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Piping Times

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December, 1973.



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COVER PICTURE :

Dr. John MacAskill,

Lake Sequoia, California, last summer.

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Editorial

In recent years we have seen considerable changes in the pipe band scene, not least of which has been the introduction of medley selections in competitions. As a result, repertoires have increased, accent on technical ability has diminished and the audiences have apparently been better entertained.

Instrumentalists playing together have always found considerable difficulty in knowing when to start and stop, at what tempo to play, when to speed up or slow down, when to play softly and when loudly. Except in small groups—trios or quartettes—the solution has been to have a conductor. Orchestras, brass bands, dance bands would find it almost impossible to operate without the men with the baton out front, and indeed, groups of singers have the same solution to the same problem.

Pipe bands are about the only groups who have tried to go it alone. Starting together of course would always be a difficulty, but this has been overcome as well as is possible with the instruments concerned. Tempo and its variation however call for more than just a general agreement made beforehand. Bass drummers have been tried as the dictators of tempo, and leading drummers also, but these are not successes. At present the pipe-major does the job—mainly by keeping his left foot firmly fixed on the ground and using all the rest of his anatomy to attempt to convey the nuances of expression he wants in the tunes.

Again not a great success, and not even a pretty picture.

Why not a conductor then? The first reaction is naturally from the conservative side of our nature—it just would not look like a pipe band. But all kinds of innovations seemed peculiar when they were first introduced—for example trousers, tramcars, traffic wardens—but soon we accept them as part of our way of life.

John MacLellan has suggested elsewhere that a band should be arranged as an orchestra, so that instead of seeing the back view and hearing the scraps of music which the bandsmen cast behind them, we could get the full effect of both their music and their handsome physogs. (Come to think of it, standing in a circle must be about just the worst possible formation for any instrumental group supposed to be playing for an audience—no wonder the judges look worried and the B.B.C. engineers go hysterical).

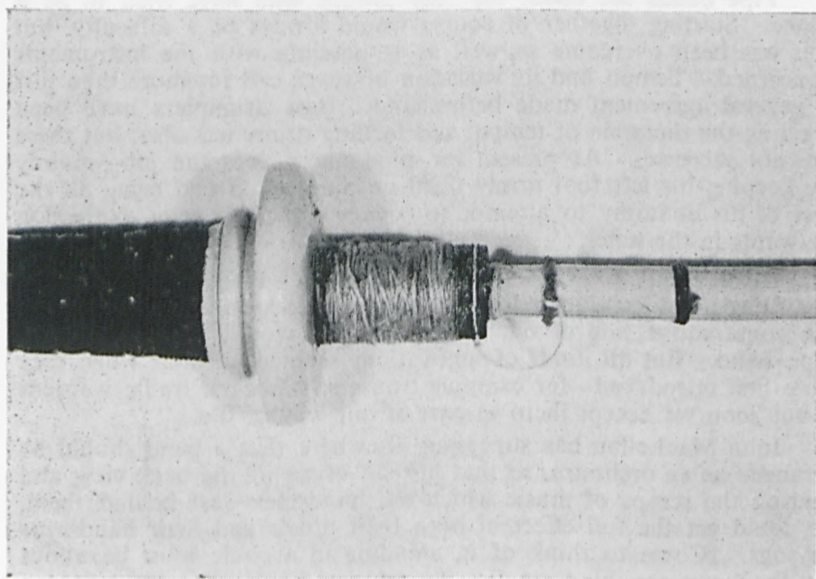
Another advantage of a conductor is that an important place could now be found for some of our older retired pipe-majors. And it's not just a case of finding a place for them—this would make use of their tremendous musical knowledge which in the present system is discarded as soon as the fingers begin to slow down. If Toscaninni can go on till he is ninety there is nothing to prevent senior citizens of the pipe band world playing a useful part in the development and presentation of our music at least until they see the ton coming up.

A Safety Line for Drone Reeds

By T. Pearston.

All pipers at varying times have had the aggravating experience of rescuing a drone reed that has fallen into the pipe bag. If the bag has been recently seasoned then the reed could be so badly soaked in the sticky seasoning that the tongue would fail to vibrate and the reed could be spoiled permanently. If one is preparing for competitions or participating in public performances, then this accident amounts to a major disaster if it happens just prior to appearing on the stage.

The usual procedure to adopt if this happens is to uncouple all



the stocks from their partners and then try to locate the position of the reed in the bag. This can usually be done without removing the bag cover. If the bag is relatively dry the reed can be shaken down and out through the pipe chanter stock. If, however, it is anchored by seasoning then try to push the reed towards the nearest stock outlet.

Once the reed has been recovered it will be fortunate if it can



be resettled in the drone without being affected in tonal quality. It then has to be washed thoroughly inside and outside and left to dry naturally. Another reed will have to be selected and put in the pipe. But before it can settle down and be steady adjustments will have to be made with the bridle and tuning position of the drone which can take up to ten minutes. At piping competitions any piper with this problem would wish to delay his performance for as long as possible so that the reed can settle down. In actual normal practice the reed is only settled in by leaving it in the pipe overnight.

All pipers are aware that no matter how securely they attach the reeds to the drone joint, through time because of variations in temperature and moisture, the continuous jolting in car, train, or plane, the danger of dislodging the reed is a persistent possibility. To avoid this happening a safety line to catch the reed before it drops into the bag is prepared as follows.

