



Piping Times

Vol. 30, No. 9

June, 1978.



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A FEW COPIES OF VOL. 1 (1973) HAVE BECOME AVAILABLE.

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2. "Problems of Judging at Piobaireachd Competitions," by Capt. D. R. MacLennan and Major General Frank Richardson.
3. "Ceol Mor and Gaelic Song," by Mr. Finlay MacNeill and Mr. Jake MacDonald.

VOL. 3 (1975) IS SOLD OUT.

SOME COPIES OF VOL. 2 AND VOL 4 ARE STILL AVAILABLE.

VOL. 5 (1977) IS NOW PUBLISHED.

Vo. 5 contains:—

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Editorial



By the time this reaches the far corners of the piping world (Dawson City, San Diego, Fraserburgh) the Highland Games season will be looming very closely on the horizon. At one time this was looked on as the highlight of the piping year, the reason for the long winter's practice and the excuse for avoiding household chores liable to damage the fingers.

Nowadays the urgency and the excitement are somewhat abated, for we have competitions all the year round. The feeling of "one chance only and then a year to wait" has to a large extent diminished considerably. The affluence of pipers, resulting in the fact that everyone has a car of his own and travels separately to the contests, has sadly diminished the camaraderie and also the stock of funny stories. The pipe bands are fortunate in that they still travel by bus, and so presumably continue to enjoy the fun as well as the Games.

Nevertheless a touch of the old excitement still remains and the war horses still scent the excitement of the battle from afar. This is as it should be, because competition is still the spice of the piping life. The tour of the Games continues to serve not only as a stimulus to local piping but also as the melting pot in which the true steel is forged.

At one time or another these pages have carried many complaints and suggestions regarding the Highland Games in general. The fact that not so many moans appear nowadays should not be interpreted as evidence of the inevitable ageing of the staff, but rather we prefer to think of it as a sign that suggestions made in the past have been more or less carried out. The professional pipers themselves have of course been the men who made the changes possible, and inevitable. Prize-money has increased dramatically in recent years, and the equally important problem of conditions under which the competition takes place have improved so much that nowadays the status of the competing piper is very much higher than it has ever been in history.

In one respect however the new pipers' association is either very timid or is playing a waiting game—in the choice of judges who adorn the bench. Of course we have to appreciate that apart from Oban and Inverness, Mull, Skye and the Uists, our Highland Games are not run mainly to encourage piping, or even with

pipng as the central activity. Even although in most cases the Secretary is at least interested in pipng, his plans for the various events are influenced largely by other considerations. When it comes to choosing judges he may feel obliged to continue with those who have served him in the past, and this often works fine. He may feel that it is advisable to use local men of good reputation, and again this often works well. What really continues to surprise us is that some Games' secretaries continue to invite, year after year, people who so far as judging ability is concerned are unknown quantities or—worse—known to be incompetent, or biased, or both.

Solving this problem is a very big task, especially by the professional pipers themselves. But it is certain that they are the only ones who can. Many solve it to their own satisfaction by refraining from competing if they consider the judges inappropriate to the task in hand. This however is a miserable solution, lending itself to the interpretation that the competitor is in the first place only prepared to compete when he knows he is sure to win a prize, and in the second place attempting to influence the choice of judges for selfish and unsocial reasons.

The only true way for the task to be done is for the competing pipers to have a panel of judges and to say quite clearly that they will not play in front of any non-panel adjudicators. The pipe bands are again fortunate in that they have the system already set up. It would be impossible and even unthinkable for a pipe band contest secretary to engage any adjudicator outwith the approved panel. Every judge on their panel has gone through a training period and eventually a trial contest before being permitted to assume the responsibility of contributing towards the decisions. Surely it is reasonable to assume that the results of solo professional competitions are at least equally important, and that our top pipers should be given the same courtesy when they exhibit their artistic abilities.

SKYE GAMES instead of having separate march and strathspey and reel competitions this year, a march, strathspey and reel event, played right through, will be held in the Skye Gathering Hall beginning on the Thursday morning at 10 a.m. Competitors will play "The Ross-shire Volunteers" followed by a march, strathspey and reel of their own choice, and the event will be judged as three separate competitions.



FROM THE "PIPING TIMES"

Twenty years ago.

"In our thirteen years of teaching in the College we have found that there are seven main reasons why boys come for tuition. These are as follows:—

1. Because they want to become great pipers.
2. Because they want to entertain their granny the next time she visits.
3. Because they want to play in a pipe baun.
4. Because dad wanted to be a piper.
5. Because mum thinks pipers are wonderful.
6. Because the psycho-analyst sent them.
7. Because mum and dad want to get out to the pictures once a week".

Ten years ago.

"Creeping away quietly from the judges' bench I was caught up by events and placed at the head of a parade of Gold Medallists, who played me on to the train to the tune of "Happy Hae We Been A' Thegither". The guard blew his whistle and waved his little flag for ten minutes after the scheduled hour of departure, to no avail."—Colonel Neil Ramsay.

Royal British Legion Contest

It hardly seems seventeen years since the national piping competition organised by the Royal British Legion Scotland was inaugurated, but on Saturday, 6th May, the eighteenth of these interesting and entertaining events took place, and once again a great deal of piping was heard throughout the day.

