



Piping Times

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COVER PICTURE: ALLAN DODD, NEW ZEALAND—see page 23

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Editorial

The eternal problem of judging had a new (once again) look this summer, particularly where the pipe bands were concerned. One must always give A for effort and credit for trying, but according to all accounts—at least from the ranks of the pipebandsmen—this was one of the poorest experiments so far.

Of course the trouble is that even if the perfect system of judging pipe band performances could be found it would be changed within a year or two. All bands have a more or less equal say in what system will be used; there are more losers than winners in any contests; and it is natural for changes to be sought which will increase a band's chance of success. So changes are absolutely inevitable. If we had sense we would resign ourselves to the situation, but at the same time we should ensure that no scheme doomed from the start should even be attempted.

The plan this year—so far as piping was concerned—was to cut out either the highest mark or the lowest mark in each contest. Which it was to be was decided by drawing from a hat at the start of the event.

The system meant that it would (and on occasions did) mean that one judge might as well have stayed home. The intention was to eliminate the effect of the judge who had a particular bias in favour of, or against, a particular band, which is an admirable sentiment but the cure was worse than the disease.

No doubt the inspiration came from the Olympics system for the judging of skating or gymnastics. There however they have the luxury of very many judges, and if one of them contributes nothing then little is lost.

As for drumming the system was even worse. After the drumming judge had awarded his points the various drum corps were put in order of merit and re-marked so that there was exactly a quarter of a point between each one. Some (mostly pipers) may applaud this idea because it means that drumming can never decide the result of a contest, but surely this must discourage the good drummers and lead only to disheartened mediocrity in the back ranks.

One wonders if any solution exists to the perennial problem. The aims are praiseworthy—to cut out bias and to let each judge contribute equally to the final result. In addition at the end of the day justice should seem to be done. Perhaps even these simple requirements are too much for our complicated human natures.

The Northern Meeting

by Seumas MacNeill

Many years have gone by since I first attended the great piping competitions at Inverness. In these days the pipers all travelled by train, sociably. The date was towards the end of September and all the contests were out of doors.

A thing I remember clearly about that far-off occasion was the atmosphere in Inverness on the night before the actual Gathering. It seemed that wherever one walked, in this small, dark, Highland capital, the sound of the bagpipe followed from street to street. There was no gaiety or hilarity, just the quiet music as pipers prepared themselves gently for the forthcoming battles.

In an effort to recapture this almost forgotten atmosphere I ventured out for a stroll in the teaming metropolis that Inverness has become. A drive of three-and-a-half hours along mostly splendid roads had brought me from the deep south, and a quiet walk to clear the head seemed a good idea.

Alas however for memory. Instead of darkness and quiet the streets were alive with lights, cars, tourists, and even normal people. A banner across Church Street proclaimed a meeting of the Ancient Order of Shepherds. At one time that banner would have mentioned piping, and although we were assured later that there were indeed advertisements around for the famous Northern Meeting we failed to notice any.

The County Hotel has gone, the Northern Meeting rooms are no more, one-way streets are a frustration and a menace to health, the Cally takes 'bus tours, but the Crit, Cummings, the suspension bridge and the river are still there. What the hell, I said to myself as I turned back in search of kip. Probably Calum Piobaire felt the same way at one time too.

The Gold Medal

In the morning things always seem brighter, and at least the competitions had moved back to the correct side of the River Ness. There in the Eden Court Theatre a new home had been found for the top competitions, and an excellent one it is too. No more dashing between halls, pubs and tearooms—they are all under the one roof. The weather was excellent with warm sunshine, the pipes all sounded great and old friends from the hills and glens, from Delaware, Dundee and Dunedin, from Johnstone, Jacksonville and John O'Groats had gathered for the tunes and the chaff.

According to later comments it was not felt that the standard in the first of the piobaireachd competitions was all that outstanding, but this rather surprised me because I thought that the prize-winners at least played up to what we have come to expect. That might well be taken two ways, but one must not imagine that all the great players of the past were great players from their earliest youth—most of them achieved greatness



and many were honest enough to admit that they won good prizes long before they really knew what it was all about. The Gold Medal is not a competition for experts, only for future experts.

First prize went to young Jack Lee from British Columbia, as nice a young man and as good a piper as you will come across in a long day's flying. His tune was "Black Donald's March", and he gave a fine, steady performance with excellent fingering on a first-class instrument. Maybe the tune was a trifle studied and careful, perhaps a good copy of his master's playing, but this is perfectly acceptable and enjoyable—the touches of genius will come later.

In second place came Iain Hines from New Zealand, his tune being "The Finger Lock". This was a well controlled performance with no obvious flaws and no outstanding brilliance, again a credit to both the teacher and the learner.

Having seen the two major positions going abroad the Scots were happy to discover that they were able to secure the remaining three prizes in this event. Hearing the result and remembering the editorial of the August Piping Times, we began to realise that it's later than we thought.

Robert Barnes of course has, in John Burgess's phrase, "A fine pair of claws", indeed two of the best hands in the business. His rendering of "The End of the Great Bridge" was bright and brisk as befits one of his natural talent, but possibly he needs some more sophisticated study of the tunes before he brings the very best out of them.

Fourth place went to Colin Drummond with a very good rendering of "Squinting Patrick's Flame of Wrath"—a little light on the low G's at time and the hiharin had not enough of the D gracenote throughout.

Evan Macrae took fifth place with a good interpretation of this same tune.

Of those not placed Pipe Major Angus MacDonald gave a fine rendering of the "Finger Lock", and Finlay MacNeill and Jackie Pincet showed as always that they have the big music in their souls. Dr. Angus MacDonald may have played well, but we were all sick of his long tuning—especially the judges who had to send for the steward to instruct him to get on or get off. Dr. Angus is not likely to feature in invitation events—no matter what prizes he wins—until he learns to keep his tuning down to reasonable proportions.

Malcolm Macrae was a bit disappointing with the "Prince's Salute", favouring a cack-handed interpretation which obviously did not find favour. Patricia Henderson also was not up to her high standard in "The King's Taxes" and John Hanning disappointed with some elementary finger faults in the same tune.

Robert Wallace gave a weird rendering of "Black Donald's March", played in strict waltz-time throughout. It is hard to imagine that Donald Balloch could have done a modern waltz all the way to the first Battle of Inverlochy in 1427. The fault arose of course from playing the low A's short, instead of in the majestic firm style favoured by John MacFadyen, who won two Gold Medals with this tune.

Wilson Brown gave a quite enjoyable performance of "The Gathering of the MacNabs" although his taorluath movement was a bit weak and

his crunluath a mach was rushed.

