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PIPING TODAY

**stuart
ROBERTSON**

Path to the top of grade one

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Six years on and sizzling hot

Border pipes and their recent revival

Gillian Chalmers explores the role of the manufacturer

Festival of Juvenile Solo Piping

The Saltcoats competition

Donald Sutherland

Piper, composer and adventurer

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Scottish Championships 2009

Photo feature from Dumbarton

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STUART ROBERTSON has made his way through the grades and is now playing at the very top with the House of Edgar Shotts and Dykehead pipe band. (Story: p.10)

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Parity of esteem



THE VISIT by the National Piping Centre's patron HRH Prince Charles on June 2 was a happy and celebratory occasion. When he last visited in 1998 he was given a guided tour of the premises by the Chairman and Founders and was introduced to various members of the teaching, administration and hotel staff. This time was quite different with the emphasis placed firmly on entertainment and a presentation of piping at its best.

There was no doubt that Prince Charles enjoyed the occasion and gave warm thanks to all who had taken part. It was clear too that the large invited audience had also enjoyed the event and the subsequent flood of letters of appreciation which gave heartfelt praise for the performances provided ample evidence for that.

It became clear from the letters that people wanted to tell us how they had never heard piping like that before or that they didn't know piping could be so good. A lot of people remarked on the range of music which represented both traditional and contemporary with many surprised to realise that new compositions were a regular thing and that the piping scene was currently so vibrant among young and old alike.

I guess because I personally am so close to piping day-in and day-out that I am surprised to think that people still don't realise these things about piping today. It does tell me though that we still need to get the message about good piping out there as much and as often as is possible because there are many people in Scottish society and throughout the world who are more than receptive to our music but still simply do not know about it.

It also reinforces in my mind the need for piping to continue to look for parity of esteem with every other musical instrument. We at The National Piping Centre continue to strive to make in-roads through higher education with our collaborations with institutions such as the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama and Glasgow University and we are excited by the possibilities presented through the Piping and Drumming Qualifications Board's interaction with the Scottish Qualifications Authority to have its qualifications nationally accredited.

This would be a huge step forward for piping and drumming and would align our instrument to other mainstream instruments giving it the credibility at all levels within the education system it deserves.

The five organisations involved in the Piping and Drumming Qualifications Board are The Army School of Bagpipe Music and Highland Drumming, The College of Piping, The Piobaireachd Society, The Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association and The National Piping Centre. Matters under the guidance of Chairman Alistair Aitken have finally progressed after a four-year slog to the stage where the Scottish Qualifications Authority will in the coming weeks ask each organisation to go through an Institutional Approval process to ensure quality assurance for the delivery of the new awards.

The end goal is in sight and with an opportunity too good to lose, this is a hurdle which we must all jump over together in order to strengthen the future of piping in Scotland and abroad and to allow us to grasp future opportunities for progression, funding and continued acceptance within the musical mainstream.

by **RODDY MacLEOD** MBE, BSc
Principal, The National Piping Centre

Tribute to heroic D-Day Piper

A SCOTS war hero who came under fire as he piped his regiment ashore at Normandy on D-Day is to be honoured with a statue in France.

The monument paying tribute to Bill Millin, now 86, will show him in full military regalia and is to be built in Colleville Montgomery, close to where he played a key role as Allied troops launched their assault.

Mr Millin, a veteran of the 1st Special Service Brigade and the personal piper of Lord Lovat, said: "It is a great honour. I wanted it to be as lifelike as possible so I'm sending a photograph of myself to the mayor."

Originally from Fort William, Mr Millin now lives in a nursing home in Dawlish, Devon.

He travelled to Normandy to commemorate the 65th D-Day anniversary in June and was reunited with the pipes he played to lift morale as the troops landed on Sword Beach in 1944. The famous instrument is now kept in a museum in Pegasus Bridge.

The widower also led a parade by a French bagpipe band, which struck up *Scotland the Brave* in his honour.

He was just 21 and unarmed apart from his dirk in his sock, when he marched under heavy fire with the troops who stormed the beaches.

The bagpipes were damaged by shrapnel, but after leaving the beach Mr Millin replaced them with another set and continued to play all the way to Pegasus Bridge. From there, his unit from the 1st Commando Brigade reinforced troops who had landed gliders in the night and helped to secure the crucial crossing point over the Caen canal.

Mr Millin said: "I feel pride to be back here – and sadness for those who didn't make it.

"Our brigade lost 280 men on that first day, and when I'm here I can still see the faces of some who died.

"I'm glad I've been able to come back again and pay my own tribute by just being here and remembering."

