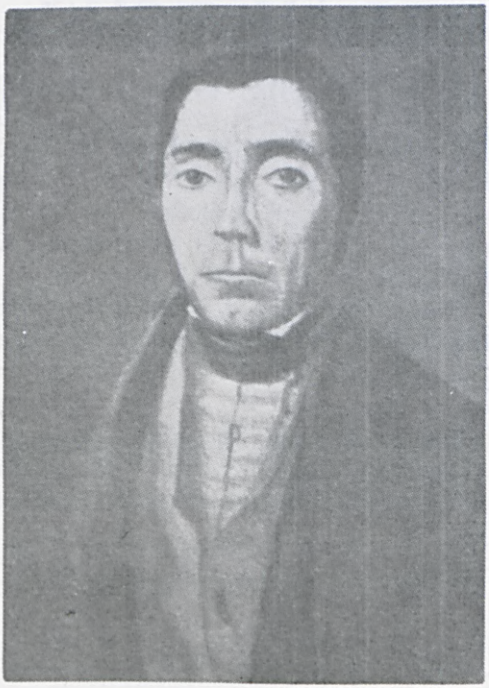
Piping Times

Vol. 22, No. 11. August, 1970.



2/-

Piping Times

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Contents

COVER PICTURE:

Norman MacCrimmon.

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

Visitors to Scotland each summer usually try to take in at least one Highland Gathering on their trip. If they are interested in piping of course they try to take in as many as possible. One thing that surprises them, however, is the fact that usually where we in Scotland have a pipe band competition, we do not have a solo contest, and vice versa. Only Cowal, Pitlochry and Invergordon try both—and Cowal more or less segregates them into separate days.

With these three as exceptions (and one or two others which may be added to the list), the band contests in Scotland tend to be rather dismal affairs, unless you happen to be competing or officiating. As we have stated often before, the spectators don't get much chance to hear the bands properly, and when the only alternative is to watch little tartan horrors stotting woodenly through stereotyped steps of Highland dances, no wonder the band contests are so poorly attended. This is truly a case of the end being all and the means being nothing, for nobody is really interested in anything except the result.

In Canada and the United States the pipe band contests and the solo contests are held at the same meeting, but this is due to the fact that on the other side of the Atlantic the two facets of our culture are not separated as they are here. Almost all solo pipers play in bands, so the usual plan is to have the individual events in the morning and the band contests in the afternoon.

This arrangement can only last as long as the number of pipers and bands remain small, which means it cannot last much longer. Already there are signs—as at Maxville last year—that the system is liable to break down through the increase in numbers. When it does, it is to be hoped that the Scottish one is not adopted.

It may well be that in Canada there will develop, as there is in Scotland, a group of solo players who are not members of bands. This will certainly be the best thing to happen, because the full freedom of individual playing is stifled to some extent by the necessity of playing with others, and particularly by having to play with drummers. These pipers could, however, still remain within the pipe band circle, enjoying the benefits—personal and cultural—of being part of a large group. Their contests could be in a separate part of the field from the bands and could continue simultaneously with the band events.

What must not happen is that the bands should try to operate independent of every other attractive part of the Highland Games programme. What must happen indeed, in Scotland, is that the bands will have to get back into the Highland Games environment, or will have to build a new style of entertainment round their present cold, poor-man's set-up.

An Old English Piper

by Roderick D. Cannon.

Among the more popular forms of literature in the seventeenth century were collections of humorous sketches called "characters"; pen-portraits of familiar figures of the period. The most notable perhaps were those compiled by John Earle and by Sir Thomas Overbury, but there were many others, less well-known but no less interesting to the social historian. In particular, there was one published in 1631 which contains an essay about a piper, probably the earliest substantial piece of writing connected with the bagpipe, anywhere in English literature.

The title of the collection is "The Whimzies, or a new Cast of Characters", and the author, who uses only the pen-name "Alexandrinus Clitus", is usually identified as Richard Brathwait, author of "Barnabee's Journal" and other works. J. O. Halliwell, who brought out a new edition of the "Whimzies" in 1859, expressed some doubt about this; however, both the British Museum catalogue and the Oxford English Dictionary have continued to name Brathwait as the author, and the present writer is certainly not qualified to argue the point. What follows is a copy from Halliwell's edition, but with spelling and punctuation modernised; and divided up into paragraphs for easier reference.

"A PIPER

is a very drone, ever soaking and sucking from others' labours. In wakes and rush-bearings, he turns flat roarer. Yet the youths without him can keep no true measure. His head, pipe, and leg hold one consort. He cannot for his hanging fit himself to any tune but his active foot or great toe will keep time. He is never sober, but when he is either sleeping or piping: for his repast partakes too much of the pot, to keep him sober in his feeding. He is generally more careful how to get a coat for his pipe than his child. And a riband hung in his chanter draws him into an everweening honour of so musical a favour.

"He might be not altogether improperly charactered, an ill wind that begins to blow upon Christmasse eve, and so continues very loud and blustering all the twelve days: or an airy meteor, composed of flatuous matter, that then appears and vanisheth (to the great peace of the whole family) the thirteenth day. His stentor's voice stretcheth itself to the expression of a largesse upon receipt of the least benevolence. He deserves not his wench, that will not pay for her dance.

"He is a dangerous instrument in the commonwealth, for drawing together routs and riotous assemblies; yet so long as they dance after his pipe, there can be intended no great perilous project of state.

Since he was enacted rogue by Parliament, he has got hold of a shameless tuneless shawm[1] to be his consort, that the statute might take less hold of his single quality. And to grace it the more, he has shrouded himself with the incorporate reverence of a pye-coloured livery. Yet it is to be feared that the snake must ere long lose his slough: for either his vails fail him, or he falls from his vails[2].

"A continued practice of his profession hath brought him to that perfection, that he can pipe when he cannot speak; so as his chanter becomes his interpreter, and performs the thankful office of a true servant, in speaking for his mute master who cannot speak for himself. He is oftener out of tune than his pipe; yet never plays better voluntaries than when he is drunk. In one respect he may be compared to a downright satyrist: he will not stick to play upon his best friends. He infinitely prefers his art before all other mechanics: yet all the means of his gettings is but from hand to mouth. The The most dissorting[3] companion for his humour is the tinker, for he is a metal man, which the piper is not: besides they are so unsociably affected to their liquor, as it is death to them to drink to one another: yet the noose of the law ofttimes reconciles them, when it enjoins them to hang together.

