



Vol. 2, No. 6

MARCH, 1950.

# Piping Times

FOR PIPERS, BY PIPERS, ABOUT PIPERS.



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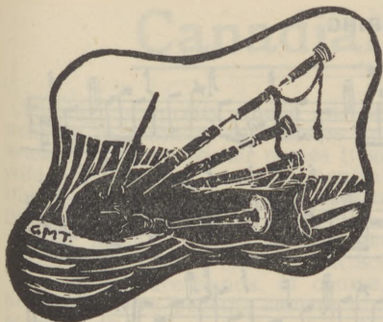
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# Piping Times

Official Organ of  
**THE LEAGUE OF YOUNG SCOTS**  
**COLLEGE OF PIPING.**

Vol. 2, No. 6.

MARCH, 1950.

## EDITORIAL

A prominent piping personality was commenting recently on the deterioration of piping standards, and was comparing present playing, adversely, with that of a generation or two ago.

The attitude is, of course, very typical of the Gael. From the days of Ossian we have been looking back and wailing because our heroes are departed from us and our strength is gone. Sackcloth and ashes are the real national garb. "MacCrimmon will never return" is the heart-cry which wrings a few tears into our whisky as we revel in the misery of our deterioration.

No great harm is done, provided we don't convert any outsiders of consequence with our attitudes. We can always impress the younger generation, or the incomers from some other art, who admire our expert performers, by saying how much better was so-and-so fifty years ago. In many cases we honestly believe what we say, because we have heard the champions of our own youth come to maturity and then (alas!) pass it, and the extension of a specific case into a generalisation is a small step.

But let us face facts occasionally. We are only pandering to our sentimental natures in bewailing the glories of the past. Pipers to-day are better than they were ten years ago, or fifty years ago, or at any time in our history. Robert Reid and John MacDonald were not as good as the MacCrimmons—they were better. To-day's pipers have all the recorded music and traditional knowledge of piping at their disposal, and they have the finest materials in the world from which to draw for their instruments.

Acceptance of the declining story of the

art is an excuse for lassitude and the acceptance of the policy of stagnation. The growing activity in the piping world requires a constructive and progressive attitude on the part of all with any influence, no matter how slight, on piping trends.

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## COLLEGE OF PIPING.

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DOUGLAS I.O.M. GATHERING.

A musical score consisting of six staves of music. The notation is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The music features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. There are several first and second endings marked with '1st' and '2nd' above the notes. The score is arranged in a single system across six staves.

THE ROSS BATTERY.

A musical score consisting of six staves of music. The notation is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The music features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. There are several first and second endings marked with '1st' and '2nd' above the notes. The score is arranged in a single system across six staves.



# Canadian News Letter.

Piping is pretty much a seasonal activity in Canada, and this is the "off-season." When winter comes it gets too cold outside, and with our central heating, too hot indoors to keep pipes in good playing condition.

Then piping indoors is not taken for granted to the same extent as in Scotland. Where there are bands, of course, halls and armouries become centres of piping activity. But summer here has its disadvantages, too. The heat is sometimes too humid and sticky for good playing.

**With all its drawbacks, I think most pipers prefer the North American climate. The summers are always warm. I for one, have memories of trying to keep my fingers warm enough to compete in Scotland, both outdoors and in some of the Glasgow halls.**

In those days Govan was well represented in semi-amateur competitions which sometimes developed into endurance contests. If there was a heavy entry we had to wait until the wee sma' hours for results, which meant that Govanites had to walk home.

## "IN THE ROCKIES."

Even in Canada, however, weather vagaries sometimes add an unexpected hazard at the Games. I remember a sudden snowstorm with freezing temperature which drove competitors into a small unheated hall at the Banff Highland Games, high in the Rockies. The only available place to tune pipes was a winding stairway to the gallery.

**And to the more or less muted accompaniment of pipers tuning on every step, the competition went grimly on in the hall. To the uninitiated the discord must have sounded like the twenty pipers at "The Wedding of Shon MacLean."**

The Banff Games petered out some years ago, but numerous other gatherings have since taken on a new lease of life. The Highland Gathering, in fact, seems to be filling the blank left by the decline of the track and field meet.

Pipers and bands are too widely scattered over here to bring them together in a championship meet such as is possible in Scotland. But Ontario and neighbouring U.S. States, with the help of the New England States, provide a close enough concentration of piping talent to make up a fairly well defined Games circuit. At least twenty gatherings are held every year in this area,

*"Canadian News Letter" comes in response to a request for some piping news from this side of the Atlantic. The writer, Stephen MacKinnon, is an old stager who started piping many years ago with the 102nd Boys' Brigade in Govan and later transferred to the 5th H.L.I. Going to Canada in 1911, he has been associated with pipers and piping ever since.*

which supports possibly fifty bands.