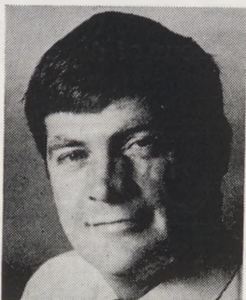
The venue was as usual the Royal Arch Halls, Edinburgh, and while it cannot be said that this is the ideal place to hold a piping competition, still it is probably as good as we can get at the moment. Tuning facilities constitute the main bugbear, and certainly in the hall downstairs the acoustics are not all that could be desired. The reverberation time must be fairly high, and so the hearing, appreciating and adjudicating of a performance is no mean feat.

Upstairs the design of the hall seems better for our purpose, but it also caused the pipers to have tuning troubles. Perhaps some experiments with curtains or tartan drapes could be tried out before the next piping event. After all, this is the principal hall for piping events in the capital of Scotland and attempts at achieving the best listening conditions would surely not be out of order.

As usual all the arrangements for the day were most efficiently managed by the Honorary Secretary, Major Charlie MacGlynn (who had the onerous task of making all the preliminary arrangements); by the Convener, Major James F. Scott Millar, T.D.; by the Chief Steward, Pipe-Major John Allan of the Queen's Own Highlanders, and by his many assistants, the students at the Army School of Piping in Edinburgh Castle.

In spite of the heavy sprinkling of top professionals, it cannot be said, unfortunately, that the standard of playing was all that high. In fact over all and for no apparent reason the playing was poorer than we have heard in the other competitions this winter, even although the prize-winners were more or less the same people.

It is hard to tell what causes a drop—or a rise—in quality at a particular competition. Some think that the first few players set the standard, and this may well be true, for if word gets down to the tuning rooms that the early competitors have struck gold, then perhaps all are inspired to reach the heights. On the other hand, reports of several mediocre performances may lead the later players to imagine that the contest is going to be a dawdle for them.



Iain MacFadyen.

In the piobaireachd event however Iain MacFadyen kept his head when all around were losing theirs. His "Clanranald's Salute" was easily the best performance of the day, and—so far as the audience was concerned—made up for a lot of disappointments, such as hearing top performers go wrong in their tunes.

Not too far behind was Andrew Wright with a splendid "Tulloch Ard," on again an immaculate bagpipe. Third prize went to William MacDonald (Benbecula) with a brisk "Lament for Mary MacLeod" which was marred for one listener at least by a particularly penetrating high G—which in this tune is bad enough at the best of times, even when gelded into acceptability by a considerate use of tape.

Fourth prize went to James MacIntosh playing "Lament for Donald Duaghal MacKay" and even although the lovely tune came singing through it was not, even in James's opinion, one of his best performances.

The March Events.

With the introduction of competitions for members of British Legion bands, there are now five different events for the playing of a march. One of the problems of course is that the number of pipers eligible to become members of the British Legion is becoming less as the years pass. Membership is restricted to former members of the armed forces, and with the wind-down of army recruitment the numbers are likely to continue to diminish. Several of the top pipers who played had been in the army only because of National Service, and this too of course has been abandoned for many years. The day may well come when there are as many competitors as prizes for the main events, but we can only hope that that is still in the far future.

Meanwhile, in order to swell the ranks and encourage the young pipers, events have been introduced for band members under fifteen years, between fifteen and eighteen years, and over eighteen years. These all added considerably to the interest of the forenoon session.

Confined march.

The march confined to pipers who had not won a major piping competition in Scotland produced nine entries, each playing his own choice of tune. The standard of playing was remarkably high, and the standard of instruments was exceptionally good. The worthy winner was Edward Clark from Aberfeldy, playing "Willie Gray's Farewell to the Glasgow Police" in fine rousing style. His tempo was perhaps a shade on the fast side but otherwise there was little to find fault with in this performance.

Second prize went to David Aitken of Edinburgh, who also played extremely well, although his timing was a little bit erratic occasionally. His style of "Pipe-Major John Stewart" was slightly different from the standard setting, in that he plays E to low A instead of a grip at one part, and plays D for C in the fourth part of the tune, but presumably these modifications were not held against him.

A very fine tune was also heard from William Grieve of Monifieth. His "Millbank Cottage" was as steady as a rock, played on a bagpipe which was something similar. A little more attention to expression would have been a help, and his double C at the end—like most pipers to follow during the day—was inaudible. Fourth prize went to William Hepburn from Turriff playing "Glenfinnan Highland Gathering"—a bit on the fast side, but on an excellent pipe.

Under 15.

Only three pipers played in the under 15 march, but all of them gave good accounts of themselves. Hamish Stevens from Strathspey played best, with again "Pipe-Major John Stewart". He was a bit stiff in the fingering, but perhaps the morning chills had not quite evaporated. Thomas MacDonell, also from Strathspey, played very well for a wee fellow, but he needs to blow a bit harder, and also practise his birl. Roderick MacIntyre from Hawick made the junior North American pipers' mistake (Canadian and U.S. Journals please copy) of getting his pipes tuned and then stopping and having another blow up before beginning the competition tune. What happened in this case is that one of the tenor drones was double toned and never came right throughout the performance, which was most unfortunate. He will certainly be a splendid piper if he keeps at it, but he needs to go and look at the score of "Glenfinnan Highland Gathering" because he is playing many notes wrong.

15 to 18 years.