Carefully saw or file a 1/16 inch groove at the end of the drone tenon which is clear of the hemping (see photograph). Tie three or four inches of hemping into the groove and, with the other end, tie to a small stout rubber band. Take the drone reed and push the rubber band over the hemmed end of the drone and adjust the length of the "safety line". When the reed requires bridle adjustment or attention it is a simple matter to push off the rubber band to disengage it. Instead of hemp for the safety line some fine nylon thread slides easier and lasts longer.

Another way to attach the drone reed is to drill a 1/32 inch hole through the face of the drone tenon at an angle to catch the channel of the groove. Through this hole the line can be threaded. Or, alternatively, the finished tail of hemp used for the joint can be threaded through and attached to the rubber band on the reed thereby making use of a loose end of hemp.

This "Safety Line" for reeds could be particularly valuable for pipers who only play sporadically, as in between blows the reeds dry and become loose.

There was this church which advertised for young men to form a pipe band. One particularly aggressive man turned up, and when asked if he wanted to be a piper or a drummer he said neither, he wanted to be the conductor. So they nailed him to the steeple.

Sir Rory Mor MacLeod's Influence on Piping

by Ruaridh Mor MacLeod.

It was an amazing piece of good fortune for piping that the first two great MacCrimmons, Donald Mor and Padruig Mor were brought up under the patronage of that remarkable Highland Chief, Sir Rory Mor MacLeod of Dunvegan. Sir Rory was chief of "Siol Toromod" from 1595 to 1626, at a critical time when King James VI and I was extending his authority over his unruly subjects in the west. Some measure of Sir Rory's success at steering his clan through these difficult times may be judged by the fact that three powerful clans, MacDonalds of Islay, MacLains of Ardnamurchan and MacLeods of Lewis all foundered.

Great man though he was, Sir Rory has managed to acquire an aura and tradition that did not necessarily belong to him. Any piper interested in more than the light music will surely have visited Dunvegan Castle, in the Isle of Skye, where in the old keep, now the drawing room, and in the dining room, the MacCrimmons, hereditary pipers to the MacLeods for three centuries, first played their outstanding music. Sir Rory has given his name to three MacLeod relics, but in fact two of these items outdate him by many years. The famous drinking horn was probably acquired in the 14th century, and the double handed claymore was used at the battle of Bloody Bay in 1480, eighty-two years before his birth. Only Sir Rory Mor's Gourd is likely to be contemporary.

The significance of these two misapplied names is to illustrate the danger of hanging famous relics, or famous tunes in piping, on famous men. Sir Rory was a great chief, and yet how many scholars of piping are aware that he was born a younger son, and inherited the chieftainship from his nephew?

I was a little disconcerted therefore, to discover that a number of eminent pipers were very hazy about their MacLeod history. Any unfortunate non-MacLeod may groan at the thought of having to study the Clan's long history, and yet the MacCrimmons were paid by the MacLeods to produce pipe music, and thus if the music is to be understood fully, then the deeds that prompted the music must be known.

Every competent piper should therefore have access to two major works on the MacLeods. The first is Dr. Elsie Grant's six hundred

page "The MacLeods—the History of a Clan", published by Faber and Faber in 1959. Though now out of print, the work will be found in most major libraries. Dr. Grant was particularly interested in the artistic achievements of the MacLeods, and devoted considerable space to their poetry and the piping of the MacCrimmons. The other work is "The MacLeods—The Genealogy of a Clan", compiled by the late Rev. Dr. Donald MacKinnon, and Alick Morrison. The Genealogy is divided into five parts, covering all the cadet families of both the MacLeods of Harris and Lewis. So far three sections have been completed, and the fourth will be published in 1974 by the Clan MacLeod Society. Copies are still available but will also be found in most major libraries.

Roderick MacLeod—called Rory, or more correctly Ruairidh in Gaelic—was born at Dunvegan Castle about 1562, the second son of Norman XII Chief, only two years after the Reformation. These were troubled times for Scotland and, in particular, for the MacLeods. Norman had just completed ten years of family feuding over the Chieftainship by having a score of his relations murdered in retaliation for the killing of his elder brother Donald. Norman's eldest son, William, was born about 1560. The tune "Salute to the birth of Rory Mor MacLeod" is therefore much more likely to have been written for the birth of William who was the heir, than Rory who was only the second son.

William duly married Janet, daughter of Lauchlan MacIntosh XVI of MacIntosh, and produced an heir, John, in 1580. Old Norman died in 1585 and was succeeded in the chieftainship by his eldest son, William, as XIII Chief. William was a sickly man and died in 1590, whereupon his ten year old son, John, became XIV Chief, and Rory became Tutor of the Clan, responsible for leading the MacLeods until the Chief came of age.

It was about this time that Padruig Coagach MacCrimmon was murdered in Kintail and his enraged brother, Donald Mor, then about twenty, burnt out his brother's murderers and composed that magnificent tune, "A flame of wrath for squinting Patrick". Donald Mor's exile in Sutherland led to the tune "Too long in this condition".

In 1595 Rory led an expedition of MacLeods to Antrim and probably brought back the Dunvegan Cup, thought to have been made for Niall of the Black Knees in the 10th century, and the tune "Lament for the Earl of Antrim".