## BANDS IMPROVING.

A band contest is the feature attraction at most meets, but for the last three years a military tattoo staged by the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Hamilton, Ontario, has proved a big attraction. More than twenty bands—several of them from the United States—took part last summer, most of them staying over for the band contest on the following day.

**A memorial church parade on Sunday winds up this three-day meeting. The bands are billeted and fed by the Games committee, which also contributes a proportion of the travelling expenses.**

Our bands may not be quite up to the standard of Scotland's best, but they have improved greatly in recent years. Perhaps it may be possible in the not-too-distant future for our top-scoring band of the season to make the trip to Cowal.

## SCOTS VISITORS.

The presence of two piping celebrities from Scotland last summer added zest to the Games here. Archie MacNeill, noted blind piper and president of the College of Piping, on a visit to his son Alec in Montreal, travelled some 2,500 miles to judge at five meetings. His comments on the trip appeared in a recent number of the **Piper and Dancer Bulletin**, Canadian equivalent of the **Piping Times**.

John Wilson, well-known piper, formerly of Edinburgh, lived up to his reputation by taking most of the firsts on the U.S.-Canadian Games circuit.

He has recently taken over the band of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada at Hamilton from John Cairns, retiring pipe major.

Stephen MacKinnon.

# Trial or Competition of Pipers.

By William Gray.

"Glasgow, July 28th, 1841.

"My Respected Sojourner,

"Yesterday there was joy in this town. As many as twenty of the best pipers in Scotland competed with one another. They met in the Royal Play House at 12 noon, in presence of a full house of the lords, ladies, chiefs and chief rulers. Sweeter music no ear ever heard. Their name was made in days gone by.

There was at the same time trials or competition for dancing. They stepped quickly and turned briskly. Different from the awkward dancing of the Lowlander.

When the excitement was over, the Provost of the town stood up and, in the name of the judges, gave the first prize to Donald Cameron—set of pipes worth £10 (English) for playing of "Port Mor," and the 2nd prize to Duncan Campbell, and the 3rd prize to Archibald Finlayson, and the 4th prize to John MacTavish.

### For Dance Music.

The 1st prize to John MacBeth, and the 2nd prize to Duncan Campbell, and 3rd to William Gunn.

### For Dancing.

The 1st prize to Angus MacKay, the 2nd prize to Duncan Campbell, 3rd prize to Peter Comrie.

### For the Garb (Best Dressed).

The 1st to Angus MacKay, 2nd to John Ralston, and 3rd to Archibald Finlayson.

Over and above those, a book of poems was won by Peter Comrie for dancing "Gillie Calum," and to Angus MacDonald for dancing "Tullochgorm."

However, friend, although most of those present paid a crown (5/-) for admittance, yet if the same were taking place the following day hundreds would pay double the sum, 2 crowns (10/-) for the same performance."

Then follows four lines in Gaelic, of which the following is one translation:—

"That was the greatest desire of my beloved,

Sounding merrily the finest music.  
Quickly turning fingers, following on  
Strong and binding, as a harrows."

Another idea of the Gaelic verse:—

"The desire of my heart,  
Humming merrily, o'er all music ex-  
celling.

Quickly turning fingers, hold together,  
Quickly fingered, bind together."

"I forgot to mention that the distinguished Gael, William Campbell, brother of the Provost, Lord Thulaicheon, gave a banquet to all present in the evening, and he himself presided—MacTalla was in the company and gifted two books to each one present.

The Lord of Islay's piper, MacKay, then presented a book of Piobaireachd, which he himself composed, valued £1 15/-. Indeed, the close was not the least of the day."

The foregoing is from the pen of the Revd. Dr. Norman MacLeod in "Cuairtear nan Gleann." Scanning through the report of the competition, we do not find March playing figured as an item. Yet the compositions of Donald Cameron, Angus MacKay, Duncan Campbell and John MacBeth in marches are to-day barely equalled.

We also find that the piper of these days was equally skilled as a dancer, and that Angus MacKay took the dancing prize. Might I add that Sandy Cameron, son of the famous Donald Cameron, taught Neil Cameron, Glasgow (famous dancer and an excellent piper), who in turn taught Robert Cuthbertson of renowned fame.

It is unfortunate that Highland Dancing to-day is not more closely linked to piping.