"He is of an invincible strong breath, whereof he leaves usually in the blast of his pipe such a vaporous and vicious steam as it would go near to poison any creature but a piper.

"He suits himself to the seasons of the year, wherein if his honest neighbour partake of any benefit he expects his musical share. And to wind him the more in his love, without which he cannot live, every distinct time must be accomodated to a several tune. He has a strain to enchant the shepherd in his shearing; another for the husbandman in his reaping; in all which he has a peculiar privilege for gleaning. Sundry corners he reserves in his knapsack for these neighbourly bounties, which in short time, by prescription, become customary to him, and all his lineal successors of the same science after him.

"If his bonny blouze, or dainty doxie[4], being commonly a collapsed tinker's wife, or some highway commodity taken upon trust, demand of him supply, he bids her go pipe.

"For his bed, he leaves it the soonest, and goes to it the latest. He is enjoined by his place, to rise early, roar highly, and rouse the whole family. So as, his pipe may be properly termed the instrumental cause both of their rising and his own.

"He is no constant dweller, and yet he is no shifter. All he reedes[5], he puts into his pipe: which consisting of three notes, breaks out into a most vociferous syllogism.

"He will be heard at horse races, where it makes him infinitely proud, if the horse will but vouchsafe to lay his nose to his drone. This so transports him, as it makes him think himself worthy to be recorded in those musical airs or annals of Orpheus and Arion, who made beasts follow them. (Which he doth daily, for his doxy dogs him).

"Being weary of the country, or she rather weary of him, he dives into some suburban or city cellar, where he roars like the devil in a vault. Here he deeply enhanceth his cellar rents, if he had grace to keep them: but truth is, whatsoever he drains from the four corners of the city, goes in muddy taplash down Gutter-lane, and so sinks down into Pannier-alley. So he gets his morning draught, which ends about mid-day, at the soonest; he stands not much upon breakfast: neither indeed will his vails find supply both for thirst and hunger.

"This sauce-fleamed[6] porcupine, when his veins begin to warm, will be many times monstrously malapert, which purchaseth a beating with much patience. You may break his head as good cheap, as any man's in Europe.

"If his prugge[7] aspire to so much stock or so great trust, as to brew to sell, he will be sure to drink up all the gains. He will not stick to run on score with a score, so he may have credit: but when they come in for their coin, he solicits some longer time, and pays them home with a tune: **Tis mesrie when malt men meete**[8]. But they may pipe small ere they meet with their money. By this, his holly bush is pulled down, which proclaims him bankrupt: by which means, he may most politicly compound upon indifferent terms with his malt worms. Thus are his fortunes no perpetuity: an ill wind blasts them; being commonly lightly got amongst nimble-heeled fools, and lewdly spent amongst heavy headed knaves.

"His vocation is no peculiar station, but a roving recreation. There is no man will more cheerfully sit down to eat, nor more cheerfully rise to play than himself. To keep him company, and free him of that which his leaden conceit is seldom capable of, melancholy, he wisheth no other associate than a jackanapes, or a jolly waterman-kin, wherein is his highest strain of study to accomodate his ape with a guarded[9] coat, and so foole his spectators out of their coin.

"He dies a sound man and merrily, for he dies a piper, but no good death, for he hath played away his time. He could find it in his heart to pipe longer, but his wind fails him, which makes him play his last-goodnight. His wealth may appear by his inventory, which contains the over-worn remains of a motley livery, a decayed pipe-bag, and half a shirt; all which, without his neighbours' charity, will scarce amount to the purchase of a sheet[10]."

NOTES: 1, *shawm*, a reed instrument essentially similar to a pipe chanter detached from the bag; 2, *vails*, payment, more particularly "an occasional profit or emolument ...attached to an office or position", or "a dole or gratuity given to one in an inferior position", or a perquisite; 3, *dissorting*, incongruous; 4, *doxy*, "the unmarried mistress of a beggar or rogue"; 5, *reedes* (so spelt), could mean either 'redes' or 'reads', but is also a pun on 'reeds'; 6, *sauce-fleamed*—the only dictionary definition even remotely applicable is 'fleam' or 'fleme', a small knife like a lancet, hence perhaps the quills of the porcupine; 7, *prugge*, same as 'doxy'; 8, I have copied the spelling of this tune title exactly; 9, *guarded*, decorated or trimmed with braid, lace, coloured stripes, etc.; 10, *sheet*, a shroud.

As a piece of humorous writing this is pretty feeble stuff, and I do not suppose it would have seemed particularly clever even in the seventeenth century. Most of the humour lies in puns—'a very drone', 'instrumental cause', 'on score with a score', or near puns—vails/fail, and so forth; but even so there is a point of interest, since we get the familiar tale of the piper who can play better when drunk than when sober. Unless the author invented this ancient libel himself, we can assume that it was just as prevalent three centuries ago as it is today.

Turning to the factual content, there is not much doubt that this author knew his subject, however imperfectly, at first hand. The Oxford English Dictionary points out that he is the first English writer ever to use the word 'chanter', which suggests that he must have got it from an authentic source. If Brathwait was in fact the author, this is quite reasonable: he would have had every opportunity to observe pipers, having been born in Westmorland in 1588 (actually at Warcop, half way between Appleby and Kirby Stephen). During the seventeenth century, and for much of the eighteenth century, bagpipes were played throughout Northern England, and of course they are still played in Northumberland at the present time. It seems clear by the way that the essay is describing an English piper, since if not, there would surely have been a few cheap witticisms against the Irish or Scots; and more conclusively, there is the fact that one of the pipers' functions is to play during the twelve days of Christmas. This would not be very likely in seventeenth-century Scotland.