Again three competitors came forward for this event and once more the standard was very good. The best performance was given by Stuart Samson from Montrose who played "Donald MacLean's Farewell to Oban" with great expression. He will have to be careful however that he doesn't fall into the habit of thinking that expression will get you everywhere, important though it is. A good deal of work is necessary on the execution, especially the birl and the double C.

Angus MacDonell from Strathspey played a pleasant "Kilbowie Cottage" but seemed to make little effort towards getting a real lift into the tune. Again however it is possible that he was suffering from cold fingers. Stuart Davidson from Kirkcaldy also needs to have a look at the book for "Glenfinnan Highland Gathering," and his playing would improve if he practised how to march better.

18 and over.

Four competitors played in the eighteen and over event and a very worthy winner was David Irvine from Hawick. He played "The Argyllshire Gathering" in a manner which promises well for the future, but unfortunately the effect of the pipe band with its uniformity of tempo and neutrality of expression was only too evident. He (and the others) should try to listen to the best of the solo professionals when playing marches, and realise how much light and shade is really possible.

David's twin brother Robert also played well, if somewhat casually, and the same comments apply. He gave us a most unusual low G for B in the third part of "Bonnie Ann".

Alan Veitch ("Edinburgh Volunteers"), also from Hawick and Sandy MacDonell ("Hugh Kennedy") showed good promise in their playing.

Open march.

The standard produced by the top men was very good, and surprisingly uniform, with about eight of the nineteen competitors being possible candidates for prizes. Premier place went to James MacIntosh with a fine rousing rendering of "Arthur Bignold of Lochrosque". The bagpipe was as usual in excellent form, and his tempo and phrasing were splended throughout.

Second place went to John Burgess who also played on an immaculate instrument, but not in quite such inspiring form as we are accustomed to hear. Perhaps "The Taking of Beaumont Hamel," although nostalgic and entertaining, is not the best of tunes with which to win prizes in premier competitions.

Third prize went to Ian Clowe, who gave his usual steady rendering on a first class instrument. His tune was "Leaving Glenurquhart". In fourth place came Andrew Wright, who played one of the best marches we have heard from him—"Colin Thomson"—with fine swinging rhythm and expression.

Others who must have been considered for the prize list included John MacDougall, David Aitken and Walter Cowan.

The strathspey and reel.

In this event each competitor was required to submit alternative strathspeys but was allowed to play his own choice of reel. This is an interesting system, but we wonder if anyone would ever have courage to try it the other way round—allowing the piper to play his own strathspey but letting the judges choose one reel from a fair number submitted. It might be interesting to see if the breakdowns occurred in the strathspey due to the worry of the reel coming up.

Again the standard was adequate, but only that. The results were as follows:—

1. John D. Burgess ("Delvinside" and "John Morrison of Assynt House");
2. John MacDougall ("Shepherd's Crook" and "Mrs. Macpherson of Inveran");
3. James MacIntosh ("Atholl Cummers" and "The Grey Bob");
4. Iain MacFadyen ("The Caledonian Society of London" and "Dolina MacKay").

The challenge trophies were awarded as follows:—The Tom Matheson Trophy and The Queen's Own Highlanders Jug for piobaireachd—Iain MacFadyen. The Sherriff Levitt Challenge Trophy for most points—

John Burgess in B.C.



The annual spring competition of the British Columbia Pipers' Society is the occasion for a short visit of a top piper from Scotland each year, and this time it was the turn of John D. Burgess to make a memorable return to the scene of previous glories. In addition to judging the annual meet John gave a recital which was his usual brilliant success, and also spent some time giving lessons to the aspiring young pipers of the province.

"The standard of playing," said John, "was exceptionally high. In fact I got the shock of my life when I heard some of these young players performing in the competitions".

The feature which is most noticeable over the past twenty-five years is the way the professional pipers have improved their standard. The junior and intermediate players have always been outstandingly good, thanks to the many fine instructors in the Vancouver area, but now the good playing is continued right up to the highest ranks.

The tremendous interest in piping in Vancouver is probably going to be a major feature of the piping scene in the next decade. Many of the bright young men are completely dedicated to the instrument in all its facets. Several are making reeds, and some are even making bagpipes, which indicates an overall interest found in few other places in the world.

The 46th Annual Gathering.

The gathering itself was held on Friday, 24th and Saturday, 25th March, at Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. As always, large numbers of pipers and piping enthusiasts were attracted from the west coast of Canada and the United States. The events lasted from 9 a.m. until 10 p.m. each day, showing the huge numbers of competitors involved.

Also adjudicating with John Burgess were James C. Yardley for piping and Robert Collins for drumming. The outstanding player in the professional events was Jack Lee who has already been heard in Scotland and plans to compete at the premier gatherings here again.