The following year young John, a sickly boy, died, un-married, and at last Rory became XV Chief at the age of thirty-four. Two years later he married Isabel MacDonald, "Iseabail Mhor Nighean Mhic 'ic Alasdair", daughter of Donald of Laggan, VII Chief of

Glengarry, which should make all pipers prick up their ears. Donald died about 1635 as a very old man, and Donald Mor MacCrimmon wrote the "Lament for Donald of Laggan". It became Isabel's favourite tune, and was played to her each evening, from the room next door, before she fell asleep. Isabel lived to be one hundred and two!

Isabel produced five noble sons and six daughters for Rory Mor, and to give some indication of the latter's standing and influence in the Highlands, his children were married to the following families. His five sons to daughters of MacKenzie, Lord Kintail; Mackay, Lord Reay, and MacKinnon of MacKinnon; Mackenzie of Lochslinn and MacDonald of Sleat; Monro of Fowlis; and Clanranald. His six daughters were married to Hector Mor MacLean of Duart; Sir Lauchlan MacLean of Duart and John MacDougall of Dunollie; John MacDonald XII of Clanranald; John Garve MacLeod VI of Raasay; Donald MacSwan XXI of Roag and, lastly, Lauchlan MacLean of Coll.

The MacCrimmons wrote laments for the father-in-law of one of Rory Mor's sons, and for the husbands of two of his daughters. Marriage to a young MacLeod gave a good chance of a place in piping history!

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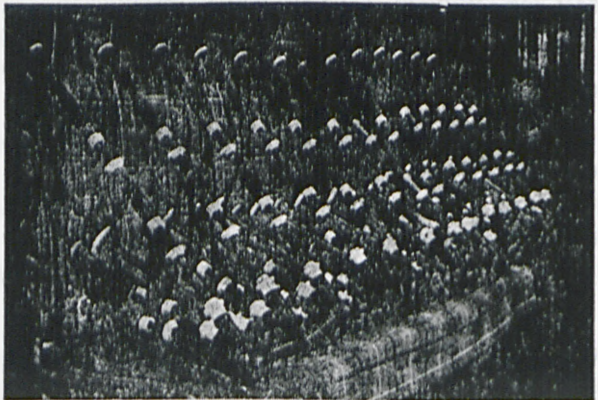
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Donald Dugall MacKay, the somewhat chaotic adventuring 1st Lord Reay, was a close friend of Rory Mor, and father of Barbara, the first wife of Roderick MacLeod 1st of Talisker. Lord Reay died about 1640, having been forced to sell most of the MacKay country. Donald Mor MacCrimmon (Kilberry) wrote in his memory "Lament for Donald Dugall MacKay".

The much loved John Garve MacLeod, VI of Raasay, married Janet, Sir Rory's fourth daughter. He was drowned returning from the Isle of Harris, and two famous poems and gaelic songs have survived, one written by his wife and one by Mary MacLeod ("Mairi Nighean Alasdair Ruadh"). Despite the traditions of a young hero lost, Iain Garve had been Chief of the MacLeod of Raasay for forty years, and was drowned in 1688. The Lament for "Iain Garve MacLeod of Raasay" is attributed by Kilberry to Padruig Mor MacCrimmon, but since the latter died about 1670 it seems more likely on historical grounds that the tune was written by Padruig Og.

Sir Rory Mor was knighted in 1613 by James VI and I when he visited the king in London. Sir Rory Mor's fifth daughter, Florence, was married to Donald MacSwan XXI of Roag, and when the latter died at his house a few miles south of Dunvegan Castle, he also earned himself an immortal tune, "Lament for MacSwan of Roag".

Sir Rory had an even more direct influence upon the composition of three other tunes. His sister, Margaret, was married to Donald Gorm Mor MacDonald of Sleat, but when she failed to produce any children she was so illtreated by her husband that she lost an eye. Donald Gorm repudiated the unfortunate lady in 1600 and returned her to her brother attended by a one-eyed, ragged groom, riding a one-eyed grey mare, and followed by a one-eyed dog. The arrival of this pathetic procession infuriated Rory Mor. At first he sent a civil message to Donald Gorm, but received in reply the news that his sister had been divorced, and that Donald Gorm had married the daughter of Colin MacKenzie, XI of Kintail, and sister of one of Sir Rory Mor's greatest enemies, Sir Roderick MacKenzie, Tutor of Kintail. Rory Mor invaded Trotternish, and Donald Gorm retaliated by raiding Harris. Warfare continued for several years, with a bloody battle in the Cuillins (Ben Coolin), but finally reconciliation was reached in 1603.

Rory Mor invited Donald Gorm to Dunvegan and instructed Donald Mor MacCrimmon to prepare a tune. The piper produced three, "MacLeod's Controversy": "MacDonald's Salute" and "MacLeod's Salute", which is also called "MacLeod's Rowing Tune".

Sir Rory Mor MacLeod died in 1626 and was buried at Fortrose Abbey. The tune "MacLeod of MacLeod's Lament" ("Tog orm mo phìob s' theid mi dhachaidh") was probably written at this time.

Sir Rory's son, John XVI Chief, died in 1649, to be succeeded by a minor, Roderick as XVII Chief, during the troubled times of the Civil War and the Commonwealth. The Clan, however, was valiantly led by those redoubtable brothers, Roderick of Talisker and Norman of Berneray, who were both knighted in 1661. Talisker, the young Chief's eldest uncle, was Tutor of the Clan, and Norman commanded a thousand MacLeods at the Battle of Worcester. During this time the tunes, "Lament for Mairi Nighean Alasdair Ruadh" and "I got a kiss of the King's Hand" Padruig Mor MacCrimmon, were composed. Having lost six of his seven sons to small pox, Padruig Mor also composed the greatest tune ever written, "Lament for the Children".