We are given some interesting details about the pipes themselves. They were blown by mouth, not with bellows, and the tone was evidently loud and penetrating. This suggests something like the great Highland pipe, except that there were only two drones. The whole instrument had three sounding pipes, "a most vociferous syllogism". It is interesting that the majority of pictures of bagpipes in English works of art from 1600 to about 1750 conform to this description, though most of them are so roughly drawn that they could not stand as evidence by themselves. Usually the two drones are shown different in length, but it is difficult to make out whether they are a tenor and a bass, or some other combination. The oldest form of the Union pipes, played in England as well as in Ireland, had two drones, tenor and bass, but later on the number was increased to four, one bass, two tenor, and one 'baritone', intermediate between them (equivalent to an E drone on the Highland pipes).

Brathwait describes the piper in all three of his traditional roles—country musician, official town piper, and urban street performer—

and it would be interesting to know whether the same individual really would commute between all three as he suggests. The rural functions of the piper as he describes them are quite reminiscent of what we are told by later English and Scottish writers. Logan, Dalyell and Grattan Flood all give instances from historical records of pipers being hired to lighten the labours of sheep-clippers (in Yorkshire), "to animate the reapers in the field", or to assist at road mending, presumably by supplying a rhythm for the labourers as they crushed or hammered down the stones. Again it would be interesting to know if there really were separate tunes reserved for the different seasons and tasks. Perhaps there were bagpipe versions of the various work-songs, just as there were tunes proper to the different country dances.

It seems to have been a general opinion that town pipers were unworthy of the status conferred upon them. Most of the pipers mentioned in local records had fairly chequered careers, though heriditary families like the Hasties of Jedburgh were surely exceptions to the rule. Brathwait's use of the term 'vails' for the piper's payments suggests that the piper was not so much a salaried official as a traditional figure, entitled to his fee by long custom, but only so long as he took care to claim it. A careful search through the records of the more ancient towns of Scotland and Northern England would probably yield up a lot of interesting information about the duties and status of pipers in the two countries.

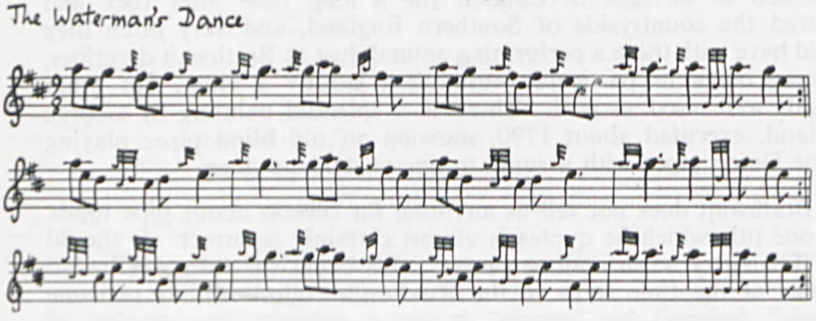
As far as the general public in England was concerned, it was the last and lowest of the three classes of pipers who were most in evidence: the fairground musicians and street entertainers. Bagpipers continued to be seen in London for a long time after they had deserted the countryside of Southern England, and very often they would have with them a performing animal, just as Brathwait describes. Dancing bears in particular were often led by a piper, but other animals were used as well. There is a splendid painting by George Morland, executed about 1790, showing an old blind piper playing on the Union pipes with a small troupe of dancing dogs.

Brathwait does not tell us anything for certain about pipe tunes. The one title which he quotes is almost certainly incorrect. It should be "'Tis merry when maltmen meet", this being the title of a ballad popular at the time (now in the Roxburgh collection). I presume "mesrie" (misery) for "merrie" is not a misprint but another of Brathwait's attempts at humour, and he probably introduced the name simply because his readers could be expected to have heard of it, not because of any connection with the bagpipe. The maltman of course is the maltster, maker and seller of malt for brewing. He demanded prompt and regular payment and so shared the same odium as the miller and the landlord. There were proverbs about the difficulty of

keeping up payments, and there is the old Scots song in the same vein, "The Maltman comes on Monday".

Those who study the past history of the bagpipe and its music have to make do, for the most part, with only odd scraps of information, set down at random by writers who know little or nothing about the subject. Brathwait's essay is not an outstanding piece of literature, but it does seem to be founded on careful observation, and it contains a number of valuable facts which cannot be obtained elsewhere. Besides which, it presents a vivid picture of a rural type once familiar in England as well as in Scotland, but now almost totally forgotten.

One final point may be worth mentioning. Brathwait calls the piper's monkey a "waterman-kin", whatever that may mean. A tune called "The Waterman's Dance" was published in 1716, and it is also found, under other names, in Thomas Marsden's "Collection of Original Lancashire Hornpipes", London, c. 1705, and in Daniel Wright's collection of "Hornpipes, Jigs,... Bagpipe hornpipes and Rounds", London, c. 1715. It is in 9/4 time, and is similar to many present day 9/8 jigs. There is no proof that this particular tune is a "bagpipe hornpipe", but it fits the chanter and sounds well; and tunes of that type certainly were played by pipers in the North of England in the seventeenth century.



PIPERS OF RENOWN

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The Royal Scots Greys

Began at the age of 13 with the Newtongrange Juvenile Pipe Band, and later with the Shotts and Dykehead Pipe Band while an apprentice Bagpipe Maker in Edinburgh. He joined the army as a National Serviceman with The Royal Scots before becoming a regular soldier in the Highland Brigade. While serving he attended the Pipe-Major's course at Edinburgh Castle, and in 1960 joined The Royal Scots Greys in Germany as Pipe-Major.

Pipe-Major Pryde is now the Senior Pipe-Major of the British Army serving with a Regiment. He was presented recently with H.M. The Queen's personal Pipe-Banner. Her Majesty being Colonel in Chief of the Royal Scots Grays. Although The Pipes and Drums are the most junior band in the Army, they have been brought into recognition by Pipe-Major Pryde, and are now reputed to be one of the best Pipe Bands serving.

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The Greys inspired Regimental Motto is "Second To None", and we would agree that they surely live up to it!

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Five books of piobaireachd compiled by Dr. Roderick Ross in collaboration with the late Malcolm Macpherson. A total of 100 tunes.

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Price of each record is £2-5-0d. plus postage. (U.S. $6.65 including postage. Canadian $7.15 including postage).