The judges were John D. Burgess, William M. MacDonald and James McIntosh. If ever a Cameron Highlander would have felt at home in a competition surely this was it.

One of the judges originally chosen for this event was Pipe Major John M. MacKenzie and it is of interest to note that John withdrew from the judging panel when he discovered that he was down to judge both the Gold Medal and the Clasp events—on the grounds that he could not, in the time, master thoroughly all the 16 prescribed tunes. Full marks to John, for we have known judges in the past whom this would not have worried one whit.

The Silver Medal

While all this was going on, the Silver Medal event was taking place in the Boardroom, judged by Donald Bain, Iain MacFadyen and Mr. Norman Mathieson. Once again a Canadian came out on top—young Amy Goble from Ontario who competed a few years ago in Scotland but has matured tremendously since then.

In second place came Roderick MacLeod from Glasgow with Leslie Watson from Annan third and the first American prize-winner to be announced, Peter Kent from North Carolina, in fourth place.

The competition on the whole was not of a high standard but Amy was a very worthy winner and the other prize-winners all performed well. Scotland had managed a second and a third which was not so bad.

The result then was:—

1. Amy Goble, 2. Roderick MacLeod, 3. Leslie Watson, 4. Peter Kent.

The March

Better was to come for the home country in the March Grade A competition where all four prize-winners were from Scotland—provided we are allowed to count Murray Henderson nowadays. Some very good tunes, well expressed on excellent bagpipes, were heard in this event and Dr. Angus MacDonald's rhythm and expression in "The Braes of Castle Grant" were a joy to hear—BUT. The but is a big one, nothing less than crossing noises.

By this time you may think I have something against Dr. Angus, but not so. I have the highest admiration for his innate musical sense, his marvellous fingering and his splendid expression in tunes. All this however goes for nothing—or should go for nothing—if the execution is not clean, distinct and free from false notes.

My diagnosis of the good doctor's disease is that he plays too fast too often for the entertainment of non-pipers. My suggested treatment would be to slow down and stay away from the ceilidh bands.

The result was:—

1. Dr. Angus MacDonald, Glenuig, 2. Murray Henderson, Angus, 3. Allan MacDonald, Glenuig, 4. Robert Wallace, Glasgow.

The judges were Capt. Iain C. Cameron and Dr. Robert Frater.

The B Grade March was a triumph for that excellent young piper Pte Alasdair Gillies, formerly of Ullapool but now of the Queen's Own Highlanders. The American challenge again made itself felt with two of

the four prizes going to them. Tom Morris from Glasgow, a piper for whom we have the highest admiration but who does not compete enough to get the fine edge on his playing, made up the other prize-winner.

The result was:—

1. Pte Alasdair Gillies, 2. Mike Cussack, Houston, Texas, 3. Tom Morris, 4. Albert MacMullin, Georgia, U.S.A.

The judges were Robert G. Hardie and Capt. John MacLellan. So ended the first day.

The Clasp

The event which attracts the greatest interest at the Northern Meeting is inevitably the Clasp Competition for holders of the Highland Society of London Gold Medal. This says a great deal for the musical taste of people residing in the north of Scotland, because although the large audience contains many recognisable piobaireachd enthusiasts, a high proportion of those who crowded into the auditorium first thing on Friday morning were, in the narrow view of a southerner, native to Inverness and district.

Early to play of course is not an envied position, and it was not until Duncan MacFadyen produced a very musical "Donald Gruamach's March" that we began to sit up and take notice. The tunes set were of course all very long and difficult, so that in addition to the task of interpretation there was also the very real problem of endurance, both for the piper and the instrument.

Hugh MacCallum was given the monstrous "Lament for the Union", and there is probably no one more suited to take us through the very musical ground and its eighteen mind-wrecking variations. Rumour has it that Hugh went slightly astray at one point but only a judge who, in General Frank Richardson's phrase, was doing his factory inspector act, would have noticed.

The veteran Donald Macpherson came to play "The Daughter's Lament", and a fine job he made of it too. As always he got the bagpipe in perfect tune before starting and it stayed that way throughout, but very surprisingly he was not blowing out the high A properly. A slight croak was acceptable in some quarters a generation or so ago, but not now. Otherwise it was technically an outstanding performance although musically it had its flaws—as in his abrupt endings of the singlings and the trace of what Colonel Grant used to call the lazy Glasgow habit in taorluath and crunluath. His actual taorluath movement however must be about the best in the business.

After this performance it was a disappointment to hear Donald Bain struggling with "The Park Piobaireachd, No. 2" as if he did not really know it—which was probably true enough as he broke down at an early stage.

Tom Speirs was given the grand-daddy of them all, "The Lament for the Harp Tree". Strangely enough he started just a shade too soon, for the drones were not quite in tune with one another and they stayed that way throughout this half-hour piece. A shade more time just to have them perfectly set would have made all the difference. Tom started perhaps a little on the fast side but this was understandable and accep-

table. On the whole this was a very fine performance and might well have taken a place in a normal Clasp Competition, as did the only other rendering of this tune we have heard, given by Donald MacGillivray many years ago.

This however was not your average top-class Clap competition. It was exceedingly better than usual and much splendid piping was still to come.

Murray Henderson was given "Donald Gruamach's March" to play and right away he informed the judges that he was not going to play the style they expected. This has developed into a bit of a thing with Murray and Malcolm Macrae and one or two others—to play the unusual setting on many occasions. Ever since Iain Morrison gave us a decidedly strange setting of "Lord Lovat's Lament's" at Blair Castle one year, with surprising success, the way-out versions have had quite a vogue.

There is much to commend this of course, for why should everybody try to play the same thing, but on several occasions it misfires, as for example in trying to play "The Rowing Tune" without the Donald Mor run-down.

Anyway Murray made a very fine job of his tune on an excellent instrument. There are some who preferred Duncan MacFadyen's performance and there was perhaps not much in it. Both of them seemed to be trying to play the crunluath movement too quickly.

Next came a performance which itself alone was worth the price of the fare to Inverness, from Vancouver. Iain MacFadyen was asked to play "The Rout of the Lowland Captain" and never have we heard it played better. The bagpipe was in tremendous form and Iain took his time to make sure that the spotlights were not going to upset it. Then he took the tune in both capable hands and made it sing from beginning to end with all the subtleties of phrasing and timing that only a master can produce. Often a good tune comes through in spite of the piper but this time the piper was the dictator, in complete command.

Rumour has it that the Music Committee of the Piobaireachd Society is considering re-issuing the tune the way Iain played it. At the end only one word appeared on our personal judging notebook—"Excellent". It was with difficulty that we restrained ourselves from jumping up at the end and in Schumann's phrase about Chopin shouting "Hats off gentlemen, this is genius".