# YOUR SET AND YOUR HEALTH

I think I might be correct in assuming that theoretically the bagpipes are an unhygienic musical instrument. Of course, like many another theory, this can be exploded when put to the test; and I may be correct in saying that our instrument performers are about the healthiest section of the community.

In other words I think the disadvantages are less than the advantages with regards to the health of the player—provided that he avoids certain points which I list.

First one which is probably obvious to most people. It is definitely bad policy to allow other people to blow your chanter or set of pipes. You should never lend an instrument, even to your relations, without taking at least some aseptic precautions.

I have seen pipers wiping the mouthpiece with their hands, believing that in doing so they have cleaned the saliva of the previous player. I may also add that if we all took a heavy dram before we play then the alcoholic fumes would certainly act as a deterrent to active germs.

## EMPTY THE BAG.

The precaution I would suggest is that every piper should carry his own mouthpiece in his pocket and replace it on the set of pipes which are to be played.

Before handling a strange instrument I would also see that as much air as possible is squeezed out. This would be the residual breath of the previous player. As a further precaution I would blow into the bag for several minutes before tuning up.

A thing which I think should be avoided is resetting the pipe chanter reed or drone reeds or wetting the flapper with your finger. Avoid oral contact of any description, and always wash your hands after handling a strange set of pipes.

There is a point worth mentioning about buying a second-hand set, and it is that you should scrap the bag and get a new one. Also wash out the wooden parts with soap and hot water. Give special treatment to the drone and chanter stocks at the point where they have been tied into the bag.

You can make things complete and buy a new set of reeds and a new flapper.

## USE MILD ANTISEPTIC.

The re-hemping of all the joints is another precaution which applies in buying a second-hand practice chanter. I would not recommend douching the parts with any strong disinfectant, as they tend to remove the varnish off the wood. A mild antiseptic could be tried—but in a weak solution.

To clean ivory it has been suggested that lemon juice is effective. Soap and water is a good substitute.

After thorough cleaning and drying of all the parts, the internal bore of the drones and other pieces should be given a light skimming of linseed oil to preserve the wood. A rifle pull-through is an excellent way of applying the stuff.

As far as I know, no bacteriological examinations have been done in connection with the piob mhor, which indicates that my hypothetical ideas of cleanliness may be all wrong.

However, experiments are under way by the College of Piping to try and assess the potential aspects of the bagpipe as a disease-carrying object. We all know that the virus of the common cold is acquired by being present in a large crowd. The air then is quietly polluted with bacteria and is transferred by droplets of secretion with the breath of other individuals.

## DON'T TAKE TO DRINK!

The story—which is worth repeating—of the Arctic settlement which had spent many months with a population free of the common cold until the arrival of a visiting whaler with an infected person aboard. The virus quickly passed from one to another and soon the people on the mainland were having an epidemic.

The bagpipe can be assumed to be dangerous if played upon by an individual suffering from the common cold or other respiratory infection.

In further articles I shall discuss the bacteriological aspect of the bagpipe as a medium for disease-carrying organisms, but in the meantime don't take to strong drink as an aseptic precaution!

# THE HISTORY AND ART OF ANGUS MACKAY

(Continued from last month).

By Archibald Campbell.

All four sons of John Mackay were pipers of great repute. Donald (1794-1850), piper first to MacLeod of Raasay, then to Clanranald, and then to H.R.H. the Duke of Sussex, took first prize at the Highland Society's Competition in 1822. His winning tune is not on record, but he played "The Stewarts' Gathering" at the preliminary "rehearsal," at which a short leet was selected for the competition proper. Roderick (1810-1854) competed unsuccessfully in 1826 and 1829, and was placed first in 1832, playing "The Bells of Perth." He was piper to Moray of Abercairney from before 1829, and latterly was a merchant in Kyleakin, where a local and possibly not unbiassed tradition describes him as the best player of the four brothers. John (1815-1848), also a skilled dancer, won 4th prize for piping in 1835, with "MacKenzie of Gairloch's Lament," as piper to Sir Robert Gordon of Balmoral. His rehearsal tune was "The MacLean's March." He was afterwards piper to Mr. Leslie, Invergarry, and competed again in 1844, being eligible under the rules only for a prize higher than 4th. He played "Queen Anne's Lament" and was narrowly defeated for 3rd place. Donald Cameron was 1st with "Seaforths' Salute."

Angus competed in 1825, when he was awarded 5/- for producing music written in staff notation, and in 1826, when he was placed 4th over the heads of his brother Roderick and several others, playing "MacKintosh's Lament." In both years he was described as a boy of 13, so his year of birth may be put down as 1812. He survived all his brothers, but, like them, died at a comparatively early age in 1859. In 1835 he competed again, and was 1st with "The Lament for the Union," having played at the rehearsal "The Lament for the Viscount of Dundee."