The records are not of high quality, nor is the piping indicative of Malcolm Macpherson at his best. They are mainly of value as a guide to pipers who wish to learn to play these tunes.

Obtainable only from The College of Piping

Bagpipe Player on a Postage Stamp

by
T. Pearston.

The illustrated photograph of a bagpipe player on a postage stamp is unique in that it is the only one of its kind. It was first seen in an Australian magazine stamp corner for stamp collectors. I tried all over Great Britain to find this stamp, and I was lucky to find one in King's Lynn, Norfolk.

This stamp was issued in 1961, as part of a set of five depicting unusual instruments—trumpets, horns, and a bagpipe.

In south-eastern Europe the bagpipe is played in many countries and is used extensively in Bulgaria, where a wedding without a piper is an exception.

There are two main instruments in Rumania, called the "Cimpoi", one from the Banat area and the other from the Marus Valley. They are both similar to the Bulgarian bagpipe in appearance. It is stated in Baines' book on bagpipes that the Rumanian bagpipe is always mouth-blown, but his photograph on plate XIV clearly shows the Rumanian piper with a bellows under his right arm.

It is interesting to find that the bagpipe from Banat is stated to have an ingenious blowpipe with a moisture collecting sump, or, in our language—a water trap!

The types of reeds used are single-beating drone reed variety, and the bag is of sheepskin. There is a chanter of 6 vents and a drone consisting of three turned joints. The sizes of vents and air holes, like most of the bagpipes of this variety, vary in size from maker to maker quite extensively.

The photograph of the stamp is about one and a half times normal size.

Piping Last Century

An except from "The Statistical Account of Scotland, 1830-1840," from the library of Mr. R. B. MacRae, Vancouver, B.C., contributed by Evan C. MacKay.

Bagpipe.—It is well known that the great bagpipe, the instrument on which the national music of Scotland was chiefly played for so long a time, and which has still so striking an effect in rousing the martial spirit of the Highlanders, was cultivated with greater success by the Macrimmons, the hereditary pipers of the Macleods, than by any others in the Highlands. The name of Macrimmon, whether on fanciful or on conclusive ground we pretend not so say, has been derived from the fact of the first musician who bore the name having studied his profession at Cremona in Italy. Certain it is that, what rarely happens, high musical talent as well as high moral principle and personal bravery, descended from father to son during many generations in the family of the Macrimmons. They became so celebrated that pupils were sent to them from all quarters of the Highlands, and one of the best certificates that a piper could possess was his having studied under the Macrimmons. Finding the number of pupils daily increasing, they at length opened a regular school or college for pipe music on the farm of Boreraig, opposite to Dunvegan Castle, but separated from it by Loch Follart. Here, so many years of study were prescribed, regular lessons were given out, certain periods for receiving the instructions of the master were fixed. The whole tuition was carried on as systematically as in any of our modern academies; and the names of some of the caves and knolls in the vicinity still point out the spots where the scholars used to practise, respectively on the chanter, the small pipe, and the "Piob mhor", or large bagpipe, before exhibiting in presence of the master. Macleod endowed this school by granting the farm of Boreraig to it, and it is no longer ago than seventy years since the endowment was withdrawn. It was owing to the following cause: The farm had been originally given only during the pleasure of the proprietor. For many ages the grant was undisturbed: but when the value of land had risen to six or seven times what it was when the school was founded, Macleod very reasonably proposed to resume one-half of the farm, offering at the same time to Macrimmon, a free lease of the other half "in perpetuum": but Macrimmon, indignant that his emoluments should be curtailed, resigned the whole farm, and broke up his establishment, which has never been restored.

The Macrimmons were well educated, intermarried with highly respectable families, and were universally regarded as vastly superior to the common class of the country people. A son of the last family piper holds the rank of captain in the British army, and is said to inherit the musical talents of his race. There are a few of them still

residing in this parish, but they are born of what was reckoned a very low marriage for Macrimmon, and they do not possess either the talents or respectability of their progenitors. A Macrimmon still acts as piper to Macleod, but he is not descended of the Boreraig Macrimmons, who appear to have renounced their profession with their endowment.

We know not whether there were establishments similar to that of Boreraig in other parts of the Highlands; but it certainly is to be regretted that it was dissolved, and also that we have not minuter information as to the mode of training pursued by those who were universally acknowledged to be the first masters of bagpipe music.

Kilmuir was formerly famous for its pipers: but they are now extinct. The leading performers and teachers of this ancient and martial music, were the MacArthurs. When the proprietors resided in the parish, a free grant of the lands of Peingowen, a hamlet in the place, was given to the MacArthurs, in the same manner as Boreraig was given by the Macleods of Dunvegan, to the MacCrimmons. Peingowen, like Boreraig, was a sort of musical college, to which pupils were sent by various Chieftains, to acquire a correct knowledge of "piobaireachd". A little green hill in close vicinity to Peingowen, called Cnoc-phail, was the general rendezvous of the MacArthurs and their pupils. To the top of this eminence, they almost daily resorted, and practised their tunes. The MacArthurs vied with the MacCrimmons of Dunvegan, the MacGregors of Fortingall, the Mackays of Gairloch, the Rankins of Coll, and the MacIntyres of Rannoch, who were all renowned performers in their day.

Some years ago every funeral procession was attended by one or more pipers, who always played a lament, or melancholy pio-bairreachd, suitable for the occasion. The attendants silently listened to the quivering notes of the bagpipe, as they rent the atmosphere, and re-echoed from the surrounding hills. The inhabitants in the remote parts of the district were also warned by these doleful and protracted peals, floating on the air, that a fellow-creature was about to be consigned to his kindred dust.

GOLD MEDAL WINNERS

1961.
RONALD LAWRIE

1962.
SEUMAS MacNEILL

1963.
ANGUS MacDONALD

1964.
HECTOR MacFADYEN

1965.
NEIL MacEACHERN

1966.
DUNCAN MacFADYEN

1967
WILLIAM MacDONALD

1968.
THOMAS PEARSTON

PIPE BAND CHAMPIONS

1961.
Muirhead and Sons
(World Champions)

1962.
277 Argyll & Sutherland Hgd. Fd. Regt. R.A. (T.A.)
(World Champions)

1962.
Muirhead and Sons
(Champion of Champions)

1965.
Muirhead and Sons
(World Champions)

1966.
Muirhead and Sons
(World Champions)

1967.
City of Glasgow Police
(Champion of Champions)

1968.
Muirhead and Sons
(World Champions)

Notices of Pipers

This is a further instalment of the "Notices" compiled by Lt. John MacLennan, revised by Major I. H. MacKay Scobie, with further additions by Archibald Campbell, Kilberry. We are indebted to Captain D. R. MacLennan for permission to publish these.