Iain Morrison lasted only a few notes with "Lament for the Laird of Annapool" when we were all looking forward to a continuation of this high standard.

Thereafter some good playing was heard but it was not until Bill Livingstone came on that we reached the heights once again. Bill was given the tune he wanted, "The Laird of Annapool", but this time there was no hurried attack or lack of concentration.

A careful and reasonable time was spent bringing the bagpipe into the best order and then Bill produced another outstanding performance. He showed a real understanding of this particular piece and his studied production of each part of it produced universal approval and, at the end, acclamation. If one had any criticism it could only be that he gave at

times an impression of over carefulness, but a man is not going to travel 3,000 miles and risk the top award by displaying any gay abandon.

The task facing the judges was now formidable but eventually they announced the result as follows:—

1. William Livingstone, Canada, 2. Iain MacFadyen, Kyle of Lochalsh, 3. Donald Macpherson, Glasgow, 4. Murray Henderson, Angus.

The judges were Capt. Iain C. Cameron, Dr. Robert Frater and Capt. John MacLellan.

Once again the Canadians had captured the first prize for piobaireachd, making it a clear sweep for the first time in history—all three piobaireachd events won by Canadians. If Sunart has gone to wreck will Ardnamurchan be far behind?

Strathspey and Reel

Again this event was divided into A and B Grades and again the challenge from overseas was very real. In the A Grade Scotland managed the first two places but America's strength in depth was reinforced by Mike Cussack when he won the B Grade.

The results were as follows:—

A Grade 1. Pipe Major Gavin Stoddart, 2. Robert Wallace, 3. Iain Hines, 4. Murray Henderson.

B Grade 1. Mike Cussack, 2. Pte. Alasdair Gillies, 3. John A. MacDonald, Skye, 4. Roderick MacLeod.

March, Strathspey and Reel

The rest is quickly told. Jack Lee made it a glory gathering for the Canadians by taking first prize in the march, strathspey and reel for former winners. His tunes were "Bonnie Anne", "The Cameronian Rant" and "The Little Cascade", and although some claimed that the performance was somewhat mechanical and a few criticised his timing of the fourth part of the reel there was no doubt that the young man produced a splendid performance.

In second place came John MacDougall who has been having a very successful year and third was Hugh MacInnes with another outstanding selection.

The judges were John D. Burgess and Iain MacLeod.

Round The Games

STRATHPEFFER — 8th August

Piobaireachd 1. Alasdair Gillies, Queen's Own Highlanders, ("Too Long in This Condition"). 2. John Hanning, Kirriemuir, ("The Gathering of the MacNabs"). 3. Murray Henderson, ("Donald Gruamach's March"). 4. Malcolm Macrae, Cannich, ("Donald Duaghal MacKay").

March 1. Tom Speirs, Edinburgh, ("Arthur Bignold of Lochrosque"). 2. Iain MacFadyen, Kyle of Lochalsh, ("John MacFadyen of Melfort"). 3. Murray Henderson, ("Glengarry Gathering"). 4. Mike Cusack, Texas, ("Lochaber Gathering").

Judges: Donald P. MacGillivray, Neil A. MacDonald.

Strathspey and Reel 1. Iain MacFadyen. 2. William MacDonald, Benbecula. 3. Norman Gillies, Ullapool. 4. Alasdair Gillies.

Judges: John D. Burgess, J. R. Matheson.

GLENFINNAN — 15th August

Piobaireachd 1. Murray Henderson, Eassie, 2. John Hanning, New Zealand, 3. Donald Bain, New Zealand, 4. Roderick MacLeod, Glasgow.

March 1. Sir Patrick Grant, Glasgow, 2. Murray Henderson. 3. Roy Gunn, New Zealand, 4. R. MacLeod.

Strathspey & Reel 1. Allan MacDonald, Glenuig, 2. Sir Patrick Grant, 3. Murray Henderson, 4. Iain MacFadyen, Kyle.

Local March 1. Robin Smart, 2. A. Campbell, 3. Iain Marshall, 4. D. Morrison.

Local Strathspey & Reel 1. Robin Smart, 2. George Campbell, 3. D. Morrison, 4. A. Campbell.

12 Years & Under March 1. George Campbell, 2. D. Morrison, 3. Robin Smart, 4. Iain Marshall.

12 Years & Under Strathspey & Reel 1. Iain Marshall, 2. Robin Smart, 3. George Campbell, 4. D. Morrison.

CRIEFF, 15th August

OPEN—Piobaireachd

1. A. Morrison, 2. E. Anderson, 3. E. Clark, 4. C. Drummond.

OPEN—March

1. J. Graham, 2. T. Morris, 3. A. Morrison, 4. P/M. Stoddart.

OPEN—Strathspey & Reel

1. T. Morris, 2. C. Drummond, 3. J. Graham, 4. A. Morrison.

Strathspeys & Reels (under 18 years)

1. A. Morrison, 2. J. Kerr Sprott, 3. C. Mitchell, 4. M. Gee.

March (under 18 years)

1. A. Morrison, 2. M. Gee, 3. J. Kerr Sprott, 4. C. Mitchell.

CONFINED to Perthshire—March

1. J. Bayne, 2. C. Mitchell, 3. K. Leisk, 4. D. Biggart.

Judges were Capt I. C. Cameron of Edinburgh, Capt A. Pitcaithly of Edinburgh and P/M R. A. Barron, B.E.M. of St Andrews.

LONACH — 22nd August

Piobaireachd 1. J. Hanning, Blair Atholl, 2. John McDougall, Kincaig, 3. Murray Henderson, Forfar, 4. Iain Hines, Kirriemuir, 5. Alaster Gillies, Queen's Own Highlanders, 6. Roy Gunn, New Zealand.

March 1. John McDougall, 2. Alaster Gillies, 3. Murray Henderson, 4. P/M Gavin Stoddart, Royal Highland Fusiliers, 5. Roy Gunn, 6. Ian Hines.

Strathspey and Reel P/M Gavin Stoddart, 2. John McDougall, 3. Murray Henderson, 4. J. Hanning, 5. John H. Shone, London, 6. Alaster Gillies.

Under 14 years—March 1. Barry Tough, Aberdeen, 2. Martin Brown, Bucksburn, 3. Angela Davidson, Aberdeen, 4. Jacqueline Walker, Bucksburn, 5. Alexander Milne, Glenlivet, 6. Peter Ross, Logie Coldstone.

Under 14 years—Strathspey and Reel 1. Martin Brown, 2. Barry Tough, 3. Angela Davidson, 4. Alexander Milne, 5. Jacqueline Walker, 6. Callum Coull, Renfrew.