Roderick XVII Chief died in 1664, predeceased by his only son, and was succeeded by his younger brother, Iain Breac, as the next great MacLeod Chief at Dunvegan Castle. He heralded another outstanding era of piping as Padruig Og MacCrimmon grew to manhood, to become the greatest teacher in the history of Ceol Mor.

Tunes written under the patronage or influence of Sir Rory Mor MacLeod.

- 1560 Salute on the birth of Rory Mor MacLeod
(Perhaps on the birth of William MacLeod)
- 1590 The Flame of Wrath for Squinting Patrick Donald Mor
- 1590 Too long in this condition Donald Mor
- 1595 Lament for the Earl of Antrim Donald Mor
- 1603 MacLeod's Controversy Donald Mor
- 1603 MacLeod's Salute Donald Mor
- 1603 MacDonald's Salute Donald Mor
- 1626 MacLeod of MacLeod's Lament
- 1635 Lament for Donald of Laggan
- 1640 Lament for Donald Dugall MacKay ... Donald Mor (K)
Lament for the Children
- 1651 Lament for Mairi Nighean Alasdair Ruadh
I got a kiss of the King's hand Padruig Mor (K)
Lament for MacSwan of Roag
- 1688 Lament for John Garve MacLeod of Raasay Padruig Mor (K)

THE CAMERON PIPE BAND OF SACRAMENTO

By Roger Weed

The Cameron Pipe Band of Sacramento was organised more than 25 years ago to preserve the traditional music and dress of the Scottish Highlands in California's capitol. The band is attired in the full dress uniform of the Scottish Regiments and the tartan worn is the Cameron of Erracht. The pipers wear glengarries with blackcock feathers, and the drummers wear feather bonnets.

The band has marched in parades throughout Northern California and provided entertainment at a wide variety of clubs, fraternal, social and historical organisations. For several years the Cameron Pipe Band has been the escort for the Camellia Queen and her court at the Camellia Festival Folk Dance Pageant. The band has also participated in the different Highland Games held in Northern

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California. In 1970 they were placed 2nd in the Grade "C" and juvenile five minute time limit contest at the Santa Rosa Highland Games.

Two Glasgow area men are prominent in the band. Alec Cowan, the quartermaster and a tenor drummer, is from Clydebank, and John



MacMillan, the drum-major, is from Paisley. The other officers of the band are Jack Brown, pipe-major; Roger Weed, pipe-sergeant; and David Cowan, drum-sergeant. The band treasurer is Fred O'Connor.

* * * *

Roger Weed lives at 2140 Palisade Ave. 2, Modesto, California 95350. Any band or individual in the area with news or items of general interest for publication should please contact him.

THIS IS SCOTLAND.

The following heading, printed here in its entirety, was the introduction to the Glasgow Letter of the "Oban Times" on October 18th :—

"Lack of interest in Gaelic due to indifference".

PURIFICATION AND PIOBAIREACHD :
**Summer School at
Lake Sequoia, California**

by Donald B. MacIntyre.

At an elevation of 6,000 feet on the western slope of California's Sierra Nevada, Lake Sequoia is an ideal place for a summer school of piping. Days are warm and skies are blue. By the end of August, nights are cold. Majestic sugar-pines and cedars clothe the slopes, leaving a narrow fringe of clear ground along the shore. Classes and individual players are free to select their preferred blend of sunshine and shade.

Huge pine cones, 18 inches long and heavy with resin, hang from the tips of the upper branches, inviting the attention of squirrels. When a big cone fell with a crash, and a minute later was hauled off by the offender, Hugh MacCallum was forced to admit to his class that now he had seen everything! Cedars are safer.

Five miles away, a grove of sequoias makes even the biggest of the trees by the lake seem small. They soar skyward, red columns with scarce a taper; on one, the first branch, several feet in diameter, starts 130 feet above the ground. Several students visited the grove and played piobaireachd beneath these venerable giants that were a thousand years old when Christ was born. What music more appropriate in such a cathedral?

Instruction at the School was well organised, so that each benefitted according to his interests and capacity. To achieve this the instructors worked long hours, tirelessly maintaining good humour, patience, and contagious enthusiasm. Seumas MacNeill emphasised at the start that for the school to succeed it must be fun, especially for the instructors. His own obvious enjoyment ensured success.

There were serious moments too, starting with the first day's audition and Dr. John MacAskill's pithy diagnosis and prescription: "Tutor 1, page 1". The brochure had described him as "ruthless" as well as being the possessor of "the best fingers in Scotland". Who else could put such disapproval—even horror—into the two simple words, "Crossing noises"? A cloud seemed to obscure the sun, as he added, in obvious pain, "It's like a dagger through my heart!" He asked one class what a crossing noise is. To the answer that it is an **extra** note played when changing from one hand to the other, John responded: "It's a **false** note".

During the first week I was one of three who met for an hour

each morning with John MacAskill. He preferred the veranda overlooking the lake, and sat at a table opposite his pupils. He opened our eyes and ears to accuracy of technique, demonstrating that a general fluttering of the correct fingers is no substitute for the execution of a doubling. John put us on the correct lines for many months of practice.