The results were:—

- Junior Piobaireachd**—1, Paddy MacNeil; 2, Maureen Lee; 3, Pauline Alakija.
Gordon Sinclair Memorial Trophy: Paddy MacNeil.
- Junior March**—1, Sharon MacKinnon; 2, Geordie Young; 3, Kim Smith.
- Junior Strathspey and reel**—1, Sharon MacKinnon; 2, Alison L. Duncan; 3, Pauline Alakija; 4, Roderick F. MacRae.
Trophy for best junior piper—Sharon MacKinnon.
- Juvenile March**—1, Brenda Barker; 2, Wesley Eaton; 3, Autumn Oberg; 4, Heather Lyle.
- Juvenile Strathspey and reel**—1, Brenda Barker; 2, Gordon Pollock; 3, Heather Lyle; 4, Gordon Redmond.
The Malcolm Nicholson Trophy for best juvenile—Brenda Barker.
- Amateur Piobaireachd**—1, Bradford Wakefield; 2, Alison Palmer; 3, Grant Wilkie; 4, Gordon Lyle.
- Amateur March, strathspey and reel**—1, Grant Wilkie; 2, Gordon Lyle; 3, Donny MacNeil; 4, Bradford Wakefield.
- Amateur Jig**—1, Gordon Lyle; 2, Bruce Gandy; 3, Alison Palmer; 4, James R. Robb.
Nicholson Trophy for best amateur piper—Gordon Lyle.
- Novice March**—1, Elizabeth MacKinnon; 2, Cameron Alakija; 3, Scott Shelley; 4, Barbara MacKinnon.
Glasgow and District Association Trophy—Elizabeth MacKinnon.
- Junior Quartettes**—The Walter Douglas Memorial Trophy—1, Penticton Pipe Band; 2, Richmond Jr. Pipe Band.
- Senior Quartettes**—The Douglas Trophy—1, Triumph St. Pipe Band; 2, City of Victoria Pipe Band.
- Junior Mini Bands**—John T. McHardy Trophy—1, Vancouver Ladies Junior Pipe Band; 2, Richmond Junior Pipe Band.
The John MacKenzie Memorial Trophy for Drumming—Vancouver Ladies.
- Professional Piobaireachd**—The MacCrimmon Memorial Trophy—1, Jack Lee; 2, Jamie Troy; 3, Mary Alward.
- Professional March, strathspey and reel**—1, Hal Senyk; 2, Jack Lee; 3, Steve Geddes.

Professional Jigs—1, Jack Lee; 2, Jamie Troy; 3, Steve Geddes.
The Mary MacLeod Collins Trophy for best professional—
Jack Lee.

Senior Mini Bands—1, Triumph St. Pipe Band; 2, City of
Victoria.

Drumming—City of Port Moody.

**The MacIver Memorial Trophy for the highest points in all
events**—Jack Lee.

The Roderick MacLeod Memorial Trophy—most promising piper
—Pauline Alakija.

ATTENDANCES SAG at meetings of the R. U. Brown
Piobaireachd Society of South Australia. The S.A.P.B. Associa-
tion Newsletter reports that at a recent meeting only four
members and two visitors were present. Jim Smith, Piping
Principal of the Society, had to play for most of the evening. An
appeal is being made for support for this important piping
activity.

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The Piobaireachd Society Annual Conference

by Muriel Clayton.

It's not all purity of piobaireachd at the P.S. Conference. Light relief appears in various forms, not least of which was the contribution this year from Mrs. Russell Clayton, one of the willing workers who do so much to ensure that the chores of administration do not spoil the fun of the gathering.

Muriel's singing was a big hit at the ceilidhs. This strathspey and reel was the favourite on the Saturday evening. The strathspey is sung to the "Caledonian Society of London" and the reel to "Mrs. Macpherson of Inveran".

At the Annual Conference of the Piobaireachd Society

Many folk are gathered in a very great variety.

We are met together, in most serious sobriety,

And all of us—well, most of us—well, some of us stay sober.

And the elders and the youngsters join in eagerly debating;

The whisky flows like water while the busy tongues are prating;

The honorary secretary's busy delegating;

We talk a bit, and play a bit, and drink a bit together.

From early in the morning the pipers they are playing,

And individual gatherings the arguments are weighing,

And nobody agrees with what the other speaker's saying.

But talk is cheap, and whisky's cheap—when other folk are
paying . . .

Och, and the piping and the singing at the ceilidh's so delightful,

The stories cause hilarity, the fun is never spiteful,

The fear-an-tigh will praise us, be we brilliant or frightful,

And some of us, you'll realise, are getting just a mite full !

On Friday we meet and greet, and welcome old friends brightly,

On Saturday the pipers play, and all must listen quietly,

On Sunday comes the A.G.M., which can't be taken lightly,

So ends the Annual Conference of the Piobaireachd Society.



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AIRTIGHT SEASONING

Donald MacPhee

THE FORGOTTEN MAN IN PIPING

by Seumas MacNeill.

Probably no period in the history of piping will see such changes as did the 19th Century. At the beginning of it, all pipers were Gaelic-speaking Highlanders, solo performers whose repertoire consisted almost entirely of piobaireachd. All teaching was by canntaireachd, for no piper could read staff notation. Indeed only the briefest of attempts—by Joseph MacDonald in 1760—had been made to record our music in this convenient form.

By the end of the century many of the pipers were not Gaelic speakers, many of them were not Highlanders, and some of them were not even Scots. Piobaireachd was still played by all the best pipers, and was paid due reverence by the others, but it was not now so popular as the new light music of marches, strathspeys and reels. All pipers used staff notation, and as a result publications of collections of tunes were popular and selling well.

In addition, the invention of the pipe band about the middle of the century had brought an entirely new dimension to our music. This was originally an army idea, and there are those who claim that the 79th or Cameron Highlanders were to the fore in this field also. Certainly the first recorded account of the existence of a pipe band is of the Cameron Highlanders playing on board ship in the gulf of St. Lawrence on their way to Quebec. By 1900 there were even signs of the combination of pipes and drums being taken up by civilians, notably the Govan Burgh Pipe Band, later—after many changes of name—to become the Strathclyde Police Pipe Band.