Having suffered a stroke several years ago, Mr Millin is confined to a wheelchair and can no longer play the pipes.

But he has told about how he played as he waded waist-deep in water to the shore. He said: "I paddled through the surf playing *Highland Laddie*, and Lord Lovat turned round and looked at me and gestured approvingly.

"When I finished, Lovat asked for another tune. Well, when I looked round — the noise and people lying about shouting and the smoke, the crump of mortars, I said to myself, 'Well, you must be joking, surely'.

"He said, 'Would you mind giving us a tune?' 'Well, what tune would you like, Sir?' 'How about *The Road To The Isles*?' 'Would you want me to walk up and down, Sir?' 'Yes, that would be nice — walk up and down'."

The action was portrayed in the 1962 film *The Longest Day*, with Pipe Major Leslie de Laspee, the official piper to the Queen Mother, playing Mr Millin's role. ●



Bill Millin, right, the legendary piper of Pegasus Bridge attends a ceremony with British veterans of the Royal Navy on June 5, 2009 in Colleville-Montgomery during a commemoration for the D-Day celebrations to mark the 65th anniversary of the June 6, 1944 allied landings in France.

Photo: Mychele Danau/AFP/Getty Images

Summer Schools at The National Piping Centre

THERE'S still time to sign up for The National Piping Centre's summer school courses.

The dates are: July 20 to 24, 2009; and July 27 to 31, 2009. An autumn course is also being held from October 12 to 16.

The daily programme will cover all aspects of performance on the Highland Bagpipe including practice routines, technique, musical expression, timing and tuning. Students will be taught in small

groups of similar ability for three to four hours per day. Some individual lessons may also be included.

The course commences daily at 9am and will finish at approximately 4.30pm.

They are a great fun way to learn and prices start from just £205 for adults (£175 for under-16s).

For further details and to sign up online go to www.thepipingcentre.co.uk/schools/seasonal-piping-schools

Centre honoured with royal visit



Photo: Derek Maxwell

Prince Charles with the Lord Provost, Sir Brian Ivory and Lady Ivory, above. Top right, meeting Lucy Ferguson, Ciaran Sinclair and Connor Sinclair, middle right, chatting with Roddy MacLeod and bottom right, Prince Charles greets members of The National Youth Pipe Band of Scotland, including Kyle Howie.

THE NATIONAL Piping Centre was honoured by the visit of HRH The Duke of Rothesay on June 2, 2009. Prince Charles returned to see the progress of the work of the Centre as part of his ongoing commitment as Patron of The National Piping Centre, which he formally opened more than a decade ago.

His most recent visit showcased one of the Centre's most vibrant and vital initiatives, The National Youth Pipe Band of Scotland.

Prince Charles was greeted on the steps of the The National Piping Centre by the founders, Sir Brian Ivory CBE FRSE MA CA and Lady Ivory DL MA ARCM FRSA. Councillor Bob Winter, the Lord Provost of Glasgow, was also in attendance as the NYPBoS played the rousing *98 Jig* to welcome the royal visitor.

Once in the Centre he was piped to his table by Captain (Retd.) Stuart Samson MBE after which the Prince and an invited audience of guests from throughout Scottish society were treated to a feast of music by the BA (Scottish Music) students from the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, a Highland Fling from World Champion highland dancer David Wilton and piping and singing from Allan MacDonald who gave a rendition of *The Sound of Waves against Castle Duntroon*.

Keith Bowes, Alasdair Henderson and Cameron Drummond (also known as TNT) gave a high octane performance and the spotlight was also on the Centre's tutors — Stuart Sampson,

John Mulhearn, Glenn Brown, Chris Armstrong, Ryan Canning and Principal Roddy MacLeod – who put on a fantastic display of top-quality piping and showmanship.

Young performers got the chance to shine with Ciaran Sinclair, Lucy Ferguson and Connor Sinclair from The National Youth Pipe Band of Scotland playing a delightful set of melodies including a tune which was especially composed for the Prince's visit to the Centre in 1998.

The finale of the show comprised a set of jigs – *Rory MacLeod* and *The Curlew* – in which all of the performers were joined by Board members Alan Forbes BSc FFA and Dr Martin Lowe OBE BSc PhD along with multi-talented folk musician Phil Cunningham.

Prince Charles also met and chatted with musicians, staff and officials from the Centre during his visit to Glasgow.

Centre Principal Roddy MacLeod said the visit had been a resounding success and it had been an occasion to remember for everyone involved.

He added: "The day was a day to share and herald the successes of the first decade or so in the life of The National Piping Centre.

"It was also a great way to raise the profile of our work with people involved in different aspects of Scottish society from business and tourism to music and culture.