In the afternoons a group of eight met under the trees with Hugh MacCallum to study piobaireachd. We worked in some detail on "The Groat" (which Hugh later played for us in an evening recital), "The MacDougalls' Gathering" (how insistent the call!), and "The Old Woman's Lullaby" (we knew just when the baby fell asleep!) Hugh also introduced us to the beauties of "The Daughter's Lament" and "The Unjust Incarceration", every day delighting us with his sensitive interpretation of the great music that he knows so well.

A feature much appreciated was the daily question-and-answer session on maintenance of the pipes. As a result, I came home bold enough to take a knife to a new bag and successfully tie it in. Particularly illuminating was Hugh's commentary as he went through a box of reeds, demonstrating on two chanters, and teaching us something of the art and craft that makes a sweet tone possible. No one who heard John MacAskill could forget his plea for patience when blowing in a new reed: "Time! Every thing and every person deserves a chance". I am sure that many found comfort and encouragement in this outcry of a born teacher.

Seumas MacNeill covered the history of piping in a series of masterly "fireside chats" that captivated young and old alike. They were done to perfection. We also enjoyed tapes of programmes on piping that Seumas had created for the B.B.C.; tapes that bring to life such famous pipers as John Ban MacKenzie, G. S. MacLennan, John MacLellan, and Malcolm Macpherson.

Each of our instructors treated us to at least one evening recital, which gave us the opportunity to hear eight piobaireachd, each beautifully executed.

Particularly outstanding was Hugh MacCallum's "In Praise of Morag", the piobaireachd that won him the Gold Medal at Oban a year before; he had us all on our feet when he finished. I found it interesting when, during a chanter class, Hugh mentioned the possibility that Morag was Prince Charlie, who used the name when travelling in disguise after Culloden.

Among many wonderful memories of Lake Sequoia, I particularly treasure Seumas MacNeill's thrilling exposition of "The MacGregors' Salute", with canntaireachd and chanter. The boldness of the opening big birls, Ho din Griogarach, proudly boasts, "We are the



people; we are the greatest!" Seumas wanted to share with us his love of the music and its history. The experience was exhilarating. His knowledge, so generously poured out, and his enthusiasm would have made the two weeks worthwhile had no more been accomplished. Although so far away in time and space, I felt that I could never be closer to the College at Boreraig.

I think everyone appreciated the care with which new tunes had been selected for us; good tunes which none of us knew and which we all enjoyed, like "My Land", "Lexie MacAskill", "Archie MacKinlay", "Castle Dangerous", and the "Glenfinnan Highland Gathering". We are grateful for the total involvement of the

SEUMAS MACNEILL
SUMMER SCHOOL OF PIPING
LAKE SEQUOIA 1973



instructors; for their endurance when subjected to painful and oft-repeated mistakes; for the extra time that let us record slow versions on the chanter that will help us more easily correct some of our own errors; and for the dedication and missionary zeal that brought them to California when they could have been competing for the Silver Chanter at Dunvegan.

We owe thanks also to Paula Casteen and her parents, without whose hard work and forethought there would have been no Summer School of Piping at Lake Sequoia. The School is a wonderfully effective and pleasant way to learn. It gave me enough to keep me busy for a year; I look forward to another of the same next year.



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Judging Piping Contests by William Gray.

These are some notes found in the papers of the late William Gray, formerly pipe-major of the Glasgow Police pipe band.

Prizes should not be awarded on the basis of who has the least faults. The preference should not go to the piper who makes the fewest errors, as against the piper who makes more, though he may not really have produced one full true note or played one rousing rhythm.

I consider it absolutely essential that judges ought not to see the players. Judges ought not to have the unnecessary difficulty thrust on them of knowing that they are criticizing and valuing the performance of a recognised champion than against a man who is better but yet unrecognised.

If points are given for appearance, etc., they should be given by another set of judges.

The method of judging by judges who are not allowed to communicate with each other and who give points separately is a failure for the following reasons. Firstly, we take it that at a certain competition there are three pipe judges who are placed apart, and that in summing up points for two bands, the points are awarded as follows:—Judges 1 and 2, 70 points each, while the 3rd judge gives 60—total 200 divided by 3=66.6. No. 2 band receives in marks from judges 1 and 2, 60 points each, while the 3rd judge gives 96, total marks 210, divided by 3=70.

Thus we have it that although 2 judges thought No. 1 band the better one, the 3rd judge over-ruled them and his opinion carried.

Again, this applies where under similar circumstances there is a judge for the drums, and why I cannot say, but by regulating his points to suit his own purpose can outweigh the remainder of the judges. I have known this to take place. The same thing has happened where there has only been 1 pipe judge and 1 drum judge.

I hold no brief for the present method of judging pipe bands, a method which I regret to say, obtains almost universally. There is no good reason why any performance should be analysed into four sections, called variously, Intro, Tempo, Tone, Execution, Drumming, etc. Neither is there any principle in the allocation of 5 or 10 or 20 points to these various sections.

There is no definition of any one of these names, with the possible exception of drumming, which will entirely exclude all mention of the other factors.

When a child is confronted with the wonderful mechanism of a clock, it seeks to tear it to pieces, and curiosity is not satisfied until the object of wonder is completely dismembered. But the curiosity

of man is surely on a higher level than this. There is a kind of wonder which does not seek its satisfaction in dismembering its object but in contemplating the latter in its entirety. For example, when a great work of art attracts our attention, we do not dispel our wonder by analysing it into its component parts, or by enquiring how it was produced. We take it as a whole and outside the whole the parts are meaningless.