14-18 years—March 1. Kenneth McCormack, Kintore, 2. Bruce Elerick, Aberdeen, 3. F. Cruickshank, Aberdeen, 4. Tracy Gray, Aberdeen, 5. Mark Walker, Bridge of Don, 6. John Walker, Bridge of Don.

14-18 years—Strathspey and Reel 1. Kenneth McCormack, 2. F. Cruickshank, 3. Ian Hildeath, 4. Alaster Melrose, 5. Mark Walker, 6. John Walker.

Judges

Piobaireachd Pipe Major N. Meldrum. Invercauld and Pipe Major J. McGregor. Glenalmond.

Seniors Mr. W. Drysdale, Methil, Fife and Mr. J. Henderson, Glasgow.

Juniors Mr. Wm. Maitland, Aberdeen, and Dr. W. Fraser, Aberdeen.

CAMPBELTOWN, KINTYRE — 22nd August

Piobaireachd 1. Hugh MacCallum, Bridge of Allan, 2. Fred Morrison, Bishopton, 3. Duncan MacFadyen, Johnstone, 4. Ronald McShannon, Campbeltown.

Judges, P/M Ronald MacCallum and Mr. Ronald Morrison.

March, Strathspey & Reel 1. Hugh MacCallum, 2. Allan MacDonald, Glenuig, 3. Ronald McShannon.

Judges, P/M Iain MacLeod, P/M Ronnie Ackroyd.

March under 21 years 1. John Brown, Campbeltown, 2. Iain McKerral, Campbeltown, 3. Archie Coffield, Campbeltown.

Strathspey & Reel 1. John Brown, 2. Archie Coffield, 3. David McIvor, Campbeltown.

BIRNAM — 29th August

Piobaireachd—Ian Hines, Kirriemuir.

March—Pipe Major Gavin Stoddart.

Strathspey & Reel—Pipe Major Gavin Stoddart.

Jig—John Hanning, Blair Atholl.

Sinagoca Cup for Piper with most points—Ian Hines.

Arisaig and Mallaig

by Robert MacMillan

Arisaig Highland Gathering held on Wednesday 22nd July—one week earlier than usual due to the Royal Wedding—attracted a healthy number of competitors for the piobaireachd competition. Weather conditions varied throughout the afternoon but the playing was of such a high standard that the judges, Lt. Col. Murray, John D. Burgess, Dr. J. N. MacAskill and Canon I. Gillies, who had done so much in Arisaig and the surrounding area to popularise piobaireachd, had a most difficult job in selecting the prizewinners.

On completion of the days piping Canon Gillies presented the trophy to the winner Iain MacFayden, Kyle-of-Lochalsh, whose rendering of "The Blind Piper's Obstinacy" (Crosanachd Na Doill) was near perfection. John MacDougall, Kincaig, was runner-up with "Beloved Scotland" (Alba Bheadarrach) and Derek Fraser, Edinburgh, with his rendering of "Corrienessan Salute" was third.

Alfred Morrison, Bishopton, who played the "Lament for Captain MacDougall" (Cumha An Chaiptain MacDhughall) and Colin Drummond, Bathgate, who performed "Flame of Wrath" (Lasan Phadruig Chasgaich) were placed fourth and fifth respectively.

Monday August 3rd was the date for the Mallaig/Morar Highland Games. Cross Farm, Traigh, was the venue which attracted sixteen pipers for the special open piobaireachd competition. Early morning rain gave way to an afternoon of intermittent sunshine and the competitors from as near as Fort William and as far afield as Los Angeles and Houston, Texas, played a wide variety of tunes and styles.

Adjudicators Norman Meldrum, Balmoral, and Norman Matheson, Aberdeen, placed Glasgow-based Robert Wallace for his adept playing of the tune "Donald Duaghal MacKay" first and he was called forward to receive the John Gillies, Bourblach, Memorial Cup which was presented to him by Miss Morag Gillies.

Tom Speirs, Edinburgh, who played "The King's Taxes" was runner up, with M. Cusack, Houston, Texas, and Iain MacFayden, Kyle-of-Lochalsh, being placed third and fourth, their respective tunes being "Too Long In This Condition" and "Battle of Auldearn".

Judging Vis A Vis Chanter Pitch

by **David V. Kennedy**

Sacramento, California

The question is: should piping judges subjectively or objectively deduct points from a piper in competition because the piper plays a low pitched chanter as opposed to a high pitched one, or vice versa? We say emphatically NO!

I am not referring to any one note being out of pitch (flat or sharp) with respect to others in the scale, but to the whole chanter being higher (or lower) than another. Quite correctly, a judge should take into account the relative accuracies or tonalities of all the notes in the scale . . . but not to whether or not a pipe chanter is pitched to, say, A 440, or 475 cps or even 490 cps.

My ire was raised to this issue by having a professional piper (living in Arizona) make a written comment on my Jig judging score sheet at the Northern California Corte Madera Scottish Games; and say to me afterward (in all sincerity, I'm sure): ". . . if you want to get anywhere in piping, you'll have to lift that pitch" . . . or similar words.

One must explain to our homeland readers that at some local Games in California, the score sheet is a standard design, which is handed to the judge for his or her use in judging solo piping. Item 2 on the sheet is called "Tuning and Tone" and the rows are titled "Sharp" or "Flat" with the columns headed HiA, HiG, and so on for the entire scale. It would seem that this tabulation is to assess the relative pitches of one note to another, and not to comment on the basic or tonic note of chanter. Below this tabulation are some wee boxes titled "Tone"—"bright", "full", "dull", "thin"—referring to the chanter, and identical boxes for the drones. On the right hand side of the score sheet is a wide column called "Additional Comments".

To make his point with my chanter, the judge lined through the entire row called "flat", and then ticked off the boxes "full" and "dull"; and added a Parthian shot on the "additional comments", saying "Tone very flat and dull by to-day's standards".

When you add his personal comments to his written ones, you have to infer strongly that this judge is going to deduct points from anyone playing a low pitched chanter, simply because he, the judge, thinks the high pitch to be the greatest thing since the wheel!

This is a ridiculous concept because no actual "standard" pitch has been established for the Highland Pipe, nor should it be. If the low pitched chanter is "spot on" with respect to its scalar intervals, and suits the drones, then it should be judged on its own merits, and not in comparison with a higher pitched chanter. And similarly for a high pitched chanter. No judge should be permitted to pre-determine what *he* thinks is worldwide standard, or allow himself to let his personal preference for a pitch interfere with his adjudication of a piper's performance.

I assume that if Angus MacKay were to play before this judge to-day, his chanter would be called "flat" and "dull" just because he had a low pitched chanter. From the records and cassettes I've heard of top pipers in Scotland, the chanter pitches vary, and I cannot believe that any of them were penalised just because of a low or high pitch!