All the changes during the 19th Century were due to social pressures and the adaptation of the Highlanders to the kind of life they were forced to lead when their traditional clan system eventually disintegrated. Many men were involved in this adaptation, and we have learned to pay due credit to Angus MacKay particularly, with a host of others all adding their own contributions. One man however who seems to have been forgotten completely nowadays is Donald MacPhee, who was undoubtedly the most versatile piper of his day, or perhaps of any day.

Donald MacPhee was born in 1841, and according to the records he was a native of Coatbridge, which for those un-

acquainted with the geography of mid-Scotland, is a quaint little village to the east of Glasgow. He seems to have lived most of his short adult life in Glasgow however, and in some ways he may be looked on as the first of what came to be known before and after the recent war as "the Glasgow pipers". Not a great deal is known about his personal history or career, and part of the object of writing this is to stimulate anyone who has some knowledge on the subject to bring it forward, even if it is only second or third-hand, or heresay.

What is known is that MacPhee had a bagpipe manufacturing business in the Royal Arcade in Hope Street, Glasgow. At that time Hope Street was on the fringe of the country, for certainly there are photographs extant of Buchanan Street, three blocks east, showing it in 1870 as a country lane along which cows were driven to the pastures.

In spite of the Glasgow connection it would seem that Donald MacPhee had a close affinity with Argyll. The tunes he composed had often Argyllshire names, and his apparent friends included Donald MacPhedran from Lochfyneside, the grand-uncle of Archie MacPhedran later to become famous in Glasgow piping circles.

In addition to his bagpipe making business MacPhee was a very successful competitor round the many Games which were coming into existence at that time. According to Ronald Meldrum, who is one of the few of the old pipers to put his reminiscences into print, MacPhee in 1876 was the best piper in Scotland, excelling at piobaireachd as well as the light music. Meldrum was himself a pupil of the famous Calum Piobaire Macpherson so his opinion is not something to be dismissed easily.

MacPhee was also a teacher of piping, no doubt in his shop, and he was a compiler and publisher of pipe music. He published two collections of piobaireachd, a Tutor for the bagpipe containing a large number of tunes, and a collection of light music. These must have had some popularity during his lifetime because they were later republished after his death by Logan and Company of Inverness. His second book of piobaireachd contains two compositions of his own, "The Marquis of Lorne's Salute" and "Lord Colin Campbell's Salute". The former was dedicated to the Marquis of Lorne on the occasion of his being appointed Governor General of Canada, and the latter is dedicated "in commemoration of his election as M.P. for Argyllshire in August, 1878". It is perhaps of some interest to note that Argyllshire is spelt in the Glasgow way! (to be continued.)

Robert B. Nichol

"Say Goodbye to the boys for me." These were Bob's last words to his brother on April 4th before he passed away.

His death is a great loss to the piping world and especially to the many people who came from all over the world to Blacksmith Cottage for help and knowledge.

Bob was born in 1905 at Durriss, Aberdeenshire, and was first taught by a piper MacKellar, a pupil of MacDougall Gillies, who was later killed in the 1914-18 war. He was then taught by one



Bob Nichol with James MacIntosh.

of the Ewen brothers. The other brother, Jonathan, at that time was teaching the then young Bob Brown who was later to become Bob Nichol's life-long friend. He had a successful junior career and his first piping appointment was as piper to Lord Cowdray at Dunecht. It was from here that he moved to Balmoral as King George V's piper in 1924.

In 1926 when only 20 years old he had a shooting accident that resulted in the loss of his right eye, a shot from a fellow gamekeeper ricocheted off a frozen tree and hit him in the eye.

Later in 1926 King George V was anxious to have Bob given the best tuition and he consulted the factor at Balmoral, Sir Douglas Ramsay, and Sheriff Grant, Rothiemurchus, themselves both John MacDonald pupils. As a result Bob Nicol was sent

to Inverness to John MacDonald for a month that same year. and a nerve-racking time it was, as Bob relates. "When John MacDonald came into the room he gave me a good dressing-down for a start. He said 'You're no use to me.' In fact he was quite nasty to me for the whole month". But on the completion of his course a very good report was sent to Balmoral.

The following year he was accompanied by Bob Brown, and the visits continued every year until 1939. During this period Bob became one of the outstanding players, winning all the top honours including the Gold Medal at Inverness and Oban in 1930 and the Clasp in 1932. His medal tune at Inverness was "Lament for Donald Ban MacCrimmon," a tune he was later to play at the graveside of both John MacDonald and Bob Brown.

Throughout the 1939-45 war he served as pipe-major in the 2nd Gordons and ran a piobaireachd class for the 15th Scottish Division. He also taught at schools in America and Brittany.

He was a very good and firm teacher, a very likeable man with a sharp wit and pawky sense of humour. Dedicated to keeping the traditional piobaireachd alive he was undoubtedly one of the greatest and most knowledgeable men of our time.

The funeral was attended by hundreds of pipers and friends, and on a lovely spring day the cortege was piped through Ballater by Norman Meldrum, Braemar, playing "I got a kiss of the King's Hand," "Lament for the Children" and "Lament for Donald Duaghal MacKay". At the graveside Pipe-Major James MacGregor played the ground of "Lament for Donald Ban," a fitting tribute to a great piper who gave his time willingly to help others.