Thereafter he became piper, first to Campbell of Islay and then to Queen Victoria. The Queen records in her "Leaves from the Journal of our Life in the Highlands" that he entered her service in 1843, on the recommendation of Lord Breadalbane, and that he was about the best piper in Scotland. The only piobaireachd which he is known to have composed (apart from the variations

to "Colin Roy MacKenzie's Lament") is called "Farewell to the Laird of Islay," and is dated 1840.

He remained in the Queen's service until 1854, when he developed mental trouble and became an inmate, first of Bethlem Hospital, London, and later of the Crichton Institute, Dumfries. The official account of his death on 21st March, 1859, is that he escaped from the Crichton Institute and was drowned when crossing the Nith to elude pursuit. A tradition has it that he was playing the pipes on the river bank during a supposed lucid interval, and that he suddenly leapt a high hedge and disappeared into the water. An unlikely addition to this story is that an itinerant piper who frequented those parts afterwards was really Angus MacKay. As if John MacDonald, for instance, or William Ross, at the age of 47, could have hidden his identity under the disguise of a street performer.

After his death, Angus MacKay's widow disposed of all his music to Michael MacCarfrae, piper to the Duke of Hamilton—MacCarfrae, at his own death, left the more valuable portions to the Duke, and they still remain in the hands of his daughter, the Duchess of Montrose. Where Angus Mackay's pipes went is not known. They were made by his brother, Donald, on the order of Queen Victoria.

The four children were—the Rev. Angus, some time incumbent of the Episcopal Church of Holy Trinity, Edinburgh; John, who was in the Excise in China; and two daughters, one of whom was once a teacher of the piano in London, and gave a portrait of her father to the Scots Corporation. They and their mother appear to have dissociated themselves from everything connected with piping.

To one, only, of John Mackay's descendants did the family art come down in the third generation. This was Donald, son of Donald, who was educated at the Caledonian School, was afterwards taught by Donald Cameron, was married from Donald Cameron's house, won the Northern Meeting Gold Medal in 1872, as piper to Sir George Macpherson Grant of Ballindalloch, was a valued assistant to General Tomason in the compilation of *Ceol Mor*, and finished up in the service

of the Prince of Wales, afterwards King Edward VII. His only son died in infancy.

In 1838, at the age of 26, Angus Mackay published his famous book of piobaireachd music. It was prefaced by an apology for its delayed appearance, and so must have been compiled some time previously. It contains the music of 61 piobaireachds, abundant letterpress, lengthy prefaces, historical notes, dissertations on musical theory, instructions for playing, etc., and no evidence is known of his having been helped by anyone. The reduction of piobaireachd music into staff notation was then in its infancy. Donald MacDonald had been a pioneer, but there was room for improvement of his methods, and these improvements Angus Mackay effected. The book was accepted immediately by all pipers as their Scriptures, and their sedulous fidelity to it, in my youthful days, was sometimes grotesque. Things are a little more elastic now. Mistakes, such as are almost inevitable in collections of pipe music, are now recognised as mistakes and are not asserted heatedly to be gospel truths. Yet, speaking generally, the prestige of Angus Mackay's book still stands higher than that of any other book of pipe music, and probably, among those who are able to estimate its worth, as high as any other book on any branch of Celtic art.

Not a bad effort on the part of a youth in his early twenties, who as a boy of eleven had travelled from Raasay to Grieff on foot, and probably bare-footed.

His other published work was of a less notable character. He appears to have been one of those responsible for the comparatively modern development of the quick-step march as a serious branch of the Highland piper's art, and in 1843 he edited for Alexander Glen, Edinburgh, a collection of 155 marches and dance tunes called "The Pipers' Assistant," and long out of print.

Most of his unpublished work was included in the music sold by his widow to Michael MacCarfrae. That music consisted of—

- (1) Piobaireachd Manuscript, Vol. I.
- (2) Piobaireachd Manuscript, Vol. II.
- (3) Manuscript Music, Vol. III. (Marches, Strathspeys and Reels).
- (4) Manuscript Music, Vol. IV. (Reels, Jigs and other Dance Music).
- (5) Angus MacArthur's Highland Society of London's Piobaireachd Manuscript.

(6) Piobaireachd Manuscript found by Angus Mackay among the effects of his dead brother John.