This particular concept in judging should, I believe, be excommunicated with Bell, Book and Candle as anathema!

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Piping This Century

by Angus J. MacLellan

1940-1959

The first five years of this era was of course lost to the War but when it ended in 1945 the number of pipers and drummers who returned from the Forces was quite astonishing, and as conscription was to stay with us for almost all of this period a great number of young men took advantage of National Service to further their piping and drumming.

As the country quickly settled down and the role of life in peaceful times was re-established, competitions were soon with us again and the new names appearing in the prize lists were Pipe Major Donald MacLean (Big) Pipe Major Donald Macleod, Pipe John MacLellan, Pipe Major Robert (Mickey) Mackay, John Garroway and many others, but when the Argyllshire Gathering and Northern Meeting were re-started in 1946 it was the older hands who won the major prizes. Pipe Major Peter Bain (Oban) and Roddy MacDonald (Inverness) won the Gold Medal, Pipe Major J. B. Robertson won the Open Piobaireachd and former winners at Oban, and Robert Reid won the Clasp for the sixth time.

The world of piping was caught up in the new and exciting boom times and major steps were taken at this time. Late in 1944, in premises in Pitt Street, Glasgow, two young men, Seumas MacNeill and Thomas Pearston, had taken an imaginative and exciting step forward in the cause of piping and had instituted the College of Piping. Expert tuition from some of the best pipers in the world was now available for all young pipers in and around Glasgow.

The Glasgow Police carried on where they had left off, winning the World Championship in 1946, but changes were happening fast in the band world. All these young men who had returned from the War were re-forming the old pipe bands and forming new ones. Names like Bowhill Colliery, Shotts and Dykehead, Red Hackle, Renfrew, Anchor Mills, Craigneuk Parish and many more were growing in popularity and building big reputations with their success. The World Pipe Band Championship broke away from Cowal and in 1947 it was held in Edinburgh with Bowhill Colliery taking the title to Fife for the first time.

In 1948 Donald MacPherson appeared on the piping scene, winning the Gold Medal and Open Piobaireachd at the Argyllshire Gathering on the same day—a feat achieved only rarely before.

1948 saw two new publications for pipers. One was the Kilberry Book of Ceol Mor and the other was the Piping Times which in October came to take over from the old pre-war Piper and Dancer Bulletin.

R. G. Lawrie, Peter Henderson and D. MacRae were the established bagpipe makers but just about this time they were being seriously threatened by new names like Hardie, Robertson and Grainger and Campbell, but probably Hardie's had the slight advantage no doubt due to the fact that the best advert they had was the great success of Bob himself.

Around this time a young lad who was playing in amateur competitions was making the professionals sit up and take notice and in 1950 this same boy—John D. Burgess—showed just what a genius he was by winning both Gold Medals in the same year when only 16 years of age, a feat which will never be repeated. And just to show how good he was he also won the March at Oban and the Strathspey and Reel at Inverness in 1950. By 1952 he had won almost everything worth winning and made a tour of Canada with his teacher Willie Ross.

In 1953 Seumas MacNeill, John MacLellan and James L. MacKenzie (the World Champion Highland dancer) made a very successful coast to coast tour of Canada and the United States.

Throughout the 50's many new pipe bands were formed, especially in smaller towns and mining communities, but the World Championship was still being won by the established bands like Glasgow Police, Edinburgh Police, Clan MacRae and Shotts. In 1955 a new name appeared on the World Trophy and that was Muirhead and Sons. When in 1956 in Belfast the World Pipe Band Championship was held outside of Scotland for the first time, it was Muirheads who were again the winners. However towards the end of this period one pipe band dominated the pipe band world and that was Shotts and Dykehead under John K. MacAllister, son of the previous Pipe Major who were World Champions in 1957, 58, 59.

Sensation! That was in 1958 when two young men came from New Zealand and threatened to run riot. They were Lewis Turrell and Allan Dodd and at the Northern Meeting Lewis won the Gold Medal—the first time this most prestigious prize had ever been won by anyone from outside Scotland. He also won the Strathspey and Reel and Jig and was second to Allan Dodd in the March. Quite a year for piping in New Zealand. There were however new names from the homeland too—names like Ronald Lawrie, Iain MacFadyen, John MacDougall, James Young, Kenneth MacDonald and Donald Morrison.

In 1957 the great Willie Ross retired and his place was filled at the Army School of Piping in 1959 by Pipe Major John MacLellan who was in fact still serving in the Seaforth Highlanders and thus became the first serving soldier to take charge of the Piping School.

As can be seen piping was safely steered through this era but towards its close it was noticeable that entries in the various competitions were dropping slightly, and interest in piping generally was declining a little.

Tune of the Month

This time we have a new composition, a reel from the facile pen and fingers of Duncan Johnstone.

Reel

Seonaid

The image displays a musical score for a Reel titled "Seonaid". The score is written on eight staves, each containing two lines of music. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, as well as rests. The music is presented in a single system, with the staves connected by a brace on the right side. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 2/4. The piece begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The melody is characterized by a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some measures featuring beamed eighth notes. The score concludes with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

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William McMurchy—Was he a notator of piobaireachd?

by Keith Sanger

William McMurchy was an interesting musician who lived in Kintyre in the 18th Century. The reference to him which gives rise to the title of this article occurs among the correspondence of the Highland Society at the beginning of the 19th Century. The Highland Society at that period was still being influenced by the ripples following Macpherson and the Ossianic controversy. Through the offices of Sir John Sinclair the society was trying to trace old Gaelic manuscripts containing Ossianic poetry. The correspondence in question was by a Rev. Duncan Stewart at Limecraigs (near Campbeltown) to Sir John Sinclair and dated 20 November 1808; it was in reply to a request for information about William McMurchy and the whereabouts of his collection of manuscripts.¹ The relevant portion of the Rev. Stewart's letter states: "The eldest of them (the McMurchy brothers) William, who was a great genius put all the pibroch and many highland airs to music".

To examine whether William was capable of fulfilling the implications contained in that statement I shall try to set out in a rough chronological order the little that is so far known (by me) in the hope that it might in turn stimulate the production of additional material.