"Everyone seemed to thoroughly enjoy themselves." ●



Photo: Derek Maxwell



Photo: Derek Maxwell



Photo: Derek Maxwell

Piobaireachd Society Set Tunes For 2010

THE Piobaireachd Society recommends the following arrangements for competitions in 2010:

A. SENIOR COMPETITIONS

The following pairs of tunes are recommended:

1. The Sister's Lament PS 4 p109, K p41 and Nameless (Angus Mackay's MS) PS 4 p111, K p42
2. The Battle of Glenshiel PS 4 p124 and A Glase PS 11 p320
3. Duncan MacRae of Kintail's Lament PS 4 p121, K p40 and Nameless (Colin Campbell's Canntaireachd MS) PS 4 p124, K p43
4. The Old Woman's Lullaby PS 4 p113, K p39 and The Aged Warrior's Sorrow PS 12 p360
5. Lament for Red Hector of the Battles PS 4 p111, K p42 and The Middling Spree PS 11 p322
6. The Park Piobaireachd No.1 PS 4 p113, K p46 and The Pretty Dirk PS 11 p318
7. Nameless Lament (MacArthur MS) PS 13 p420 or 421 but not p423 and Lament for the Bishop of Argyll PS 15 p509
8. Salute on the Birth of Rory Mor MacLeod PS 4 p121, K p38 and Left Hand PS 14 p489

Competitors will submit four pairs from the above list, one of which they will be required to play. Tunes may be played in any order. Prizes will be awarded for performance over the two tunes.

Settings of these tunes different from those specified will be acceptable provided that the judges are advised in advance and provided with the music for the alternative setting(s) submitted. However, versions of these tunes with conventional taorluath and crunluath movements will not be acceptable. For the purpose of these competitions, only the first line of the urlar need be repeated at the end of each tune and this will be regarded as part of the performance.

Altogether different tunes known by the same or similar names will not be accepted as alternatives.

B. GOLD MEDAL COMPETITIONS

Competitors will submit eight tunes of their own choice, one of which they will be required to play.

C. SILVER MEDAL COMPETITIONS

Competitors will submit six tunes of their own choice, one of which they will be required to play.

Brit of success for soldiers

THE Royal Scots Dragoon Guards are celebrating winning the Classical Brit Album of the Year Award 2009 for *Spirit of the Glen – Journey*.

The pipe and drums album, which was partially recorded while the soldiers were in Iraq, beat well-known artists like Andrea Bocelli and Katherine Jenkins to win the prize.

World Solo Amateur Piping Championships

THE World Solo Amateur Piping Championships, which is run by CLASP, will take place at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama on August 12, 13, and 14. Grade 3 will be held on August 12, Grade 2 on August 13 and Grade 1 on August 14.

The Grade 1 Overall Winner will receive an all-expenses-paid trip to compete at the Metro Cup Amateur Competition in February 2010. This trip is kindly sponsored by Eric & Maureen Stein. To enter please email mhoulahan@thepipingcentre.co.uk

Taste of the Tryst

THE National Piping Centre has an impressive standing in the world of music, but the emphasis on quality also runs through to the Pipers' Tryst restaurant at their Glasgow base in McPhater Street.

Head chef Eddie Shaw has created a mouthwatering menu offering a range of dishes with a strong Scottish theme but there is also a Mediterranean twist.

Eddie explained: "We have a wide range from basics like steak pie and fish and chips to something a bit different like steak or lamb cutlets. There is plenty of variety plus we do a dish of the day and fish of the day, which can be anything from sea bass to monkfish.

"The main nucleus of the menu is traditional Scottish dishes like cullen skink, haggis and cranachan. But we also use Scottish produce like Stornoway black pudding served with chorizo so there is also a Mediterranean influence."

The Pipers' Tryst has an extensive a la carte menu but also offers an excellent pre-theatre menu which runs from 5-7pm every day costing £12.95 for two courses or £15.95 for three courses.

The dish Eddie has chosen to showcase for *Piping Today* readers is from the pre-theatre menu – Panfried pollock fillet with warm spinach, sautéed chorizo and potato salad with a balsamic reduction.

He said: "This dish uses sustainable fish and is a posher take on fish and chips. We have potatoes instead of chips, the fish, the spinach is like a salad and the balsamic reduction which is the salt and vinegar.

"It goes really well with other dishes from the pre-theatre menu such as the starters of smoked chicken with goat's cheese and orange or warm leek and cheese tart."

Eddie has given step-by-step instructions so that you can recreate this dish at home. And if you'd rather use a different fish, any variety with meaty flesh like cod or monkfish will do just as well.