Similarly, it is my contention that a band should be regarded as a whole; not a subject of analysis but a harmonious and euphonic entity.

Now, a band should be judged by its utility, or in other words, according to the purpose which led to its creation. Military bands would thus be expected to show as their chief merits, a good appearance and a keen sense of time. Civilian bands, since their purpose is a pleasurable one, would be expected to have primarily a good repertoire and a pleasing standard of playing. The best band would be the one which combined all these qualities in the most efficient manner.

But a band should be judged qualitatively and not quantitatively; the opinion of a few who are qualified to judge is worth much more than the estimation of many who lack musical knowledge and appreciation of true value.

An adjudicator judging say a Military Band does not award points under similar headings, neither can he allocate points in the same way for the different instruments. He could never do it. All he does is to give his opinion, good, better, best and so on and instead, as nearly as his opinion will allow him, puts down, 1st prize 95, 2nd 94, 3rd 93, 4th 92 points and so on.

What these adjudicators do in these contests when announcing awards after having judged strictly under cover is to immediately state their reasons for the decisions of award they came to, such as certain passages played too slow, lack of rhythm or accents.



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R.A.F. Contest

Despite the blustery weather conditions a large crowd attended the Royal Air Force Pipe Band Championships held at R.A.F. Church Fenton on Saturday, 13th October. The competing bands came from R.A.F. Stations throughout the United Kingdom but, unfortunately,



the only overseas band entered—from R.A.F. Akrotiri, Cyprus—failed to reach Church Fenton in time to take part. The Akrotiri band was in an aircraft flying from Cyprus which was diverted in flight to Malta to pick up a Service casualty. Thus the band did not arrive in the U.K. until it was too late to reach Church Fenton for the competition.

The guests included the Lord Mayor (Alderman K. Travis

Davison) and Lady Mayoress of Leeds, as well as a number of senior R.A.F. Officers and their ladies.

The City of Leeds pipe band accepted an invitation to attend as a guest band, and they provided a sparkling display of piping and marching under their Pipe-Major, Mr. J. Nixon, of 65 Lidgett Park Road, Roundhay, Leeds.

The winning band, from R.A.F. Kinloss, obtained first place in all the competitions, in addition to winning the overall prize for pipe bands.

Due to the unfavourable weather the competition had to be held in a hangar, with all the resultant problems for pipers and judges alike. Nevertheless, the judges commented most favourably on the standards achieved which, they said, were surprisingly high for amateur musicians.

The judges were : Piping, Pipe-Major A. MacDonald and Pipe-Major A. S. Cross; Drumming, Mr. R. Turner; Drum-Majors and Band Drill, Capt. R. J. Powell, R.A.O.C.

RESULTS :

Drum-Majors—1st, Kinloss; 2nd (equal), Cosford and Leuchars.

Pipe Bands—1st, Kinloss; 2nd, Halton.

Solo Piping—1st, Jnr. Tech. Chisholm (Kinloss); 2nd, L.C.A. Dixon (Halton).

Solo Drumming—1st, Chf. Tech. Pyke (Kinloss); 2nd, Jnr. Tech. Smith (Kinloss).

Drum Sections—1st, Kinloss; 2nd (equal), Halton and Leuchars.

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The Customers Always Write

Dear Seumas,

Robbins, North Carolina.

Some two years ago I wrote to you asking if you could direct me to a manufacturer of Irish Uilleann pipes (neither the Irish Embassy in Washington, or Waltons of Dublin knew one), and you were kind enough to send me the name of Mr. Michael Keenan. I have ordered a set from him, have received the first part of it (bag, bellows, chanter), and look forward to receiving the rest. I have been playing it along with the Highland bagpipe.

This morning I received a letter from a Mr. Swann Folsom containing additional information about makers, reed suppliers, etc., of the Uilleann pipes, and I am copying here parts of his letter for whatever value the information may have for you. Perhaps you know all of these, but on the chance you do not, and would like them for your file, here is his letter (or pertinent parts of it):

“The following makers are the only ones that make complete sets in Ireland (in addition to Keenan) that I know of: Alphonsus Kennedy, Uilleann and Warpiper maker, started production in the early 50s. Alf the older, or father, still alive, was supposedly an excellent Uilleann piper, but now the present Alphonsus is in charge and makes mostly Warpipes to keep the business going. He makes a good loud (though not as loud as an old Taylor set, of the late Willie Clancey, for instance) set in concert pitch, in blackwood and ivory, with all parts silver plated, stop key for chanter, and also the drones, etc., price £150 (\$375.00), practice sets £35. The only thing wrong with Kennedy is it takes years before he finishes a set.

The other maker is Frank McFadden, 22 Dunstan Street, Belfast. I have written to him, but he has failed to answer my letter.

Kennedy's address, by the way, is “St. John's”, Clifton Road, Montenotte Park, Cork, Ireland.

Practice set makers: Leon Rowsome, son of Leo, 5 Hazlewood Park, Artane, Dublin 5, Eire. Matthew Keirnan, 19 Offaly Road, Dublin 4. Dan O'Dowd, 153 Malahide Road, Donny Carney, Ireland. Pat McNulty and associate Ross Hunter, 33 Johnstone Drive,



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Rutherglen, Glasgow, Scotland, a performer turned maker. McNulty sells tapes of his playing, also publishes his own tutor. Pat Sky, Box 349, Charlestown, Rhode Island, U.S.A. Sky also carries out repairs, makes reeds, has a reedmaking manual called "The insane art of reedmaking".