J. MacI.

LAST MONTH.

Many readers have asked if there is such a person as Fergus. If Perry Mason were asking we would have to answer that of our own knowledge we do not know, but communications liberally sprinkled with foreign stamps arrive regularly so we are prepared to believe that such a person does actually exist.

Tayside Pipers

The annual amateur and juvenile competition organised by the Tayside Pipers' Society was held on Saturday, 15th April, at Broughty Ferry, Dundee. As usual the signs of a very hard working committee were very much in evidence, and the society is to be congratulated on having generated so much enthusiasm among its members, and apparently the wives of its members too.

A splendid entry of young people produced a day of exciting competition, from ten in the morning till about 5.30 p.m. From the standard of play heard it is evident that the future of piping is certainly in very good hands.

The results were as follows:—

'A' Grade Piobaireachd—1, Paul Hutchison, Dundee, "Lament for Mary MacLeod"; 2, Brian Coutts, Dundee, "Kinlochmoidart No. 2"; 3, Logan Tannoeh, Sauchie, "Too long in this Condition"; 4, Steven Young, Livingstone, "The Battle of the Bridge of Perth".

'B' Grade Piobaireachd—1, Donald Campbell, Lawers, "The Desperate Battle"; 2, Lindsay Ellis, Dundee, "MacGregor's Salute"; 3, Finlay Clark, Strathtay, "Weighing from Land"; 4, Iain Melrose, Kirriemuir, "Glengarry's Lament"; 5, Andrew Leitch, Dundee, "Lament for Mary MacLeod".

'A' Grade March, strathspey and reel—1, Wilson Brown, Crieff; 2, Steven Young; 3, Brian Coutts; 4, Logan Tannoeh.

'B' Grade March, strathspey and reel—1, Lindsay Ellis; 2, Gordon Duncan, Pitlochry; 3, C. Walker, Bathgate.

'C' Grade March—1, K. MacCormack, Elderslie; 2, C. Murray, Dundee; 3, G. Walker, Bathgate; 4, A. Leitch, Dundee; 5, A. MacDonald, Blair Atholl; 6, M. Bennett, Bathgate.

Chanter—1, R. O'Neill, Dundee; 2, S. Cathro, Dundee; 3, I. Swaney, Dundee.

The Drummond Trophy for the best young player not in the prize list of the 'B' grade piobaireachd was awarded to Colin Mitchell from Crieff. The Murray Henderson shield for the champion in 'A' grade events was won by Brian Coutts of Dundee.

As a result of the competitions Donald Campbell was upgraded from 'B' to 'A' for piobaireachd; the three prize winners in the 'B' grade march, strathspey and reel were upgraded to 'A'; and all the prize-winners in the 'C' grade march, plus P. MacInnes from Glasgow, were upgraded to 'B' grade. At the close of the competition the prizes were presented by Mrs.

Drummond of Megginch.

A unique feature of this competition was that one of the judges was a lady, Mrs. Stewart, formerly Miss Jenny Doig. We have never previously heard of any member of the fair sex acting as an adjudicator in a piping competition, but of course there is no reason why not, and maybe we will see more of this in the future.

The other judges were Charlie Buick, William Dickson, Peter Forbes, Murray Henderson, Seumas MacNeill, Norman Meldrum, Tom Speirs and Harry Troop.

ARTHUR GILLIES has more than slightly handicapped himself for the games season by having the misfortune to break his arm. A simple fall in his home at Kilchrenan has meant that he will be unable to play until July.

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SATURDAY, 26th AUGUST, 1978,

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six prizes in each event.

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six prizes in each event.

**Entries to—G. C. McIntosh, Secretary,
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Music and the Bagpipe

by D. J. Sinclair, of Queensland, Australia.

The world is a strange place is it not? It appears to be divided into two parts. One part consists of the piping fraternity and the other consists of the anti-piping fraternity. Some of the latter pose as the former and amongst these are the alleged lovers of the great pipe who complain about it being played indoors. They claim the pipe music is "great at a distance". One wonders what they are actually listening to when the piping is "at a distance". Most people on hearing music, and liking it, head for the source and sit or stand close by, so as not to miss a note.

Strangely enough the lovers of pipe music "at a distance" will sit in a smokey ill-lit dining-room and put up with the most excruciatingly loud muck rendered by some bunch of unkempt, seemingly unwashed misfits and pretend they are really living it up and having a "fun time".

The true lover of pipe music will listen to it anywhere. As an illustration I would like to mention a singular occurrence in Brisbane many years ago.

One Saturday one of Australia's best pipers of years gone by was playing in the bar of an hotel. There were about 40 men in the bar at the time (this was in pre-women's lib days). A couple of fellows, not being pipe lovers, complained to the publican. This man fearing for his custom no doubt, told Johnny the piper to shut up. Johnny did so and held a conference with his pals. A plan was formed whereby Johnny and his two or three pals decided to leave the bar of the uncongenial host but in a fitting and proper manner. So Johnny struck up an inspiring march, and as one of his pals held open the door to the street, he proceeded out of the bar—accompanied by not only his two or three pals but the whole of the other bar patrons as well, with the exception of the two original complainers and of course the publican.