It should be noted that the last revision took place in 1948, so modern pipers are not featured and information on the previous generation is not up-to-date.

(2) **MACCRIMMON,** JOHN. (IAIN ODHAR). Was hereditary piper to Alasdair Crotach MacLeod of Dunvegan, during the earlier half of the 16th century. Known as "Odhar" (i.e. dun coloured) from his sallow complexion. He was the son of Fionnlaidh a' Bhreacain Baine, or "Finlay of the White or light coloured plaid" (whom see). Like his father, he appears to have lived at Galtrigall, where he, or his father, founded the famous pipers' college, later on removed to Boreraig in Padruig Og's time, in about 1680-1700. Nothing now remains of the first-named college, and but little of the second, although Angus MacKay, in his "Ancient Piobaireachd", published in 1838, mentions that the thick walls of the main hall (about seventy feet in length and two stories in height) and the sleeping quarters, existed in his time.

For nearly two centuries, the MacCrimmon college or seminary attracted pipers, including even the hereditary pipers of other chiefs, from all parts of the Highlands, who came to learn or be perfected in the art of playing piobaireachd. The MacCrimmons became famous "for their high musical talent, as well as their high moral principle and personal bravery during many generations", and "one of the best certificates a piper could possess was his having studied under them". Tuition was carried on systematically. Lessons were given out, and certain times fixed for receiving instruction. In actual practice, the main hall was little used, the open air being preferred. The pupils were taught by ear and off the fingers. They first learnt to chant words with the tunes (viz. canntaireachd), then to finger the chanter silently from memory, then to play the chanter, and finally the pipes themselves. "The names of some of the caves and tomain (knolls) in the vicinity of the piping college still indicate the places where the scholars used to practise respectively, the chanter, the small pipes and the great pipes, before playing before the master".

The MacCrimmons (as also the other hereditary pipers who conducted schools) were very disinclined to train anyone

who did not show promise of coming up to their expectations. In every pupil was required a musical ear, a natural aptitude for pipe music, a deep affection for the music peculiar to the Highlands (i.e. ceol mor, or piobaireachd), and "an intimate knowledge of and reverence for all the circumstances which entwined themselves into the histories of the various ports or tunes". The "lesser music" (i.e. reels, jigs, etc.) was not taught, nor permitted officially. The course is said to have lasted seven years, and the students expected to memorise about 300 tunes, some taking over a quarter of an hour to play.

It was customary for the MacCrimmons to enter into formal indentures of apprenticeship with their pupils, and one appears in the "Transactions" of the Gaelic Society of Inverness. (See also under "Fraser, David".) The MacCrimmons became renowned as composers of ceol mor (great music) or piobaireachd (the classical music of the pipes)—and they are credited with being the originators of it.

The MacCrimmons of Skye, "the greatest masters of the bagpipe, never violated the principle of using only music specially composed, and they succeeded beyond all others in demonstrating the powers of that instrument. The Highland pipe is the exponent of Highland music (which includes not only piobaireachd, but also the "lesser music", viz. marches, strathspeys, reels, jigs and slow airs) and of that only. An instrument cannot produce what it is not constructed to produce. "It is said that the MacCrimmons usually did not compose off hand", but took a long time to a tune, sometimes several months, until they considered it perfect. They were very studious and practised a great deal, rising early in the mornings to play by themselves. Not only were these old masters proud, but they were jealous, and had certain secrets which they did not give away to their pupils. (Manson's "Highland Bagpipe", and Angus MacKay's "Ancient Piobaireachd".)

According to tradition, they were "fanatically wedded to what may be called the piobaireachd convention", and were said to have refused to play anything else. Iain Odhar is known to have composed "Mal Donn" (or "MacCrimmon's Sweetheart") in praise of the bag of his pipes. Was succeeded as hereditary piper to MacLeod and head of the college by Padruig Donn (whom see), his son according to tradition.

(8) **MACCRIMMON,** IAIN DUBH (1731-1822). He was the eldest son of Malcolm (whom see). Succeeded his father in about 1760, and the last of the hereditary MacCrimmon pipers to hold office. Had a lease of the lands of Borreraig from 1760 to 1775. It is said of this man that when General Norman MacLeod succeeded his grandfather in 1772, he exacted extra rent from him for the lands of Boreraig and, taking this as an

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insult, Iain Dubh renounced his profession. It seems more likely, however, that friction arose between the MacCrimmons and MacLeod, which ended in the former renouncing their profession. By the passing of the Heritable Jurisdiction Act of 1747, the relationship between the hereditary pipers and their chiefs had been entirely altered, and from being treated as persons of high standing and the confidants of their chiefs, were reduced to the status and level of ordinary musicians. This was more than the proud MacCrimmons could brook. Further, with the lack of an assured position, their enthusiasm for pipe music would have lessened under all the conditions.

The above estrangement is said to have taken place in the year 1769. The Rev. A. Clarke, writing in 1845, says: "The farm (of Boreraig) had originally been given only during the pleasure of the proprietor. But when the value of land had risen enormously, MacLeod very reasonably proposed to resume one half, offering MacCrimmon a free lease of the other half in perpetuam; but MacCrimmon, indignant that his emoluments should be curtailed, resigned the whole farm and broke up his establishment".

The very opposite is the truth, viz., Colonel Murray of the Atholl Regiment wrote from Ireland for a number of pipers, and the reply was:—

"Kilmuir, Skye, December, 1781.

"The MacArthurs and the MacCrimmons are all gone, except one old man of the latter who has something from MacLeod and no others have succeeded them."