Photo: John Slavin @ designfolk.com

Panfried pollock fillet with warm spinach, sautéed chorizo and potato salad with a balsamic reduction

Ingredients: 1 x 6oz pollock fillet, half chorizo finger, 1 tsp olive oil, 5 baby new potatoes, 1oz baby spinach (approx 8 leaves), 2oz butter, 2tsp balsamic reduction, salt and pepper.

Method: 1. Boil potatoes in salted water until ready. The best way to check if a potato is cooked is to press it with a small knife. It's ready when the potato falls off the knife. Cool the potatoes in cold water. Slice and put aside.

2. Warm pan on stove and add tsp of olive oil. Season pollock with salt and pepper. Cook skin side down for approx three minutes. Add the two knobs of butter and turn. Put in oven to finish cooking until flesh starts to come apart to touch. Leave to rest.

3. Slice chorizo sausage. Panfry in dry pan to release oils. Add potato slices and cook for around two minutes. Add spinach at end.

4. Place potato, chorizo and spinach in a serving ring, biscuit cutter or ramekin. Push down with spoon to crush. Remove ring or ramekin and place warm pollock fillet on top. Drizzle with balsamic reduction. Garnish with herbs and serve. ●

THE restaurant is open daily from noon to 3pm and 5-9pm, except on Sunday when it is only open for light lunches 12-3pm.

The Pipers' Tryst is an excellent choice for visitors to Glasgow and not just for the cuisine on offer. It also has eight rooms available over two floors for guests. There are seven twin rooms and one double. All have ensuite facilities.

The price of a single room is £50 per night including a continental breakfast. Twin or double rooms are £65 per room per night including a continental breakfast.

Full Scottish breakfast is available for £5.95.

To book a room go to visitscotland.com. For more information about the Pipers' Tryst or to book at the restaurant, call 0141 353 5551.

Piper's path to the good life at the top of grade one

Stuart Robertson

NORTH Ayrshire is not a region of Scotland known for traditional music. Thankfully, this situation may change in the near future, as for the past half dozen years traditional instruments, including Highland pipes, have been encouraged and taught at secondary school level in the area. Where pipe bands are concerned, you need to go back to the early 80s to find any who were regularly getting into the prize lists. At this time the main local bands were in Ardrossan and Irvine and these have proved to be a seed-bed for talent with a handful of players from these bands providing the leading players in the current local piping scene, and a few — including Stuart Robertson, Colin Whitelaw and Peter Hunt — playing with top grade one bands.

Back in the early 80s, Stuart Robertson was at primary school, aged 11, and looking for a reason to get out of gym class when the Burgh of Ardrossan pipe band came to his school to give music tests and find potential players. He decided to give it a try, as it seemed like a good skive, but passed the test and got invited to a band practice by the pipe major Willie Crawford. The Burgh of Ardrossan pipe band was then competing at novice-juvenile. He later moved to the grade three Irvine pipe band, under Iain MacDowell, and thought he would struggle to step up but seemed to thrive. While there he was encouraged to play in solo competitions and became Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway Juvenile Piping Champion in 1988.

He explained: "Irvine were a successful grade three band when I was there with prizes at majors and we were regarded as one of the top grade three bands of the time. The Royal Burgh of Annan pipe band were one of the

other top grade three bands at that time, with Neil Hodgson as pipe major — it was either them or us that were winning and at the Worlds in 90 or 91 we came second to them."

Stuart's progress up the ranks since then has come through his own hard work. He said: "I have never had private piping tuition, and never even had one-to-one from any of my pipe majors. I'm I bit of a sponge when it comes to learning. I just stand there, listen to what is going on and soak it in. I wish I had got private tuition at some point, but the notion for solo competition left me after Irvine pipe band. While I was still at Irvine, my first adult competition was at the Cowal Games and I just thought I would go and do what I normally did. So I put my pipes up and my bass drone stopped, then my tenor drone stopped, then I stopped, and I never competed in solo competition after that. It was at that time that I was starting to get interested in harmony, arrangements and ensemble playing, so I decided at that point I was going to concentrate on band playing."

As Stuart's involvement in solo competition was withering, the seeds of his composing career were being sown. His interest in band music grew as he started listening to exciting new pipe band music which was coming onto the scene, and realised that he would like to write music.

"I have never been taught how to write music," revealed Stuart. "When learning to read music at Ardrossan pipe band it was basically just flash cards with notes on them — that's an E, that's a G — and I have never been taught any more about musical theory. I think my first attempt at a tune had nine bars in the first line and six bars in the second line and it just did not make any musical sense on the page, but it did

make sense in my head. After a time I started to look at music and when I wanted to write a jig for example, I would dig out music for other jigs. I would study how they were written and tap my foot to figure out how many dots should be in each bar."