Johnny and his train proceeded to the street corner and marched across the street to a more friendly hostelry with the pipes sounding all the way.

So once more the pipes won the day. We should not worry too much about these people who "like the pipes at a distance". When we have the misfortune to have to suffer the presence of such people we should point out that they would be preferable "at a distance" also.

Another thing which galls me is the oft-voiced opinion that "pipers are seldom people with a broadly based musical education". The implication is that players of all other instruments are highly qualified musicians fully versed in the theory of music. So far as I can see, the theory of music is the same regardless of what instrument is played. The vast majority of the player's time is taken up with learning how to play the particular instrument. If he plays a brass keyed instrument it is more or less a case of "play one, you can play the lot". Stringed or bowed instruments must be similar. Drums, xylophone, piano, and glockenspiel appear to have much in common. Part of any musician's education consists of listening to music. The piper is urged to listen to other music so that his horizon will be broadened. Well, we often hear other music and that is why we are lovers of the pipe.

The sort of stuff we get in Australia is either "pop" on commercial radio or "other" on one of the Australian Broadcasting Commission stations. "Other" ranges from light, operatic, classical to the most curious, idiotic avant garde sort of drivel you can imagine. Much of this stuff is borrowed from your own B.B.C.

Generally people who play instruments other than the piper have to congregate in a group such as an orchestra. Many of them have only little bits of the music to play and seem to sit about most of the time until they catch the conductor's eye (or is it the other way around?). How dreary the practice sessions must be at home with only these fragments of the whole work to learn!

Certainly the piper should listen to other music if he has the time. But what he should listen to is the traditional music of his own land if he is a Scotsman, and to similar music of the allied Celtic countries.

I cannot see that he will improve the art of the Highland bagpipe by studying the piano with its tempered scale. All he will succeed in doing will be to deaden the acute sense of pitch which all good pipers should strive for.

Also, he should not play anything but good pipe music on the Highland bagpipe. Such efforts as "Jesus Christ Superstar" and some of the awful tunes in 4/4 time that are being foisted on us do nothing for piping.

I have seen in the "Piping Times" a fear expressed that piobaireachd or ceol mor will pass away because no new music

is being composed. There is a complaint in other musical circles that no great works are being composed, but would anybody expect the music of Bach, etc., to be heard no more because of that?

There is a tremendous amount of published material available now for the piper and most other musicians. Those who think a particular form of art will die must be looking at it from their own point of view and at a late period in life. Surely a young person just starting to learn the pipes (or any other musical instrument) has a lifetime of music ahead? Every tune they start on is new to them. Even if they have heard it hundreds of times, the tune they are starting on, the actual learning is a new experience. It is the older, experienced person who is under the impression that things lose their appeal to everyone, simply because he has lost his earlier enthusiasm. The person who comes along to learn to play an instrument does not do so because he likes a particular new tune. To him all tunes will be good because he wants to learn to play. The way to maintain a fresh outlook is to take each tune on its merits and do the very best with it and look for the melody and sentiment which the tune appears to express.

We should endeavour always to look back to what induced us to learn in the first place and place ourselves in the beginner's position and realize his reasons will be the same as our own were. As the late Robert Urquhart Brown once said, "You are never done learning".

I do see one possible danger to the general support which piping needs.

Many players in the past have been drawn to piping by the appearance of a pipe band on the march. This side of the recruiting campaign should not be overlooked. Unfortunately bands are not seen on the march so much now and the ability to march in step (and thus develop an acute sense of time and beat) appears to be in danger of becoming a lost art if it is not developed. Once again, it is the old experienced players who are getting too fat to march who are looking at things from their own selfish viewpoint. All those things which draw the young fry to piping, even the wearing of the kilt, should be worked to the full. Because once they are attracted, then they can be influenced into looking for the true satisfaction in the music of the great Highland bagpipe.

Trusting that my narrow biased views will annoy somebody,

David James Sinclair.

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Letters to the Editor

Dear Seumas,

Ardrishaig, Argyll.

I have been looking in my copy of Patrick MacDonal's Vocal Airs and my comments on the identifications queried by Colin Woodward in your April issue are as follows:—

Tune 2 identified as "Stable Boys". Part 1 is not. Part 2 is.

Tune 12 identified as "The Grey Buck". This seems to be different both from the jig of this name and also from "The Maids of Kintail". The latter well-known 6/8 march used to be known as "The Grey Buck" and may have had a common origin.

Tune 17, Part 1 is like another reel, the name of which is (I think) "Allan Mor," rather than the "Auld Wife ayont the Fire". Part 2 is like dozens of tunes.

Tune 9. This seems not to be tune 2 transposed, nor to be, as has been suggested, a version of "The Grey Buck".

Tune 24. This is very like another (inferior) setting of Tune 6. The key is the same.

The study of these is fascinating, but as Colin Woodward suggests, any conclusion must be some extent speculation.

Yours,

Archie Kenneth.

Dear Mr. MacNeill,

London, N6H 3Z4, Canada.

While cleaning up my desk I rediscovered the October issue of "Piping Times," and read again "Birls and Blobs, Part 2". For fun I looked at my copies of Ross's books, and found I have a different edition from either you mention. Mine has the three pieces by John MacColl AND a goodly number of blobs. It is published by Paterson's etc., London and Edinburgh (27 George St.) but bears no date. I probably bought it between 1946 and 48, so perhaps it is not fair to suppose Ross had to whip MacColl's tunes out quickly.