General MacLeod left the country in 1775, and did not return to Skye till 1799, when Lieutenant Donald Ruadh (Iain's younger brother), then "hereditary piper", played a welcome to him at Dunvegan, on his arrival back from India. Iain Dubh, whom tradition avers was not so gifted a musician as his forebears, appears to have left Boreraig prior to 1772, and ceased to be hereditary piper. In that year, his brother Donald Ruadh went to America, and the college of pipers was apparently broken up. According to Angus MacKay (in his Collection of Piobaireachd of 1838), it would seem that Iain Dubh had determined to emigrate to America about the year 1795, owing to the changed conditions in the Highlands, and got as far as Greenock, when—his love for his own country being strong—he altered his mind and returned to his native island. He had, as already noticed, relinquished his hereditary office previous to that date, and may not have resumed teaching on his return.

It is clear, however, that he taught between about 1771 and 1789, and also previously. Dr. Samuel Johnson (whom see), in his "Tour to the Hebrides", alludes to the piping school as not being extinct in 1773. Boswell, in his "Journal" of 1772,

also refers to the school (see under MacCrimmon, Kenneth (I).)

Iain Dubh spent the rest of a long life in retirement. The Dunvegan muniments show that he was given a deduction of rent "by MacLeod's order", as from 1773. He was twice married, with a numerous family, none of whom are known to have been pipers, or at least players of any note. In his old age, when infirmities prevented him from playing the pipes, he was wont—so Angus MacKay records—to sit outside his house on sunny days, and run over the notes on his cromag, or walking staff. He died as late as 1822, at the great age of 91, and his remains were buried with those of his forebears in the kirkyard at Duirnish. He was eventually succeeded as piper (but not hereditary piper) to MacLeod by one of his own name. This person appears to have been one of his uncle's (Donald Donn's) sons, Kenneth—whom see, and marked (I). In the interval, MacLeod's piper was of another name (see Mackay, Angus Mor). ("Chronicles of Atholl", Vol. IV, p. 89; Pennant's "Tours", Vol. I, p. 338; Manson's "Highland Bagpipe".)

Angus Mor MacKay (whom see) has been mentioned as holding the post towards the end of the 18th century, and this is

possible. He may be the piper referred to by Boswell. ("The MacCrimmon Family", by G. C. B. Poulter and C. P. Fisher, 1936; Boswell's "Journal"; "Scots Magazine", Vol. 91.)

MACCRIMMON, JOHN. In Wester Galurg, near Beauly Was in the Army of Prince Charles in the Rebellion of 1745, as a piper in the Fraser contingent. ("The Rebellion of 1745", Scottish Hist. Society.)

MACCRIMMON, JOHN. Tenant in Glenarder, Murrayshire. Was in 1677 complained against to the Privy Council for seriously assaulting and wounding Alexander Grant of Ballindalloch and Archibald Dunbar. It is uncertain if he was a piper.

MACCRIMMON, JOHN. Was the son of Patrick Og, and brother to Malcolm and Donald Ban. He was tenant of the farm of Leakiehan in Kintail, which he rented from William, 5th Earl of Seaforth, for £21-15-10 Scots money. (Seaforths "Forfeited Estates", 1716, p. 328.)

He is said to have been piper to Seaforth in Kintail, and to have composed the tune called "The Glen is Mine". He may have renamed it, but the Lamonts composed before that and the MacDougalls claim it as well.

MACCRIMMON, JOHN. A piper in the 2nd Gordon Highlanders who served in the Great War of 1914-18 Wounded at Ypres in 1914, and killed at Loos on 25th September, 1915. ("The Pipes of War".)

MACCRIMMON, KENNETH (II). Succeeded his father, Donald of Lowerkill, Glendale (died c.1843, and whom see) as piper at Dunvegan Castle. He is apparently the one referred to by the Rev. A. Clerk in the "New Statistical Account of Scotland", of 1845, as being of the name of MacCrimmon but a very moderate performer on the pipes. He was employed until MacLeod went abroad in about 1846, and was the last MacCrimmon piper to the MacLeods of Dunvegan.

(7) **MACCRIMMON,** MALCOLM. Born about 1704. Son of Patrick Og MacCrimmon by his first wife. He was allowed to be a very fine performer, and was the composer of a beautiful lament for his brother Donald Ban, who was killed at the Rout of Moy, in 1746. This is held by many to be the finest piece of pipe music ever composed. But it is very lengthy.

He presided over the College of Pipers at Boreraig. On 9th March, 1743, Simon Lord Lovat sent his piper David Fraser to be taught by Malcolm (see under Fraser, David).

"It was formerly the practice", we are told in Angus MacKay's "Ancient Piobaireachd", "for gentlemen to send their pipers for instruction to the celebrated masters, paying the cost

of their board and tuition; but the performers are now chiefly educated at their own expense, which induces them to attempt the accomplishment of much in as short a time as possible; hence they play incorrectly, a residence of one or two years being altogether insufficient for their proper qualification. Formerly, six to twelve years were devoted to the acquirement of piobaireachds alone; for the professors would not allow reels or quicksteps to be played in their establishments".

Hence the old Gaelic saying, "To the make of a piper go seven years of his own learning and (in allusion to the hereditary principle) seven generations before".

Malcolm died in about 1760, and was succeeded, as hereditary piper to MacLeod by his son Iain Dubh MacCrimmon (whom see). He had held office from about 1730 to c. 1760, and from 1737 paid the "rent of Boreraig", amounting to £66-13s.-4d. yearly, which was the same amount as the salary he received from MacLeod. "The MacCrimmon Family", by G. C. B. Poulter; "Chronicles of the Frasers"; "Scots Magazine", Vol. 91.)

MACCRIMMON, MALCOLM. Was tenant on the Duke of Atholl's property at Balquhidder, and on 2nd September, 1667, attended a great hunt held by the Duke in the forest of Atholl. Whether he was a piper is not known.

MACCRIMMON, EY MALCOLM. Late of Skye; died at Dalintober, near Campbeltown, on 26th January, 1823, aged 85. It appears, from another source, that he was a piper.