William McMurchy was probably born around 1700. It has been suggested, based on a similarity of Gaelic script, that he may have been a pupil of Hugh MacLean, a schoolmaster of Kilchenzie in Kintyre circa 1699.² McMurchy is a common name in Kintyre but the only family using the name William that I have encountered about that period seem to be at Auchaleck near Campbeltown around 1669-71.³ Unfortunately the Parish registers for Kintyre are not complete for that period, but that for Campbeltown parish commences in 1659 for Births and 1681 for Marriages. The first William McMurchy noted was a marriage on 14 March 1728 to Agnes Robertson who subsequently gave birth to a daughter Ann on 29 December 1728. There were either no further children, which seems unlikely, or the family had removed to another parish as they do not feature again in the births register. The only other William McMurchy's to feature in Campbeltown parish register are both marriages in 1765 and 1769.⁴

The first certain reference to McMurchy concerns the period 1745-46, by which time McMurchy was one of the Pipers to MacDonald of Largie. Largie raised his men and set out to join the Prince but the majority of the Kintyre proprietors were supporters of the Government side and

Largie was persuaded to change his mind and send his men with the rest to Inveraray. The source relates how when the Kintyre party reached Inveraray, MacDonald's pipers played alternately, McMurchy played "The Campbells are coming". The Duke of Argyle being in the company of other gentlemen at the time took no notice of the tune that was played, but McLeolan (Largie's other piper) played "Fir Chinntire" which the Duke immediately recognised and said to the gentlemen present "Come we must go out and welcome the Kintyre men." McMurchy was a superior piper and a good poet, but was grieved that the Duke did not take notice of him and that he did not play "Fir Chinntire".⁵

He is mentioned again in the same source who relates how "William McMurchy who lived at Largieside about a century ago was a superior piper and poet. He was visited by a learned gentleman who came in disguise to test McMurchy's power of poetry, the gentleman himself being a poet. McMurchy received the gentleman in a respectful manner and entertained him with a few tunes on his pipes. The gentleman was musing over a verse of poetry, and observing some scones of bread toasting over the fire, got up hurriedly and making for the door uttered the following—

Piobaireachd is aran tur,
'S miosa leam na guin a bhais,
Fhir a bhodhair mo dha chluais,
Na biodh agad duois gu brach.⁶

Piping and raw bread, worse to me than pangs of death. Ye man who deaved both my ears, may you never get a reward.

McMurchy dropping the pipe out of his mouth rapidly said—

Stad a dhuine fan ri cial,
'S olc an sgial nach boin ri bun,
Tha mo bhean a t-eachd on chill,
Is ultach d'on im air a muin.

Stop man give ear to reason, bad is the story that has no foundation. My wife is coming from Chil with a load of butter on her back.

The gentleman finding that he had met his match returned and a friendly conversation took place till McMurchy's wife came home with the butter. The gentleman partook of the toasted bread and butter and came away wondering that such a man as McMurchy could be found in such a sequestered spot."

The Rev. Dr John Smith of Campbeltown in a letter written in 1802 quoted in the Highland Society Report on Ossian in 1805 says that an old Gaelic Poem and a collection of proverbs had been got about 1780 by him from Captain Alexander Campbell, then Chamberlain of Kintyre, who had them from William McMurchy, a musician and an amateur of ancient poetry. The poem survives in the Stewart Collection and a case has been made based on the internal evidence of the poem that at the time of composition, somewhere between 1750-1768, McMurchy had enlisted in the army and was serving overseas, in an area where French



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was spoken. The date is further narrowed to around 1761 with the probability that he was serving with either the 77th regiment—Montgomery's Highlanders raised 1757 and disbanded 1763, or the 100th regiment commanded by Major Colin Campbell of Kilberry raised 1761 and disbanded 1763.⁷

It may be significant that Alexander Campbell, appointed chamberlain and bailie of North and South Kintyre by the Duke of Argyle on 11 November 1767 was a Lieutenant, late of the 77th regiment of foot, having engaged as an ensign in an additional company of Montgomery's Highlanders in 1759 and reaching a position as Adjutant by August 1763.⁸ Montgomery's Highlanders are credited with over thirty pipers and drummers (a set of miniature pipes bearing the inscription "1st Highland Battn" Jan 4 1757 Hon Coll Montgomery" were still in existence in 1937).⁹

From the correspondence concerning the Highland Society's search for Gaelic manuscripts the following information about McMurchy was gleaned.¹⁰ William was the oldest of three brothers¹¹ and died about 1778. The second brother, James, was described at the time of the correspondence as having died a considerable time since. The youngest brother Neil died in 1807. William is described as a musician in Campbeltown, a remarkable writer of ancient poetry and of being in possession of a Gaelic manuscript collection. After his death his collection passed to his brother Neil (who was also said to have had a manuscript collection). Neil appears to have been schoolmaster at Whitehouse in the Parish of Kilcalmonel from 1766 to 1779¹² before becoming a weaver in Paisley. Neil passed the manuscripts to a grandson of William. When the remainder of the manuscripts were recovered for the Highland Society through the offices of Neil's son James, a Paisley manufacturer, James expressed his disappointment since he thought that there should be a great many more of them.

The surviving manuscripts are now in the National Library of Scotland.¹³ They do not contain any music but consist mostly of poems (including many of William's own) and Proverbs. Many of the poems concern music, and include two of particular interest to pipers. They are *Moladh na pioba le Iain MacAilein* (The praise of the bagpipe by John son of Alan) and *Ascain Molaidh na Pioba* (Reply to the praise of the bagpipe) by Lachlann MacLean.¹⁴ There is also a satire on McMurchy composed by a merchant called Bostain MacCairbre about which Professor Mackinnon states—a satire in Gaelic usually means foul abuse in more or less faulty rhyme. William is described as a piper, a fiddler, a harper, a tailor and schoolmaster as well as a would-be bard, and a man who according to his reviler was enjoying undeservedly the confidence of the Laird of Largie.¹⁵

Among the miscellaneous material McMurchy includes—The dimensions of a harp (A wire strung instrument apparently similar in size to the "O'Carolan" harp in the museum in Dublin), a short poem in English on the death of Handel (d 1759) and a rather potent medical recipe for an unspecified ailment.

In the years following the '45 Rebellion the position of a professional

piper would have become precarious, leading possibly to the circumstances causing McMurchy's enlistment in the army—

With looking back on my folly
Full of grief and of horror
That I sold my freedom
My family and my peace.

Heavy is this yoke on my neck
It is beyond my power to endure it
. (one line missing)
The whip of bondage wounding me
My tender children and my partner
Without my making provision for their shelter
Driven to homeless destitution
That is the pang that pierced me through and through..

It is not guile nor trickery
On the part of gentle or simple
But poverty and hardship
That drove me into the net
And the thought that I could support
With my earnings my dear ones.
Or never had I left them
In the charge of the country.

(Translation taken from "A poem in the Stewart Collection").

In the paper just quoted it is suggested that McMurchy was about 21 years at the time of the '45 and in his thirties at the time of enlistment. The frequent references to McMurchy as old William McMurchy at and before his death were not available to the author of that paper. It is tempting to suggest on available evidence that McMurchy could be identified with the William married in 1728 in the Campbeltown parish and that he subsequently moved to serve his patron Macdonald of Largie. This assumption would place William's age around 50 at the time of enlistment, an age for which there are precedents; as a piper and poet his position as a soldier would have been relatively privileged.