The blob tunes are the ones you mention, including the inconsistencies. Book 2 has blobs in a couple of tunes only, Book 3 (copyright in U.S.A. 1938) in 3 tunes, Book 4 (1943) in 3 tunes and Book 5 (1950, U.S.A.) blobs in 5 tunes. Ross's 1948 revision of Logan's Tutor has blobs in "Mrs. MacLeod". I could find no blobs in the Seaforth Collection, while they are common in Robertson's Tutor, along with many correct examples too.

I find I play some of the tunes written with blobs, but it never occurred to me to take them 'literally'. I just registered a birl sign.

Sincerely,

Pat Taylor.

Notices of Australasian Pipers

by Doug Thoresen.

MacKENZIE, ROLAND. Son of Simon (whom see). Had a background of Highland culture by his heritage. He did some Highland dancing and assisted by the instruction of his father and uncles he did quite well, but it was his piping days at the Dannevirke High School where he made good progress and became a successful solo competitor, winning events up and into "A" grade. He compiled a very good collection of manuscript tunes and did some composing, "Young Simon" being a well worthwhile march.

In or about 1950-1951 he went to Scotland and received some tuition from Pipe-Major William Ross, who encouraged him in march, strathspey and reel and piobaireachd playing. I can recall him making a fine performance of the "MacFarlane's Gathering". He was also closely associated with Pipe-Major Donald Ramsay, who was with the Edinburgh Police Band at that time.

Roland served with many pipe bands, including the Dannevirke High School, the Wellington Caledonian, Ruahine and the Dannevirke and District Band of which he became pipe-major, a post which he has held for some years at varying intervals. He attributes some of his earlier tuition to Laurie Sattrup (whom see), and is in demand as a judge of piping. He was a school teacher by profession but left this to enter his father's firm of Simon MacKenzie and Son.

MacKENZIE, WILLIAM. Brother of Duncan, James and Simon (whom see). Yet another dancer and piper of this talented family. It was however in the piping that he excelled. He competed with success among the great name players of the 1920's and 1930's. He became greatly demanded as an adjudicator of piping at the gatherings in the 1950's. He played very good jigs and hornpipes and I recall him playing the jig "The Tenpenny Bit" in a fine manner. He played for the Highland dancing in his latter years and was active in the Scottish Societies of Dannevirke, Waipukurau and Palmerston North.

MacKENZIE, RODERICK, of Wylies Crossing in the South Island of New Zealand. He was well taught by Duncan Cameron and became a New Zealand champion piper. Said to be an excellent "A" grade competitor and appeared regularly at the major gatherings, especially in Dunedin.



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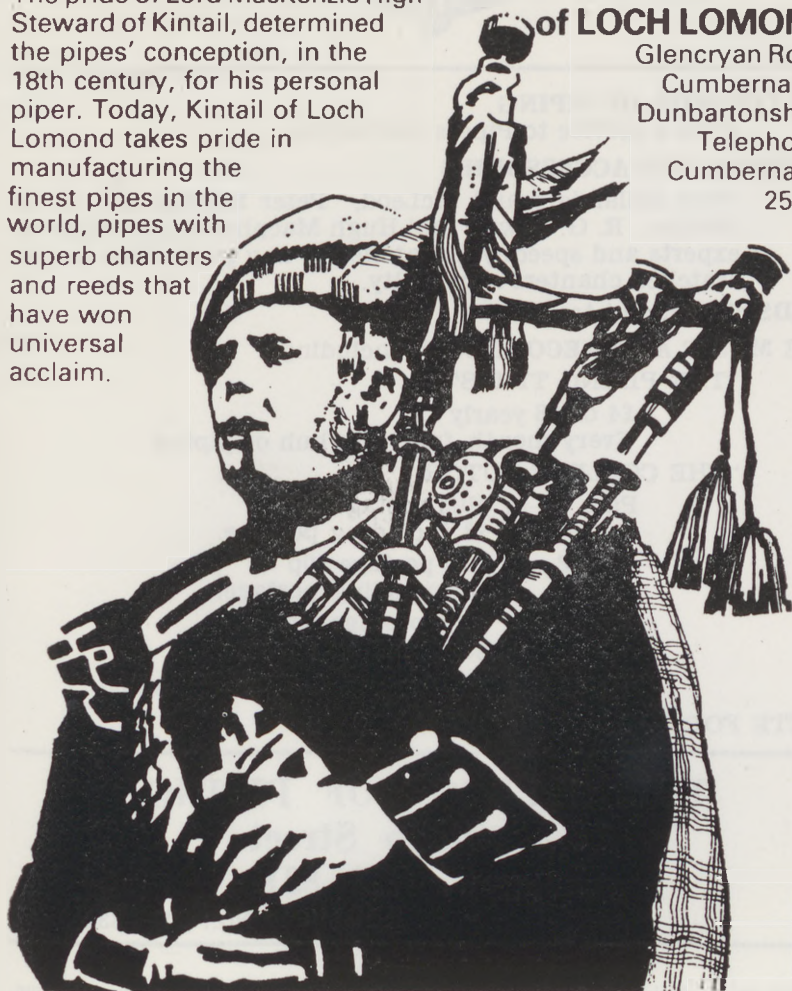
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