Nos. (1), (2), (3) and (4) were bequeathed by Michael MacCarfrae to the Duke of Hamilton, who had them bound richly in green leather and stamped in gold—fortunately for us. They were taken to London in the eighties or nineties of the last century, where a copy of Nos. (1) and (2) (now in the National Library) was made for a barrister, Mr. P. E. Dove. This copy was acquired afterwards by General Tomason, and was one of the principal authorities for his work, "Ceol Mor." After the Duke's death the four volumes were lost sight of and were believed by everyone concerned, including General Tomason, to have been taken to South Africa by D. S. MacDonald, the Duke's piper, and lost there. Actually they were at the Duke's House, Easton Park, Suffolk, and remained unnoticed there for many years, until the house was sold in 1919, when, saved by their handsome binding from the fate of much other music, the flames, they were brought to Brodick, where they still are. What D. S. MacDonald did was to obtain the Duke's permission to copy a number of the piobaireachds with a view to publication, about 1882, and to take his own copy to South Africa, whence, after his death, it returned to this country and is now deposited in the National Library.

Nos. (1) and (2) contain 183 piobaireachds, all most beautifully written, with the strokes on the left of the notes, as in printing. They are evidently a fair copy from other material, for every tune ends on the last line of a page.

Nos. (5) and (6) were acquired by the late Dr. Charles Bannatyne from Michael MacCarfrae's daughter, and were bought from his estate by the Piobaireachd Society. No. (5) has been deposited in the National Library. No. (6), John Mackay's MS., has been greatly mutilated by extensive and variegated interpolations made by Dr. Bannatyne, who also was unable to keep his hands off No. (5). This vandalism is quite inexplicable, for Dr. Bannatyne had every appearance of being a genuine piobaireachd enthusiast, though of limited practical knowledge or practical ability.

Finally, we have the so-called "Seaforth MS.," written in 1854 in Bethlem Hospital, London, by Angus Mackay, and inscribed on the title page:—

"The following Highland airs for the private use of Keith W. Stewart Mac-

Kenzie, Esq., of Seaforth, are copied by Angus Mackay, piper to Her Majesty, from the original MSS. in his possession, as noted down by him from the Canntireachd of John Mackay his father from the year 1826 to 1840.—A. M'K. con-  
fecit. Apud. Bethlehemicum, Idibus Martiis."

The contents are 21 tunes, ten of them piobaireachds, all beautifully and accurately written, both headings and scores. If there is a tinge of eccentricity about the title page, there is nothing of the mental patient about the music. We have got a certain amount of information about the nature of Angus Mackay's disease, and this indicates that there were "periods of remission." Though inscribed to Seaforth, the copy evidently was intended for the use of his piper, Donald Cameron, Angus Mackay's friend and pupil, in whose family it remained until recently, when it was placed by the Piobaireachd Society in the National Library.

(To be continued).

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## COLLEGE NOTES.

### GRADING FOR FRIDAY COLLEGE.

**Grade I.**—D. MacNeill.

**Grade II.**—R. Aitchison, G. Brown, A. Donaldson, P. Lorimer, S. MacBride, J. MacCuaig, L. MacCuaig, A. MacDonald, K. MacLean, D. MacLeod, W. MacLeod, R. Malcolm, R. Polson, I. Reid, D. MacKillop, I. Riddell, J. Morrison, J. MacColl, W. Scott.

**Grade III.**—D. MacIsaac, R. MacKenzie, J. MacNaughton, R. Brown.

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### GRADING FOR WEDNESDAY COLLEGE.

**Grade I**—Norman MacLean, Calum Carmichael, Angus MacInnes, William Ross, Finlay MacNeill, Alex. Russell, Kenneth Torrance.

**Grade II.**—Kenneth MacLeod, George Robertson, George Grant, Archie Giffen, Alastair MacMillan, George Prophet, Michael Maley, Pat Struthers, Robert Lamb, John Gilmour, Iain Forsyth, Duncan Gillies, Hamish Macrae, Hugh Callaghan, Donald Graham, William Spiers.

The third group of the College began on Monday, 13th February. Applications for this group can now be accepted.

## PIPING SELECTION.

**CAMERON** Highlanders pipers played for Egyptian King Farouk when he was guest of Admiral Mountbatten aboard the Cruiser Liverpool, lying off Alexandria.

**SCOTS** piper has been invited to the international song festival at Feilnbach, Bavaria, in the summer.

**DURING** Glasgow's Cahrities Week, pipe bands figured in the students' shows. There were three in the big parade, including a fancy dress one, and British Railways (Polmadie) Pipe Band played at the variety show in the Tthenaeum.

**NEW** Zealander Jack Hudson, visiting Scotland to study pipe music, piped the touring Canadian curlers on to the rink at Crossmyloof in their match against the Glasgow team. Aged 28, Jack is pipe-major of the Dunedin Highland Pipe Band.