Finally, write, if you wish, Turlough Moylan, who has just stepped down as secretary of Na Piobairi Uilleann, 9 Hamilton Street, Donore Avenue, Dublin 8, Eire".

As I say, Seumas, you probably have all this information—but just in case you do not, and would like it, here it is.

Le gach deagh dhurachd,

James MacKenzie.

Dear Mr. MacNeill,

Bicester, Oxon.

I would like to say "Dear Seumas" as all seem to in the magazine, but 'tis no easy thing to presume on a friendship you eventually hope to make!

We met briefly at Minard this year—I was the tall, fat one who spoke "English". That aside, I see from my piping file that I owe you the occasional "thank you", and as such must put pen to paper!

Firstly you gave me a Canadian address which my diplomatic chum has, as yet been unable to employ. Since leaving Dusseldorf last October, he has had a floor built on his bungalow, lost and regained an enormous quantity of furniture from Germany (apparently it arrived the same day as the builders started to add 4 bedrooms to said bungalow—Friday, 13th October, 1972!) sent his wife in for major surgery and become guardian of a 16 year old girl and 10 year old boy when his own children are no more than 6. I saw his problem and forgave him providing he had continued his chanter practice! That aside, he tells me that he did make the Ottawa Highland Games and saw the attendant Gods, but did not choose to acquaint himself with either John MacLellan or yourself as he knew that the only Powell either would know had political connotations!

You have also recently sent me your "Institute" brochures which I have now, by the grace of LEAVE, started to distribute. You may have read a very scruffy paper on Ceol Mor I wrote for John. It was the first paper I had written on a subject of interest, thus I am afraid it was both poor in content and English; but for all that, I really do believe there is a tremendous communication gap throughout piping. Many of the devout pipers to whom I have spoken, are totally unaware of the Institute, and consider the Piobaireachd Society as a

body of unjust gentlemen who are "guardians of their music". Whilst the latter may be true, I feel they do very much more for the bagpipe now, and in the future, than most people realise. I also feel that your Institute requires far more publicity than currently it receives. Especially outside Scotland. I would think it worthwhile having, or sharing, a stand at all major competitions in England and elsewhere for at least two years. The aim, after all, is to raise standards of knowledge and playing. Most people who are involved in Highland Music, wish so to do but may well be unaware of the increased facilities for so doing and for cementing these facets with certificates or qualifications. I can honestly say that I have never met a piper in England (who is really interested in the subject or otherwise), who has heard of, never mind understands the aims of, or reasons for, the Institute of Piping.

Am now off hobby-horse, communication forgotten! I recently visited the Bagpipe Museum in Newcastle (as indeed you probably have—brochure enclosed if not); and have taken the liberty of advising their honorary curator to start to develop the Highland side by contacting the Institute. As the one bagpipe museum (I believe) in the world, (and despite its being located in England), I feel that its Highland aspects should be properly developed. The museum is currently Northumbrian orientated as its pieces are based upon the collection of bagpipes of the late Cocks of Ryton. Even if initially the help given this museum consisted of no more than photo-copies of reference items, I feel it would be help of the right sort.

Anyway, my regards and my thanks for all the assistance you have pushed out in the last couple of years.

Richard Powell.

Dear Sir,

Bradford.

While looking up something else in Chambers Twentieth Century dictionary I came across :

"Back lilt, the left-hand thumb-hole at the back of a gabpipe chanter (Scott: sometimes erron—lilt)"—

Is this word ever used, or is it a literary rarity like Sir Walter's "warblers"?

What are the transverse holes near the sole of the chanter called? Who first thought of putting them in? What theory or accident suggested that they were necessary?

Are there names for the other holes? I have heard low G called the crannie-hole. The little finger is called a crannie in Buchan and Strathbogie.

Yours sincerely,

Colin Donaldson.

Dear Editor,

Transvaal, South Africa.

With my subscription for the next twelve months for "Piping Times" I have included a photograph of the Cosy Corner Club Pipes and Drums from Brakpan, Transvaal, South Africa.

The band is just over five years old and in the centre front row Bob Geddes, the founder instructor, may be seen.



The photograph was taken after an Armistice Day Parade in November, 1972, hence the Flanders poppies on the non-playing members.

The late George (Pipy) Ackroyd is standing at the left of the middle row. Up to the time of his death earlier this year, he was our club manager and band instructor.

Yours sincerely,

S. F. Brett.

From Patria Pictures Limited,

10 Green Street, Park Lane,

Dear Sir,

London, W17 4HP.

It might be of interest to you and your readers to know that we are currently producing a 50-minute documentary film for world-wide Television distribution on "The Great Highland Bagpipe". The film is being directed by Mr. John Haggarty who has also written the script and photographed by Mr. Lewis McCleod assisted by Mr. Ken MacPherson. The producer is Mr. G. Buckland-Smith of Patria Pictures, Ltd., whose previous T.V. documentaries include, "A Fortune in Pictures—The National Gallery", "The Truth about Houdini", "Shakespeare's Island", "Mecca—The Forbidden City" and "Night Flight to Berlin".

