston, Ontario.

I noticed two very interesting items in the March edition of the "Piping Times". (Everything in them is very interesting to me as far as that goes.) One is a little dearer copy and bigger, but I am agreeable to that. Enclosed is a money order for my extra dollar. The other item is the new idea of a valve inside the mouthpiece. This certainly sounds a new thing, but I might buy one later on.

We had the indoor contests in Piping and Drumming as usual, and I enjoyed them very much. They were all up to a very fair standard and the decisions were very fair. I had a word or two with Mr. A. MacNeill—he was a busy judge. It must be a great pleasure to you having Donald MacLeod with you in Glasgow. Best of luck to you all.

William A. Burns.

Dear Sir,

Inverness.

The Black Mill.

I have read Mr. Ronald Smith's note in the May number. I may say that I am aware that this mill is sometimes said to be a snuff one. I rejected that idea as I am of the opinion that snuff mills were scarce, if there were any at all, in the Highlands in the seventeenth century, while meal mills were abundant, one being in every district to which the local tenants were thirled.

I have never seen Angus MacKay's manuscript and wonder where it may be viewed.

No attention need be paid to the words associated with the tune. They are pure nonsense and are nemonic, serving their purpose to fix the air in the mind at a time when music books were scarce, and even if they had them the people could not read them. There are scores of tunes which have these nonsensical rhymes attached to them. The words making neither sense or poetry. James E. Scott.

THE MAN FROM SKYE.

By Pipe-Major Donald MacLeod.

The musical score for 'The Man from Skye' is presented in ten staves. It begins with a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature. The melody is characterized by frequent eighth-note patterns and grace notes. The score includes first and second endings, indicated by '1' and '2' above the staves. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

COWAL LOSE MONEY

Over the past four years Cowal Highland Gathering has lost a total of £944. This was revealed at the gathering's annual committee meeting held recently in Dunoon.

Treasurer Mr. James Muir said that bad weather was the cause of this deficit and not any failing in the popularity of Cowal Games. The last year on which a reasonable profit had been made was 1959 when 21,000 people attended the games. Last year only 11,000 had attended and the deficit had been £166.

The highest expenditure was prizes which, in cash and kind, amounted to £810. Fees and expenses to judges, etc., was £363.





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