Stuart got to a point where he felt he was not learning any more at Irvine and was disillusioned with being the nearly-men of grade three. He mentioned to his sister, drum major Sharon Smith, that he wanted to move to a higher grade and through her association with drum major adjudicator Jimmy Robertson and also Hon. Vice President of the RSPBA George Purves — who both had strong links to Torphichen and Bathgate pipe band — it helped open the door to a move up the ranks. Glasgow Skye, under Kenny MacLeod was an option, but his move to West Lothian came about by chance when he was with his parents at a competition in Falkirk.

He said: "I saw a band that were playing exciting music and I liked the uniform — their kilts were lovely. I didn't know who they were, what grade they played in, I just liked them, and sure enough it turned out to be Torphichen and Bathgate, so it was set up for me."

The pipe major, Gordon Stafford, saw Stuart in action in the Annan games and invited him to audition at the end of the season.

Torphichen and Bathgate were having a very successful season at that time and eventually won grade two Champion of Champions for piping and drum corps, so Stuart's step up was bigger than he had expected — right into grade one. "I was about 18 or 19 when I joined Torphichen and Bathgate, and I had no expectations that I was always going to play. I just wanted to do my best and if I played that was a bonus," said Stuart. "At first I felt out



Photo: John Slavin @ designfolk.com

of my depth, but as the weeks and months went by I gradually grew more comfortable, and I started to get a real understanding from Gordon Stafford of how a band is set up and how medleys are constructed at that level. My first season in grade one was really good as the band got into the top 10 at most of the majors and we achieved our targets for that year with some success.”

It was when Stuart was in his second season with the Torphichen and Bathgate pipe band that his confidence in tune-writing grew and he thought for the first time: “I can do this, I’m a composer.” Gordon Stafford was looking to put together a medley and Stuart tentatively gave a tune to Gordon and then played it for him, in case his music-writing skills did not do it justice. “When I had finished Gordon said: ‘I like that, I think we will play it in the band.’ I was very excited obviously. From that point onwards whatever band I went to played my tunes.”

The following year a few pipers moved on from Torphichen and Bathgate, including a young, ambitious Stuart Cassells who wanted to play with the Vale of Atholl. The decision was taken to put the name of Torphichen and Bathgate into hibernation and any players were free to move on. So it was in the season 1995/96 that Stuart, Gordon Stafford and a few other players went to the Polkemmet pipe band under pipe major Stevie Young.

“Polkemmet is a huge name in the pipe band world and had been one of the top six in the mid-80s,” said Stuart. “Gordon Stafford had previously played with them when Robert Mathieson was pipe major and Jim Kilpatrick was leading drummer so there was already a connection there. Stevie Young was pipe major when we joined and he is a clever guy when it comes to music and sound. However we were not as successful as we should have been, although the potential was certainly there. I stayed with Polkemmet until 1998 when I went to... I’m trying to remember — I’ve had more kilts than Geoffrey (Tailor) — Glasgow Skye under the direction of Ian Roddick.”

Stuart moved to Glasgow Skye in 1998 and the band had reasonable success in grade one while he was there. They were in and around the top 10 and enjoyed taking the scalps of some ‘bigger’ bands. “The best we played when I was there was 1998, around the time the RSPBA introduced the qualifier for the grade ones, and we narrowly missed getting into the finals at the Worlds. We had the potential to go further,



Photo: John Shaw @ designfolk.com

but Ian Roddick was due for retirement as pipe major which he announced mid to late season, and that had a negative effect on me as I had learned a huge amount from him. Ian Roddick taught me so much about band craft — setting up a band, refining the sound, musical presentation and the difference between how a solo player or a band would play a tune.

“When I was at Glasgow Skye, I seem to remember that any tunes I gave to Ian Roddick, the band would eventually play. So that gave me loads of confidence to compose more, but what I found was that for every 10 tunes I wrote I would get one that was half-decent, and that is the case with most composers. I would be very selective of what I would take to the band. I would normally go back to a new tune after a couple of days, and if I found that it had stuck in my head, that would be the one that I would take to the band.”

When Ian Roddick retired from Glasgow Skye, brothers Craig and Iain Campbell took over and Stuart was unsure of his next move. He had a few offers, but preferred to be with a band who were up and coming and would allow him to have some input rather than playing at the highest level. “I have always been self-

conscious of my own ability,” said Stuart. “I don’t think I’m a slouch, but at that stage I didn’t feel ready within myself to make the step to a grade one band at the very top. I then got a phone call from Kenny MacLeod, who was taking over as pipe major at Kilmarnock pipe band, and he asked me to be his pipe sergeant, and that sounded quite exciting. As pipe sergeant I could have some input, start to implement everything I had learned up to that point and have a hands-on approach to setting chanters, pipes and music arrangements.