Film has already been shot at the European Pipe Band Championships at Shotts, the Piobaireachd Competition at Aboyne, and at the Highland Games at Pitlochry; at the Bagpipe Museum in Newcastle-upon-Tyne; at Alnwick Castle with Mr. Tom Matthews playing the Northumbrian pipes; at Abbotsford; Kishmul on Barra; at the College of Piping with Mr. Seumas MacNeill; at Dunvegan Castle with Mr. John MacFadyen and by the kind permission of Dame Flora MacLeod of MacLeod, and at Portree High School with Mr. William MacDonald; at Deeside; at the Army School of Piping at Edinburgh Castle; at Buckingham Palace with the Pipe Band of the Gurkha Rifles; and at the British and United Services Museum.

The producers are convinced that an enthusiastic audience will be found for the film not only in Britain but abroad. So far, only Canadian and West German T.V. have shown any real interest, but, when the film is finished early in 1974, copies will be sent to T.V. stations in countries all over the world. Hopefully, the programme will be shown on either B.B.C. T.V. or I.T.V. as well. Prints of the film will then be available for non-theatrical exhibition on a sale or hire basis.

Strangely, there has not yet been a film on this fascinating story of the Great Highland Bagpipe and the Piobaireachd, the classical music for the solo instrument, nor has the history been easy to discover. We hope our film will please not only those of your readers well versed in the subject but those many others who thrill to the pipes.

Yours truly,

G. Buckland-Smith.

Dear Sirs,

Braemar.

I was glancing at the March 1973 copy of "Piping Times" which you sent us, and my eye was caught by page 38 about the Black Watch.

The references to Tobruk are not quite correct. The Siege of Tobruk took place in 1941, not 1943.

Pipe-Major Roy did indeed play throughout the attack, but he did not lead the Battalion. B Company led the Battalion until it was almost wiped out, when D Company took over, suffering a similar fate. Pipe-Major Roy went into the attack with H.Q. Company, which was the rearmost Company to cross the startline.

Pipe-Major Roy was always held in very high regard in the Regiment, and his performance in Tobruk was not his only claim to fame. He was taken prisoner in Crete, escaped in Greece and made his way through Turkey and Syria, walking into the Officers' Mess to a great reception.

J. C. Donaldson.

Gentlemen,

Waltham, Mass.

I am very pleased to enclose my check for another 12 months of the "Piping Times". In my opinion this is a truly excellent little magazine and badly underpriced. It contains many articles of unusual technical value such that past issues are a reference source on all matters concerning piping. I would be very surprised if any of those receiving it would not consider it worth at least \$.50 a copy. With best wishes for your continued success.

Very sincerely,

John H. Lewis.

We sincerely hope they do consider it worth 50 cents a copy—or at least 40 cents, otherwise we're out of business.

Dear Sir,

Falls Church, Virginia 22042.

Your magazine is invariably interesting and informative, and is a worth-while contribution to the general knowledge of the instrument and its music. Of special value were Thomas Pearston's articles on tuning and the traditional significance of the notes of the scale (I believe this will give many pipers fresh insight into ceol mor), James Scott's "Tune of the Month" series, and A. J. Haddow and John MacFadyen's notes on piobaireachd structure.

Keep up the good work.

Sincerely,

R. P. Woolard.

Tigh A' Phiobair,

Luib, Nr. Broadford,

Isle of Skye.

Dear Seumas,

I write in connection with William Gray's article called "A View of Piping", published in the "Piping Times" September, 1973.

William Gray in his article says he only knew a few true pipers, and in the good old days as many would be found in a few square miles.

I do not dispute Mr. Gray's remark that in his day there were only a few good true pipers, but nowadays there are many true pipers, who are practically obsessional in their love of Ceol Mor.

He says that in Skye forty years ago there was not a master player and bemoans the fact that good piping could not be heard today in Dunvegan, etc. The situation has fortunately changed tremendously in recent years.

At the Skye Piping Society's annual piping competition held in Portree on the 26th September last, eleven boys and girls entered and competed for ceol mor. Indeed a few more could have entered.

Forty or fifty boys and girls playing the Piob Mor, seventy or so on the chanter, represents one of the most healthy conditions in the whole of the piping world.

Recently, due to illness, I was forced to resign as Skye Schools Piping Instructor, and Pipe-Major W. MacDonald of Benbecula was appointed in my place.

I would think that he is a master player and, as far as all-round good piping in Skye is concerned, I'm sure John Mackenzie, Uig, Peter MacFarquhar, William MacDonald (Benbecula) and my humble self are capable of good performances.

Piping in Skye looks very rosy and I am very optimistic for the future.

We are very fortunate to be living in this present age where piping is flourishing as never before, and the Education Authorities are appointing teachers of piping to various areas.

These gentlemen at present are doing a sterling job, and I'm sure they all agree with me when I say piping today is stronger than yesterday. Far more youngsters are playing ceol mor today than—yes, even in Patrick Mor's time.

Yours sincerely,



Farquhar MacIntosh.



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Gifts of old instruments, reeds, photographs, books, manuscripts, medals or anything connected with pipers or piping, will be gratefully received and carefully looked after. Anyone who would care to sell such items, or knows of anyone likely to sell them will be welcomed with open arms.

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Thank you for the very nice reeds you sent us a few weeks ago. The members of our pipe band are very enthusiastic about them.
Josien Wiegerinck,
Holland.

We appreciate this service. The reeds we have received from you over the last seven years, although from different makers, have been of uniformly excellent quality.

Thank you,

Paul I. Wellman,
Los Angeles.

Thank you very much for the order of chanter reeds which arrived early this week. All were in excellent condition, and all seem to have good tone. They are 100 per cent better than any I could get here.

Ian MacDonald,
Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada.

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