On their arrival at Auckland for the Empire Games in New Zealand, Colonel Usher entertained the Scottish contingent with some tunes on the pipes.

**MINING** village of Dundonald, Fife, has formed a pipe band again. The previous band, broken up during the war, were former Scottish Junior Champions. New band is composed mainly of boys aged about twelve, all of whom buy their own pipes.

**AMONG** the unusual dollar earners last year were bagpipes reputed to have been played by the clansmen at Culloden. They were included in Highland relics sent out to Scottish Societies in North America by a Glasgow firm of antique dealers.

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## WANTED.

A copy of John Wilson's Collection of Pipe Music. Please state price and condition of copy. Box No. 21.

Pipers (Lady or Gent.), interested in forming stage act; also would consider Financial Partner for paying business. Box. No 22 'Piping Times.'

## FOR SALE.

Full Size Pipes, £16; another £12; Chamber Set, £9; all guaranteed as new. Box No. 23, "Piping Times."

# A PIPER'S DIARY

by "THE CHIEL."

## JUNIOR MOD.

Among the many Highland Societies in Glasgow, one of the most active and enterprising is undoubtedly the Knightswood Highlanders. Last year their chief contribution to piping was the running of a composing competition (strange how we haven't heard any of the prize-winning tunes played since that night the prizes were presented). This year they have held a Junior Mod, and included juvenile piping. Unfortunately the date chosen was the same as the Amateur Championship, but a very successful contest resulted, and the society is to be complimented on its enterprise.

## NEW TUNES.

Composing contests are on the increase. The Knightswood one attracted over forty tunes. The "Piping Times" one closed with 76 entries, and now the Braemar Royal Highland Society is offering a prize of £25 for a 2/4 or 6/8 march, "suitable for massed pipe bands." The winning tune is to be called "The Braemar Gathering," and the copyright is to be the sole property of the society.

## PIPE BAND CHANGES.

At the recent general meeting of the Scottish Pipe Band Association, an important decision taken was the one to have judges under cover during the coming games season. This gives many of us the selfish pleasure of saying: "I told you so," and certainly to many of us the attempt to have judges in the open was obviously doomed to failure. Another way of looking at it, however, is that it was an experiment which was necessary at some stage, and the sooner it was made the better.

The other important event at the meeting was the appointment of Mr. Donald MacIntosh as Honorary Secretary. Mr. MacIntosh has a distinguished career in the S.P.B.A., having been a founder member, a former secretary and a past president. His election to this key position is one of the most encouraging signs of the returning amity and constructive

activity for which outsiders have been looking.

## RADIO HIGHLIGHT.

The article on the B.B.C. last month, by MacGregor Kennedy, seems to have surprised quite a few people, and unfortunately for his arguments, I have to comment this month on one of the best piping broadcasts in a long time—the old tunes of South Uist, played by John MacDonald. This was one of the most interesting twenty-minute periods we've heard, with a real atmosphere of the old ceillidhs and (I think) thirty-two tunes played in expert fashion.

## GAMES PREPARATIONS.

South Uist as a centre of piping has been brought very much to our notice recently. John Garroway pointed out in these pages the tremendous impetus that was given many years ago and the results which can be seen to-day. Young Rona and Neil MacDonald showed us at the Amateur Championship that the young players from the Western Isle are second to none. Because of the great local players, the South Uist Games are looked on as one of the finest tests, second only to Oban and Inverness. This year, I am told, the games will be extended over two days, with the Ceol Mor event on the first day and other events on the second day.

## PROFESSIONAL NOTE.

A note from the secretary of the Professional Pipers' Association reminds me that many people must be already thinking of the summer piping competitions. The annual meeting of the P.P.A. is due again next month, when the general policy for the year will be considered. After a somewhat stormy start, we now accept the Association as an essential body in the build-up of the piping world.

## SICK LIST.

Friends of Archie MacNeill will be sorry to hear that he is at present spending a spell in the Royal Infirmary, Glasgow, suffering from blood poisoning. His condition is, however, quite satisfactory, and we hope it won't be long before he is up and about again.

# The Amateur Championship.

The second annual contest for the Dunvegan Trophy and the title of "Amateur Champion" was held on the 28th January before a large and appreciative audience in the Boys' High School, Glasgow. Fourteen of the best amateur players had entered, and provided about six hours of most enjoyable piping. The playing was of a very high standard, and the judges, John MacLellan and Ronald MacCallum, had the usual very difficult task.