“Kenny MacLeod attracted former members of the Glasgow Skye Band including his brother Donald who had been the band’s pipe major for several years, so Kilmarnock was re-graded into grade two, and he put lots of effort and funding towards the band to kit it out, including 10

sets of silver and ivory McCallum Bagpipes. Kenny also encouraged everyone to stay, and nobody was told they were not good enough. It was more a case of ‘if you don’t make the grade you won’t compete’, but we did want people to remain in the band and improve themselves and a few youngsters did come through.

“Unfortunately, Kenny could only last two seasons with the band due to his busy work commitments with McCallum Bagpipes. He asked me if I would like to take the band on, but such a major character would have been a very hard act to follow. Lots of players had come to Kilmarnock, and travelled quite a distance every week, because Kenny was pipe major. Were these guys going to do that for me?”

Stuart returned home from the meeting where Kenny announced he was standing down and minutes later got a call from Colin Whitelaw to ask if he wanted to join the David Urquhart Travel pipe band under Don Bradford. Don had previously told Stuart he would like him to join him when he got his own band and Stuart jumped at the chance.

“It was from that point the musical bug really took hold of me,” he said. “Don Bradford is a musical genius and I can’t think of a bad

tune he has written, although perhaps he is like everyone else — writing 10 to get one good tune. He is someone I have huge amounts of respect for, he is a clever man, and everything he did when setting up the band I paid close attention to. I loved the music that the band played and I knew I had arrived at where I had always wanted to be, both musically and with the sound of the band. The pipe corps won the medley section of the final in the Worlds in 2003, and were going out at smaller competitions, like Perth, and beating the likes of Strathclyde Police. We were on the periphery of breaking into the top six bands in the world, and it was the best year I had ever had in my piping career up to that point.

“However, it only lasted a year, as during the close season there was a break-up between the pipe corps and the drum corps as Don wanted

to bring in a new leading tip. There was all sorts of animosity and eventually a split was agreed: the pipe corps would become the Glasgow Pipes and Drums and the drum corps would remain David Urquhart Travel and keep all the uniforms and drums — it was like a divorce.”

It was around that time in 2003 that Gordon Stafford approached Stuart about coming to work with him again.

“He had been approached by George Purves to become pipe major and resurrect the Torphichen and Bathgate name, with the addition of the drum corps from the recently disbanded grade two Boghall and Bathgate Caledonia. This really suited me, starting to build a band up from the ashes again. It did upset Don Bradford a bit — like most pipe majors he did not take too kindly to people wanting to leave his band. He told me I was making a mistake, but it was one I wanted to make, so I joined Gordon Stafford as his pipe sergeant. Because of Gordon, we attracted three or four pipers from the previous grade one incarnation of Torphichen and Bathgate in 1994, and the drum corps, led by Calum Firth, were one of the best in grade two.

“By that time I had a big role in the band in helping set the sound and set pipes up. Musically, I also had quite a big input. At first, we put in a few familiar tunes into the MSR to give people a fighting chance of knowing the tunes. We left the drum corps to their own devices, as they were already very good and we needed to bring the pipes up to the quality of the drums.

“We had a very good winter, and I decided that I wanted to have much more of a hands-on approach. You can only play to your weakest player, so in the first year I concentrated on trying to bring those up a bit to raise the overall standard, but the second year was probably the best year I had in the band. I probably wrote about three-quarters of the band’s repertoire, and Gordon Stafford had brought in a few young guys from Carluke pipe band — Chris Djuritschek, Simon Bone and Alan Jamieson — the Three Amigos. Chris was a composer, but musically gifted where I’m not, and he understood music much better than me. I had plenty of ideas for tunes and could roughly write them down, but Chris had the technical abilities of writing music and we would bounce ideas off one another.”

Not content with just competing, Stuart set his sights on organising a concert. “We were a

‘Don Bradford is a musical genius and I can’t think of a bad tune he has written, although perhaps he is like everyone else — writing 10 to get one good tune’



Photo: John Slavin @ designfolk.com

new band in grade two and had a decent pipe corps and a drum corps that took care of itself, and we wanted to showcase this at the end of the season. As it turned out it was a very good season: we won the British Championships and were second at the Worlds to Drambuie Kirkliston with pipe major Ian Duncan, but we were unlucky not to win. Our drum corps were always in the top three wherever they played, and I always loved working with leading tip, Calum Firth, especially during 2005 when putting together the material for the concert. It really was a huge team effort, and though it was the most stressful season I have ever had, the band sounded really good.”