To return to the question posed at the beginning of this article. The picture of William McMurchy which emerges is of a professional musician, a literate poet, a collector and recorder of poetry and anything else that he thought worthy of preservation. Evidence that he may have had music books may be indicated by the possible use of one for a poetry manuscript.¹⁶ It would therefore seem reasonable to accept the Rev. Stewart's statement that he also put Piobaireachd and Highland airs to music.

Notes and References

1. N.L.S. 73.2.26 item 55
2. National Library of Scotland catalogue of Gaelic MSS compiled by R. Black, M.S. 72.2.12
3. Scottish records Office GD 50/189.
4. O.P.R. 507/1A.
5. History of Kintyre by Peter Macintosh (1861). Macintosh was a Kintyre man by birth and upbringing; he died in 1876 aged 90. Similar versions of the incidents involving McMurphy can be found in Glencreggan by Edward Bradley (Cuthbert Bede) 1861. MacIntosh is mentioned as one of his informants.
6. See also similar verse and story attributed to a Rankin piper—Clann Duiligh Piobairean Chloinn Ghill-Eathain by Neil Rankin Morrison, Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness Vol. 37 1934-1936.
7. A poem in the Stewart Collection by W. M. Conley—Scottish Gaelic Studies Vol. 11.
8. The Clan Campbell Vol. 3. by Sir Duncan Campbell, pages 114, 78, 83.
9. Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries Vol LXXI page 346.
10. N.L.S. 73.2.26 item 22(a), 22(c), 23, 29, 31 and Highland Society of London deposit 268-1 letter 102.
11. It is possible that there was a fourth brother who had died earlier assuming the poem Cumha na M'brathar in MS 73.2.2 f50 to have been composed by William.
12. S.R.O. The Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, Masters Salary Account G.D. 95/8/5.
13. N.L.S. Adv 73.2.2 (Turner MS). Adv 72.2.15, Adv 72.2.12 and the Inverneill M.S. (photostat copy).
14. These two poems are printed in full in "Eachann Bacach and other MacLean Poets." Edited by Col O'Baoill for The Scottish Gaelic Texts Society (1979).
15. The Scottish Collection of Gaelic MSS. by Professor Mackinnon in the Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness Vol 16, 1889-90 page 291.
16. N.L.S. Adv 72.2.15. Its form was likened to that of a music book by Ewen MacLachlan in his Celtic Analysis (Adv 72.3.4 p. 71).

Letters to the Editor

North Berwick.

For the Record

Dear Seumas,

The photograph on page 42 of the August edition is of the pipers of the 1st Battalion Scots Guards not the 2nd Battalion whose Pipe Major at that time was Willie Ross (Alick's brother).

The officer in middle of front row is Sir Iain Colquhoun of Luss who was Pipe President.

The corporal on the left of the picture is Dusty Smith.

Back row on left is Bruce Hobson and fifth from left is James MacDonald who was from Arisaig.

D. R. MacLennan.

Bearsden,
Glasgow.

20th September 1981

Dear Sir,

In order to assess some of the physiological effects of playing the great highland bagpipe, measurements were taken of the heart and respiratory rate when the pipes were being blown continuously for a period of twelve minutes. One of us was wired up to an electrocardiograph while playing, and at the same time pressure recordings were taken by means of an electrical pressure gauge, connected to the bore of the blowstick above the valve by a fine tube.

The pressure in the bagpipe remained constant at about 50 mm of mercury, and the player blew at a fairly regular rate of 15 per minute. The respiratory rate when playing was therefore only slightly above the resting rate of 12 per minute, although the breaths were deeper. The heart rate increased from a resting rate of 75 beats per minute to 100 beats per minute when playing.

Obviously such measurements will vary according to the size and fitness of the player, as well as with the strength of the reeds and the size of the bag. In this case both pipes and bagpipe seemed of average proportions, and there appears to be surprisingly little physiological disturbance when playing the great highland bagpipe, which is presumably one reason why they have evolved into their present form.

Another aspect of the highland bagpipes is the speed of fingering required to execute the gracenotes which give the music much of its unique character. This speed is made possible by the fingers being flat on the chanter, so that the holes are covered at different distances along the palmer surfaces of the straight fingers. If the holes were covered by the

tips of the fingers as in other instruments, then the fingers would have to be bent in order to bring the tips into line as fingers are of different lengths.

But bending the fingers requires contraction of the long flexor muscles in the forearm, which would have to be co-ordinated with the extensor muscles when the latter lifted the fingers to uncover a note. By keeping the fingers straight, they can be raised much more quickly and easily than if bent and so the rapid fingering of gracenotes is more readily achieved.

Although it may look ungainly, the great highland bagpipe is well adapted to human anatomy and physiology.

Yours faithfully,

Dr. David R. Hannay

Dr. Kenneth F. Hosie

Dear Seumas,

Confirming my telephone call in that I wish to apologise to you on behalf of the Eagle Pipers Society for the cancellation at short notice our Competition Recital in the Queens Hall, Edinburgh on the 17.8.81.

Through the medium of the Piping Times I would be indebted if this apology be extended to the Judges, Competitors, Guests and our public.

The reason for the cancellation was that the Hall had been double booked which we were unaware of until five days before the event should have taken place.

Yours Aye,

Euan D. Anderson.

Scottish Piping Society of London

Annual Competitions will be held on Saturday, 7th November 1981, at the Glaziers Hall, London Bridge.

Particulars of events and Entry Forms can be obtained from Mr. Anthony Tate, 409, Bellegrave Road, Welling, Kent, DA16 3RN (Tel: No. 01-856-4575).

Those applying must send S.A.E. Closing date for entries 24th October, 1981.

Radio Review

The assessment is by the star system and the awards are—approximately—as follows:—

excellent, archive material, should be * * * * *

preserved in the B.B.C. library.

splendid, almost archive material * * * *

good standard * * *

below standard, probably should not * *

have been broadcast.

poor stuff, definitely should not have *

been broadcast.

The panel consists of five men who are or have been top professional competing pipers, drawn from all over Scotland.