MACCRIMMON, NORMAN. A competitor at Edinburgh in 1824, and noted as "from MacLeod's Estate in Skye". When called upon to play a certain tune at the rehearsal he played another, and appears to have been disqualified in consequence. Was then aged 18. Afterwards a piper in the 79th Highlanders. It is said that when in the 79th, he was given an ancestral set of pipes (now destroyed) by Captain Patrick MacCrimmon, the eldest son of Lieutenant Donald Ruadh MacCrimmon (whom see), who was in the same regiment.

Norman was born at Lowerkill in 1806, and was a younger brother of Donald MacCrimmon, Lowerkill (whom see), piper to MacLeod, c. 1801-1843. Then joined the navy and served on the "Ariadne" in 1841, being described as a good piper Also on the 'Dalhousie'. Died at Trinidad, 1846. ("Records of the Highland Society of London.") (Poulter's "MacCrimmon Family.")

MACCRIMMON, NORMAN. Son of Major MacCrimmon of Glenelg. Was a captain in the 74th Highlanders in 1859, and died in 1875. His portrait appears in "The Brave Sons of Skye". Is said to have been a tolerable performer on the pipes.

(3) **MACCRIMMON,** PADRUIG DONN. Son of Iain Odhar, and whom he succeeded as hereditary piper to MacLeod in the latter half of the 16th century. Little seems to be known about him, or his activities in the musical line. According to tradition he had two sons, Donald Mor (whom see) who succeeded him as hereditary piper to MacLeod; and Padruig Caogach. The latter is stated to have become piper to MacLeod in Glenelg, on the mainland, and settled there. Tradition avers that he was killed there by a relative, between the years 1609 and 1611, and due vengance taken by his brother, Donald Mor.

(5) **MACCRIMMON,** PADRUIG MOR. Son of Donald Mor. Born c. 1595. Regarded as one of the most eminent composers of pibroch, or ceol mor. Is said to have perfected a new system of canntaireachd (or articulate music) for the pipes. He composed a great many tunes. His best known work is "Cumha na Cloinne" or "Lament for the Children", composed when some seven of his fine sons died of fever in one year.

Either he or his father composed the lament for their chief, the famed Sir Ruari Mor (who flourished as chief between 1596 and 1626), which is one of the most melodious and plaintive pipe tunes on record. Padruig Mor was not hereditary piper to the above Sir Roderick MacLeod, but was to his son, John

MacLeod, 14th chief, who died in 1649, and to the latter's son, Roderick, 15th chief of Dunvegan, who led his clan at the battle of Worcester in 1651.

He held his office of hereditary piper from 1640 to the year 1670. With his chief he joined the army of Charles II at Stirling in 1651. He seems to have been treated as a personage of importance, and led the pipers, as being their "patron in chief", on the march.

When Charles reviewed his army encamped outside Stirling he saw a group of about 80 pipers with an elderly man in their midst. On being told that this was MacCrimmon, the Prince of Pipers, he called him up and gave him his hand to kiss. Whereupon MacCrimmon is said to have composed the well-known pibroch "Fhuair mi pog do laimh an righ" ("I got a kiss from the King's Hand").

A somewhat different version of this incident is recorded in the Wardlaw M.S.; see under "MacGurmen, John". Another story has it that the well-known piobaireachd above was composed in 1660, after Charles II's Restoration, when MacLeod of Dunvegan is said to have proceeded to London, to pay homage to the king, and took Padruig Mor with him. Captured at the Battle of Worcester, he eventually returned to Scotland, and continued to be hereditary piper to MacLeod until the year 1670, when he died. Was followed as hereditary piper by his son Padruig (Patrick) Og (whom see).

Note : The 1664 rental of the MacLeod lands shows that Galtrigal was then tenanted by "Patrick MacCrimmon, pyper", at a rental of £151-16 Scots, in all, or £12-13 stg. Boreraig was, at that date, tenanted by a MacLeod. It thus seems that Boreraig was not occupied by the MacCrimmons until Padruig Og's time.

(6) MACCRIMMON, PADRUIG OG. Son of Padruig Mor. Was born about 1645, and succeeded his father as hereditary piper to MacLeod. He occupied office from 1670 to 1730 or even later. Was famed as a teacher, his pupils being considered the best players of their day. Composed several choice piobaireachds, it is said, and some can now be definitely attributed to him, including the lament for Mairi MacLeod, the Skye poetess who died in about 1700.

His most celebrated pupil, John (Iain) Dall MacKay (1656-1754), piper to MacKenzie of Gairloch, composed a lament for him on hearing a rumour (afterwards found to be false) that his old teacher had died. Soon after, John Dall visited Boreraig. Among other tunes he played was this lament. Padruig Og enquired where he had learnt it. After some hesitation Iain Dall admitted that he had composed it in his (Padruig Og's) memory. "Indeed", said MacCrimmon, "Cumha Phadruig Oig, 's e fhein beo' fhathast !" ("Lament for Patrick Og, and he still alive !", adding "I must learn to play my own lament !"

According to the famous Donald Cameron, it seems that Padruig Og made considerable alterations in the style of ceol mor, as he considered it overloaded with gracenotes. Cameron used to exhibit a "double crunluath" as a specimen of the old style. It does appear both from D. MacDonald's book and Joseph MacDonald's "Treatise" that this is so, and unknown to present-day pipers, whose knowledge is derived from John MacKay of Raasay, who was of Padruig Og's school.

Padruig was married twice and had a large family. He was followed, as hereditary piper at Dunvegan, by his son Malcolm (whom see). Another son was Donald Ban, piper to MacLeod in Harris, killed at Moy in 1746 (whom see).

In 1706, he received "as tocher from MacLeod", on his second marriage, the sum of 228 merks. As "principal piper to MacLeod", he was paid £165 in fees yearly. According to the Dunvegan Muniments, there are further items. In 1711, two bagpipes were bought for "McCrummen, MacLeod's principal pyper" for 30 merks; and in 1714 MacLeod paid Pat. Morison, merchant in Edinburgh, the sum of £57, "for Livery cloathes to McCrummen, MacLeod's Pyper".

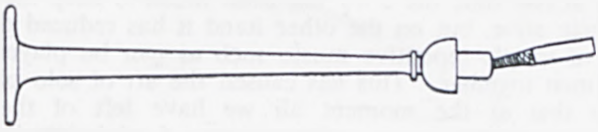
Letters to the Editor

Dear Seumas, Leicester.