The concert was held in the Magnum Centre, Irvine, Ayrshire, and it was recorded by Murray Blair and released by the band as a live CD, *The Curse of Uluru*. Stuart enlisted local group, the Caledonian Piping Club led by Gerry McClumpha, to help with the organisation, sell tickets and programmes. “That freed me up to concentrate on the running order and tune composition. Chris and I worked on writing a large majority of the show. We wanted a good

mix of old and new stuff, and we resurrected the *For Ireland I'll Not Tell Her Name* set which Gordon had played with Polkemmet pipe band on their *From Celtic Roots* album. Backstage was pretty frantic, and for that set we were playing C naturals, so I was having to tape-up chanters accurately, while there was other things happening on the stage. I double taped the holes, so that when the set was over we just removed the top layer while on stage and were ready for the next set.

“When I listen to the CD of the concert now I'm still very proud of it, although I can see a progression in my style of writing over the last four years. Obviously listening as a piper, I start to pick faults, but it was a live recording and you are going to get these things. When we walked off stage that night it was a huge relief, but it was also tinged with sadness that it was all over, as I really enjoyed performing the concert.”

The following season the band knew they had to push for grade one, but Stuart had burnt himself out the season before and could not give 100 per cent and that was not good enough for him. He was also disheartened that bands who

had not been near them the previous season, were now catching up with them. By the time they got to the Worlds, he knew it would be his last season in the band. He swithered over joining another band that he could help to build or taking his chance to play at the very top. Through connections he had with players in the House of Edgar Shotts and Dykehead pipe band, he sounded them out with a view to joining. He approached Robert Mathieson and was told to come up to the band at the end of the season.

Stuart had more confidence in his ability by then, and knew he could compare with pipers at Shotts with whom he had played in other bands, but attending his first practice was still a daunting experience.

“That first night was the single most frightening thing I have ever done in my life. Shotts and Dykehead own their band hall, and when you walk in there is a set of squeaky double doors taking you into the practice hall, and all the pipers sit at the bottom of the hall. Every time the doors open, they squeak, and everyone turns around, and it is the longest walk in the

world. That was the most frightening part. I didn't have to do an audition. The way Rab does it is just to give you music and you join in with everyone playing chanters, and if you are not going to make it you will be told. The first time I blew into my chanter I had sweaty fingers, and I was thinking 'I'm going to make a right pig's ear of this'.

"I wasn't totally confident with the style of playing the first couple of times, but I have always been able to adapt to a style quickly, and it wasn't so different from the Ian Roddick style of playing. Now that I'm established in the band, I get to listen to new guys who come for a try-out, and you form opinions right away. It is never the case that they are not good pipers, but sometimes they just don't fit into the Shotts style. In some cases if people are not getting things right, Rab will stop everyone and ask them to play on their own in front of everyone — 23 guys, all top grade one players, many who have won World Championships, and you can't help but think 'Oh my God'."

Although Stuart had settled in quickly, he still felt that he was not playing at his best and didn't want the pipe major to get a false impression, so he decided to give him a copy of the Torphichen and Bathgate concert CD.

"I wanted him to hear my Deger pipes solo track in particular, and he then phoned me and asked what the tune was. I explained it was a tune I had put together in about two minutes but had never written down. He suggested he could write it out from the CD because he wanted the band to play it. He then asked for its name, and after I had picked my chin up off the floor, I replied *Pyroclastic Velocity*. Rab said 'WHAT? I think we should drop the *Pyroclastic* and just call it *Velocity*, if that is OK with you?'"

By the next practice Robert Mathieson had it written out with some changes to the tune which he felt would suit ensemble playing. That prompted Stuart to make more suggestions and changes. "Everyone is allowed their opinion in the band, and Maurice Rhodes, the pipe sergeant, is always very scathing with any tune that is presented, good or bad — even with tunes that Rab has written! Rab and I played through *Velocity* in front of the guys and most of them liked it, but 'Big Mo' turned around and said 'what a load of mince!' On the way home that night I had another idea which built on one of Rab's suggestions, and would involve the drummers stopping for seven bars I thought,

'This is me, telling Jim Kilpatrick to cut out! So I quickly recorded it and emailed it that same night with the message, 'I'll let you tell Jim he is not playing for seven bars'."

Velocity was eventually used as the tune which finished the Shotts and Dykehead medley at the World Pipe Band Championships in 2007, when they came third overall, but were first in the medley. It is still in the repertoire in 2009 as their number two medley.