Although all competitors gave admirable performances, two were quite outstanding. Hector MacInnes, taught by Peter Bain, leaped from the comparative obscurity of Junior status to become the 1950 Amateur Champion. With first prizes for Ceol Mor, Strathspey and Reel, and Slow March, and second for March, he gained 24 points out of a possible 30, and was a clear winner over George Bannerman, who was runner-up. This success is even more outstanding when one considers that he was competing against practically the same opposition as John Burgess encountered last year when he tied with John Finlay for the premier honour. Admittedly John Finlay did not put up the same excellent opposition as last year, but proportionately Hector MacInnes's achievement is still the most convincing win of an amateur champion.

The other outstanding competitor was young Rona MacDonald from South Uist. Rona, with her brother Neil, who is also a fine player, travelled a long way to demonstrate the fine playing of the young people from the schools of piping in the Outer Isles, but there was more to her performance than that. At 13 years of age, she displayed a finger dexterity and control of technique, particularly in strathspey and reel and jig playing, which placed her in the category of future champions, and brought an enthusiastic response from the audience such as has not been seen for years. "As good as Burgess at his age," is no exaggeration. Her "Donald MacLean" jig was a fitting climax to a fine day's playing. This is a young lass we shall be hearing a lot about in future.

Other players to do well were—Donald Murray (11 points), William Connell (9 points), Nettie Davidson (8 points).

Commenting on the Ceol Mor playing, John MacLellan remarked on the high

standard of the playing, but suggested that attention should be paid to the performance of the taorluath and crunluath movements. Not enough care was being taken in producing the initial low G each time.

The adjudicators also extended their sympathy to William Connell, who played excellently but made a slip in the crunluath a mach, and to Dan MacDonald, who made a fine job of the "Lament for the Only Son" but had a reed which squealed on low A.

Among prizes presented were Kilberry Books of Ceol Mor, by R. C. Lawrie, Ltd., and Robert Reid; pipe chanter by Grainger and Campbell; practice chanter's by Piobmhor Highland Industries, Peter Henderson, Ltd., and Williamson and Jeffrey. Duncan Macrae & Son presented a pipe bag, and Thomas Fitzpatrick donated a handsome sporrán.

The platform party consisted of Thomas Pearston (chairman), Miss Joynson of Altskeith, Major Bourne, Mr. J. MacColl, Mr. H. MacColl, Dr. Kenneth MacKay, Mr. Hugh C. R. Macrae, Mr. A. Sheath. Miss Joynson presented the prizes.

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## Results.

**Ceol Mor.**—1, Hector MacInnes ("MacCrimmon's Sweetheart"); 2, Donald Murray ("MacLeod of Raasay's Salute"); 3, James Thomson ("Massacre of Glencoe"); 4, George Bannerman ("MacFarlane's Gathering"); 5, John Finlay ("The Battle of Auldearn").

**March.**—1, William Connell ("Highland Wedding"); 2, Hector MacInnes ("Abercairney Highlanders"); 3, Nettie Davidson ("74th's Farewell to Edinburgh"); 4, Archibald Martin ("Donald Cameron"); 5, Daniel MacDonald ("Pap of Glencoe").

**Strathspey and Reel.**—1, Hector MacInnes ("Maggie Cameron," "The Flaggie Cameron," "Sandy Cameron"); 2, Daniel MacDonald ("Blair Drummond," "Pretty Marion"); 3, James MacInnes ("Shepherd's Crook," "Thomson's Dirk"); 4, Archibald Martin ("Maggie Cameron," "Duntroon").

**Slow March.**—1, Hector MacInnes; 2, William Connell; 3, John Finlay; 4, Wm. Gillies; 5, Daniel MacDonald.

**Jig.**—1, Nettie Davidson; 2, George Bannerman; 3, Donald Murray; 4, John Finlay; 5, William Gillies.

# Scottish Pipers' Association.

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

The Annual General Meeting of Glasgow Pipers' "Club" was held on Saturday, 25th February. The Annual Report showed a slight loss on the year's running, but there was still a respectable balance of over £300, and the membership of about 100 ensured a confident future.

The election of Office-bearers was as usual a most important item on the Agenda. Dr. Matheson was again elected Honorary President, with Hamish MacColl as President once more. The important positions of Secretary and Treasurer produced considerable difficulty, since both Calum Ferguson and Kennedy Stove were at first unwilling to seek re-election to the strenuous tasks they have fulfilled in the past year. A number of alternatives were proposed, including temporary election, but finally the

two retiring officials agreed to carry on for another year.