Here is a tip for junior pupils and possibly some older ones.

When fitting a reed into your practice chanter, hold the bottom half of the chanter when the reed is in, sole end to the eye, and "sight" the reed to make sure it is perfectly straight.

This can be better explained with the aid of the following illustration :—



correct

incorrect

The second illustration has been exaggerated purposely.

Having checked the reed, turn the chanter a quarter turn, and check the reed again. This may save you a chipped and broken reed corner.

This was always included in my father's first lessons to his pupils.

Best regards,

IAIN D. INSCH.

The Irish Pipe Band Association,
Leinster Branch & Joint Advisory Committee,
Dublin, 9.

Dear Seumas,

Reading your publication from time to time, I have noticed references to Government support for piping in the Republic of Ireland and I would like to put you right on this. All attempts to secure any form of Government support, financial or otherwise, have always met with blank refusals and, in fact, the Army here haven't a decent pipe

band. Tuition is of the most primitive kind, no funds worth speaking of being made available to the School of Music. The Pipe-Majors are frustrated for lack of official recognition. There is not a single officer with any real interest in or knowledge of piping.

Is mise le meas, P. J. BERRLL.

Dear Sir, Wellington, New Zealand.

After the first half of 1970 I want to terminate my subscription to your magazine. The emphasis on the army and the military seems to be getting stronger in your magazine all the time; to be quite frank, I am disgusted by the cover picture on the January, 1970, issue. I know that at one time the army has done much to keep the bagpipe and its music alive, but on the other hand it has reduced the music to a level of simple repetitive music such as can be played by big masses of men together. This has caused the art of solo playing to decline, so that at the moment all we have left of the ancient tradition is a hundred or so written scores of piobaireachds which everybody plays meticulously over and over again. Ah well, sorry for this sermon—thanks for sending me the magazine so faithfully in the past, and all the best for the future. C. M. VOOREN.

Dear Sir, Blachsburg, Virginia.

I began piping about 4 years ago at the age of 31, and have relied heavily on the College Tutors. My first year was largely devoted to work with a pipe band, but after moving to Virginia to join the geology faculty at Virginia Polytechnic Inst., I found myself alone with no band to help perpetuate the great art of piping in this Appalachian hinterland. Without the demands of band projects, I have found much time to look into solo pipe playing. There have been several opportunities to play for local groups. But most fascinating for me has been the chance to begin working with piobaireachd. The depth and variety of the compositions provide the stimulation needed to sustain interest through the long cold winter. The instructional tapes and the recent book and record on the construction of piobaireachd are invaluable. Sometime I would like to see a review in the "Piping Times" of good quality piobaireachd records.

I recently had the opportunity to play the pipe in a concert of renaissance music in Bristol, Va., which included Monteverdi Madrigals with ballet. Three interludes: flute with harpsichord, soprano with harpsichord, and bagpipe, each played for about 10 minutes between ballets. After many attempts to assemble a medley of retreats, etc., I finally decided that only a piobaireachd could really fit the formal mood of the other music. With some trepidation, I played "The Prince's Salute". Although my performance would hardly draw notice on the competition platform, it was well received by the audience, and it did fit beautifully with the other music on the programme. I hope this might be viewed as encouraging to those seeking greater recognition of the bagpipe as a solo instrument.

I hope this letter is not too long, but I would like to draw attention to some of the opportunities open to pipers who find themselves alone. Despite the stern admonitions to the contrary, I do believe a piper can find much stimulation and enjoyment with piobaireachd without the delightful advantage of a real, live teacher, and, who knows, someone might want to hear it sometime.

Regards,

EDWIN S. ROBINSON.

Congratulations on putting over the great music successfully. Perhaps others in similar circumstances will be encouraged to follow your example.

Dear Sir, Reedley, California.

On the question "Why?" in the December "Piping Times"! My reed seems to double-tone (in my practice chanter—which is all I have

so far) when too much water condenses on the inside of the reed. This might have the effect of creating a second reed inside the chanter reed, or at least two ridges of vibrating water. This would at least change the way the reed vibrated and its tone, and could cause the unwanted double-tone. A backdraft in the air current through the reed would suck the water up close to the tip of the reed and hold it there. As in a stream once a current passes through the narrow area in a channel it spreads out into many eddies and backcurrents. Similar conditions are produced when air is forced through the small opening in the reed.

Yours truly,

BOB MERZ.

Dear Sir, Ashland, Oregon.

My pipe chanter is at least 36 years old. I have not changed because I have never found one that is better. I test a chanter in this manner. I put a weak reed in my own chanter and blow with increasing strength until it squawks on low G. I then transfer the reed into the chanter to be tested to see which chanter squawks easier. I make use of several reeds until I am satisfied which chanter squawks easiest. In 30 years of this test I have never found one that did not squawk easier than my own. I assume if a reed cannot be blown out fully on low A and G, the higher notes cannot be as good as they should be. Some chanters squawk far too easy. If a piper can blow a strong reed, like Mr. Garroway, all reeds sound good outside. I heard him play only once. Strange to say, the chanter I found to be nearest my own, in this test, was a new Sinclair.

Another test I have tried. In one room I played several chanters, random choice, and had a piano tuner friend in another room to decide which chanter had the best quality tone. Any time he said the tone was superior it was my chanter that produced it. He knew the difference between mine and a Henderson with a silver sole. He said mine was the better tone. My chanter is a well made Henderson with a 3¼ inch real ivory sole. The end wood shown underneath the sole is tooled with rings, not just sawed off flush with the sole. You can judge from the foregoing that I believe I have an exceptionally good chanter.

Yours,

WILLIAM D. KEDDIE.

P.S.—Here is something of interest. A Strad. violin made from wood 300 years old is no better than one made from wood only 10 years old. The wood has to vibrate for many years to become improved. I have often wondered if this applies to a pipe chanter. Violin wood can become worn out and become a poor quality sounding board.

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Printed by R. Kirkland, St. Mungo St. (Crowhill Rd.), Bishopbriggs, Glasgow
Published by the College of Piping, 20 Otago Street, Glasgow, W.2.