Awards Since May

May	6	Colin Drummond * * *
	13	Chanter * * *
	20	Wellington Pipe Band, New Zealand * * *
	27	Dysart and Dundonald * * *
June	3	Robert Wallace * * *
	10	Donald MacLeod—Learning Piobaireachd * * *
	17	Andrew Wright * * *
	24	Monktonhall Pipe Band * * *
July		Ian Plunkett * *
	1	Jim MacGillivray and William Livingstone * * *
	8	Duncan MacFadyen * * *
	15	Glasgow Skye * *
	22	Dr Angus MacDonald * * *



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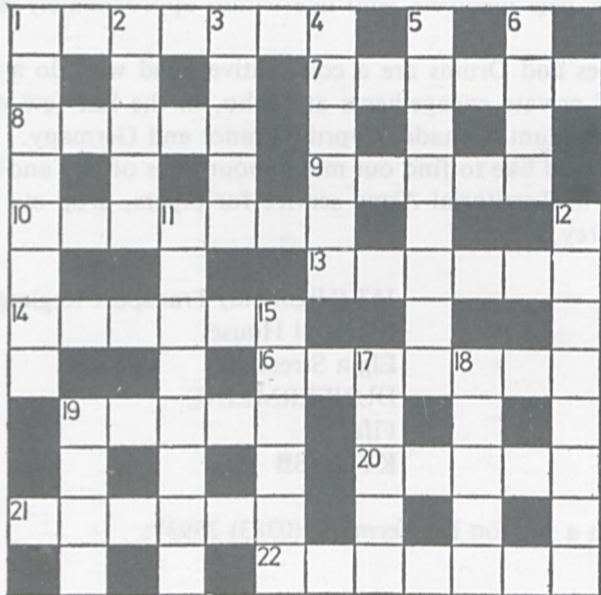
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CLUES

Across

1. The Royal Gathering (7).
7. Animals from the ring of bright water, legal to hunt but illegal to kill (6).
8. Where the milk comes from (5).
9. Games in August, in the keen air near Elgin (5).
10. A round number from the dun herd (7).
13. Come to rest, or something to come to rest on (6).
14. You need this regularly to become a great piper (6).
16. Take from an additional small court (7).
19. Measure of gold purity (5).
20. Villain or runaway (5).
21. Request for further consideration sounds like bells ringing (6).
22. Ask anxiously for the net rate (7).

Down

1. Where the hornpipe boys come from (4,4).
2. Forest in As You Like It and Battle of the Bulge, or Dr. Cameron's house (5).
3. "By Ailort and by to the sea" (5).
4. Turns bullets (6).
5. More strongly disciplined (8).
6. Fingal's hound (4).
11. Like Goldsmith's village the red steed is confused (8).
12. A minister's robe sounds like the undershirt intended (8).
15. Grasp it and it will not sting you (6).
17. Cards for fortune-telling (5).
18. Discuss with feeling (5).
19. Break pace to shelter from the rain (4).

Andrew S. Warnock

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Highland Pipers in Ireland

by Sean O'Donngaile

The following are some pieces I came across in the course of research into the Irish warpipes. I think they may be of interest to readers of the Piping Times.

Lord Dumbarton's Regiment

A muster of the above regiment taken on its arrival at Kinsale, Co Cork, in April 1679, gives one "Alexander Wallace" as "Piping Major". Subsequent musters, in December 1680 and June 1682, just mention a piper without giving his name.

These muster-rolls are printed in the Ormonde MSS. published by The Historical Manuscripts Commission.

Is this the earliest mention of the title "Pipe(r) Major"?

A Highland Wedding

"They write from Coleraine (Co Derry) that on the 17th inst. was married in the Parish Church a Highland lad and lass who marched through the whole town with a piper playing before them, accompanied by some hundreds of the lower kind of people. In the evening they fell to drinking: but on the bride's acknowledging she loved the piper better than the bridegroom, the latter agreed the piper should have her for 18s. But some words soon after ensuing, the bridegroom stabbed the piper in the breast with a dagger but was afterwards taken and sent to jail."—*Belfast Newsletter, March 24th 1758.*

Notation of Music

"A Highland piper having a scholar to teach, disdained with skills of semibreves, minims, crotchets and quavers to break his head. 'Here Donald' quoth he—"tak yer pipes and gie us a blast'. (But as I cannot make him in character speak Erse, he may as well talk English and his lesson will be better understood) 'Here, Donald', said he, 'take your pipes, my lad, and give us a blast—so, very well blown indeed! But what is sound, Donald, without sense? You may blow on to all eternity without making a tune out of it, if I do not tell you how the queer things on the paper must help you. You see that fellow with the round open face (pointing to a semibreve between the first and second lines of a bar): he moves slowly from that tune to this while you beat one with your foot and take a long blast:— If you now put a leg to him you will make two of him and he'll move twice as fast; if you blacken his face, thus, he'll run four times faster than the first fellow with the white face; but if after blackening his face you bend his knee or tie his legs, he will hop you still you first. Now, when'er you blow your pipes, Donald remember this, the tighter those fellows legs are tied the faster they will run and the quicker they are sure to dance ! !"—*Belfast Mercury, July 23rd 1784.*

Highland Society of London Competitions

In July, 1781, upon a motion of the 11th Earl of Eglinton at a meeting of the Highland Society of London, it was resolved that a pipe, flag and money prize be given annually by the Society to the best performer on the Highland Bag-pipe at the October Falkirk Tryste.

The superintendence of the first competition, held on 12th October, and of the next three competitions, was given to a branch of the Society established in Glasgow—but by a resolution of 17th January, 1785, it was decided to transfer the competition to Edinburgh and to have it held under the management of the recently formed Highland Society of Scotland.

The competition was held annually in Edinburgh from 1785 to 1826 and then triennially until 1844 when the Northern Meeting took over the running of the event.

During all these years, and until 1849, the Highland Society of London had continued to provide the Prize Pipe: but in 1849 it added the first of its Gold Medals and has been doing so ever since.

The annual competitions for the Prize Pipe and the Gold Medal continued at Inverness until 1887 in which year the Prize Pipe was discontinued and the Gold Medal became the sole first prize for piobaireachd at the Northern Meeting (as it has been at the Argyllshire Gathering since 1875.)

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Extract from Affairs in Scotland—Oct. 1781

On October 12, at Falkirk tryst, there was a competition of pipers for premiums given by the Highland Society in London for improving Ancient Scots Music, &c. A great number of respectable gentlemen attended, and judges were appointed to decide on the merits of the performers. There appeared thirteen candidates, each of whom played four different tunes; and, after various and impartial trials, the prizes were disposed of as follows: To Peter Macgrigor, piper to Henry Balnaves, Esq: an excellent Highland pipe, and 40 merks of money: To Charles Macarthur, piper to the Earl of Eglinton, 30 merks, as the second performer: To John Macgrigor, piper to Colonel Campbell of Glenlyon, 30 merks, as the third performer. The gentlemen appointed by the society to confer the prizes, expressed their approbation to many of the rest of the pipers also, by making a collection, for them to defray their expences home.



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