Major Muir proposed the appointing of representatives of the S.P.A. in all parts of the country, with a view to developing piping activities in other districts. It was pointed out that Piping Societies already existed in Aberdeen, Inverness, Edinburgh, Dundee, etc., and that the Glasgow Club could not interfere in their regions.

A suggestion then followed that an effort should be made to enrol as many members throughout Scotland as possible, with a view to making an approach to Highland Games promoters in an effort to improve conditions for competing professional pipers. Pipe-Major Robert Reid pointed out that the Professional Pipers' Association was already dealing with this aspect, and it was therefore agreed to leave the matter to them.

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## RADIO HIGH LIGHTS.

Monday, 6th Mar.—6.35-6.50 p.m., Piping.  
Charles D. Scott.

Monday, 13th March—6.35-6.55 p.m., Music for the Bagpipes. "Army Tunes," played by Pipe-Major J. A. MacLellan (recorded). Introductory Notes by Seumas MacNeill.

Monday, 20th March—6.35-6.50 p.m., Pipes and Drums. Rutherglen Pipe Band (recorded). Pipe-Major James Baxter.

Monday, 27th Mar.—6.35-6.50 p.m., Piping.  
Seumas MacNeill.

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## JUDGE THE TUNES CONTEST.

This month we again print two of the short leet from the record entry of tunes in our composing competition.

Two well-known pipers have consented to act as judges in this contest, and are in process of selecting what they consider the best tunes.

Prizes will be awarded to readers whose order of merit of tunes is the same as, or nearest to, that of the judges.

### Do not send in your list yet.

Next month will appear full details of when and how to send your entry.

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To the Editor, "Piping Times," Glenara, Whitehill Avenue, Stepps.

Please send me the next twelve issues of the "Piping Times." I enclose P.O. for 7/-.

Name .....

Address .....

# Letters to the Editor

## PROTESTS.

Sir,—I protest against the suggestion that your correspondent, J.C.M., should be fed to me. A man from Angus should know better.—Loch Ness Monster, President Loch Ness Monster Protection Socy.

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Sir,—I have just attended the Senior Amateur contest and should like to make a few observations concerning same.

Firstly, is it not a slight to the integrity of the judges to place them behind a screen? When persons are invited to judge a contest, surely the invitation is only extended to trustworthy persons.

As for the verdicts of the judges, with which I did not entirely agree, it is perhaps just as well they were behind a screen, because, according to some well-known piping personalities present, the judges were asleep and did not hear the competitors at all.

The main difference between the piping of the South Uist School and the College pupils was that from the former we had proper Taorluath and from the latter we got a muffled combination of GDE grace notes with little or no bottom G whatsoever. This applied to all the College pupils, therefore one is forced to the conclusion that the fault lies with the instructors at Pitt Street.

Lastly, the marching and deportment of the majority of the competitors was deplorable. Especially was this noticeable in the slow march, where very few competitors even attempted to march to the time they were playing.

With best wishes to the College of Piping and to "Piping Times"  
Hamilton. James Russell.

[Our correspondent is under a misapprehension. Only one member of the College of Piping took part in the Amateur Championship.—Ed.]

## TRIBUTES.

Sir,—It was with great pleasure I read in your January edition the stirring tribute so aptly paid to P/M. Donald MacLeod. Though not attending Oban, 1949, I do not hesitate to claim that Donald's performance on the "Tuning Slab" was no more, no less, than his usual natural technique.

Attending Aboyne Games, 1948, I first had the pleasure of listening to what I term the piping wonder of the age. Piobaireachd, march, strathspey, reel and jig flow from his chanter with equal accuracy, versatility and freedom from effort.

Many great masters have gone before; they may lie content in the knowledge that their country's musical tradition is being maintained at such a high standard by young masters such as Pipe-Major Donald MacLeod, Seaforth Highlanders.

Best wishes to your interesting Magazine.

Forfar. Fred. Meldrum.

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Dear Sir,

It is with pleasure that I renew my subscription for a further twelve copies of your excellent paper. It has indeed been a great pleasure to the reader and an outstanding achievement in the piping world. Since the outset I have had all three papers on piping, and it is without hesitation that I put the "Piping Times" foremost. Long may it continue its good work.

Arbroath. G. Smith.

## KNIGHTSWOOD HIGHLANDERS JUNIOR MOD.

Adjudicator: William Gray.

**March.**—1, John Graham, Avonbridge; 2, John MacPhee; 3, Iain MacFadyen, Glasgow.

**Strathspey and Reel.**—1, Norman Gillies, Glasgow; 2, Iain MacFadyen, Glasgow; 3, Thomas Shanks, Glasgow.



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