Stuart soon learned to email recordings of new tunes to Robert Mathieson, rather than putting them before the whole band, but if he does not get a response from Robert he does not pursue it. However, he now has seven of his own tunes played by Shotts and Dykehead in their competition and concert repertoire.

"We were invited to Florida in 2008 by

'That first night at Shotts and Dykehead was the single most frightening thing I have ever done in my life. All the pipers sit at the bottom of the practice hall. Every time the doors open, they squeak, and everyone turns around, and it is the longest walk in the world'

the Florida Central Highland Games Committee to perform. We were accompanied by Griogair Labhruidh, a Gaelic singer and multi-instrumentalist, and he gave Rab a tune called *Tommy Macdonald of Bargul-lion*, written by Dr Bruce Thomson. It is a swingy, really musical 2/4 march, and Rab was looking for a tune to go with it for the concert. I immediately thought of a 2/4 I had written called *The Caledonia Piping Club*, and the key change was perfect, so Rab added it right away."

It has been a long road and a constant learning process throughout Stuart's piping career to get to a stage where he can enjoy the benefits and lifestyle of a piper at the top of grade one. The trip to Florida was all-expenses-paid and they spent three nights in the Orlando Hilton. He's been on TV playing with the band on the Hogmanay show, and had a few showbiz moments like being shouted at by Sharleen Spiteri for playing pipes during her sound check, chatting to Sandi Thom and buying a can of Irn Bru for her mum. The band were also on Phil Cunningham's *Scotland's Music* TV series,

and Stuart's tune *Velocity* was played, and he received royalties for it. However it is learning from some of the most highly regarded pipe majors that has given Stuart the greatest satisfaction and inspiration — and the confidence to lead a Shotts and Dykehead practice when a few of the more obvious candidates were missing.

"I look back to when I was with the Ardrossan pipe band and I first got Polkemmet's *From Celtic Roots* album, and the thing that stuck out for me was *The Blackbird* set which is now iconic. I always wanted to play that stuff, and it was the first time I had heard anyone slide a note. I was mesmerised by the CD. I feel that I have almost come full circle now that I'm playing in Robert Mathieson's band. He is a piping icon and someone I have always

tried to emulate in my piping life and in my tune-writing. Here I am now sitting down in his practice hall and he puts his new tunes down in front of me and asks my opinion — that really screws-up my head! There are times that I really need to pinch myself.

"I have never put anyone on a pedestal, but there are people throughout my piping career that I have always looked up to and respected — Don Bradford, Ian Roddick and Gordon Stafford. I have learned so much from them, and it is the same with Robert Mathieson. To have him tell me that he likes a tune or my ideas means a lot to me. He asked me to lead a practice when he was away. Obviously if the pipe sergeant had been there, or two or three other guys, they would have got the shout before me, but for Rab to ask me just got me thinking: 'This is Shotts and Dykehead, and I'm taking a practice!' I have the confidence and ability to do that in a one-off situation, but I'm not ready to do it permanently at this level, as I still need to learn a lot about the music — but I know I'm in the right place to learn." ●



Peter Morrison of the Peatbog Faeries



Thomas Zöller of Homebound



Bodega

Piping Live! sizzles

Piping Live! Glasgow International Piping Festival is back for a spectacular sixth year with a bigger and better programme than ever before running from August 10 to 16 in Glasgow.

Events take place at venues across the city, as well as free concerts and displays in George Square daily – including a special Homecoming Scotland *Music of the Clans* presentation.

Piping Live! will open with a bang with the platinum-selling Red Hot Chilli Pipers performing at the opening night concert on

Monday, August 10, along with Bodega at The Old Fruitmarket. This is guaranteed to be a fun-packed concert from the original rock 'n' roll pipers who took their unique brand of music around the globe. Radio 2 Young Folk Award winners Bodega are another great young band with an energetic take on traditional music.

Tuesday's main concert is another treat with the *International Quartet Competition* featuring last year's winners ScottishPower competing against Simon Fraser University, Field Marshall Montgomery, Manawatu Scottish, St Laurence

O'Toole and the Australia Highlanders for the title of Quartet Champions at the Strathclyde Suite in the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall.

There's also a *Masters Drumming Recital* on the Tuesday at Todds Bar. This tribute to Alex Duthart features Jim Kilpatrick, Reid Maxwell, Barry Wilson, Gordon Brown and Steven McWhirter and is hosted by Ken Eller. Fred Morrison and friends also play at that venue on Tuesday night.

Wednesday night is a special Homecoming Scotland event called *Battlelines to Barlines*



Red Hot Chilli Pipers

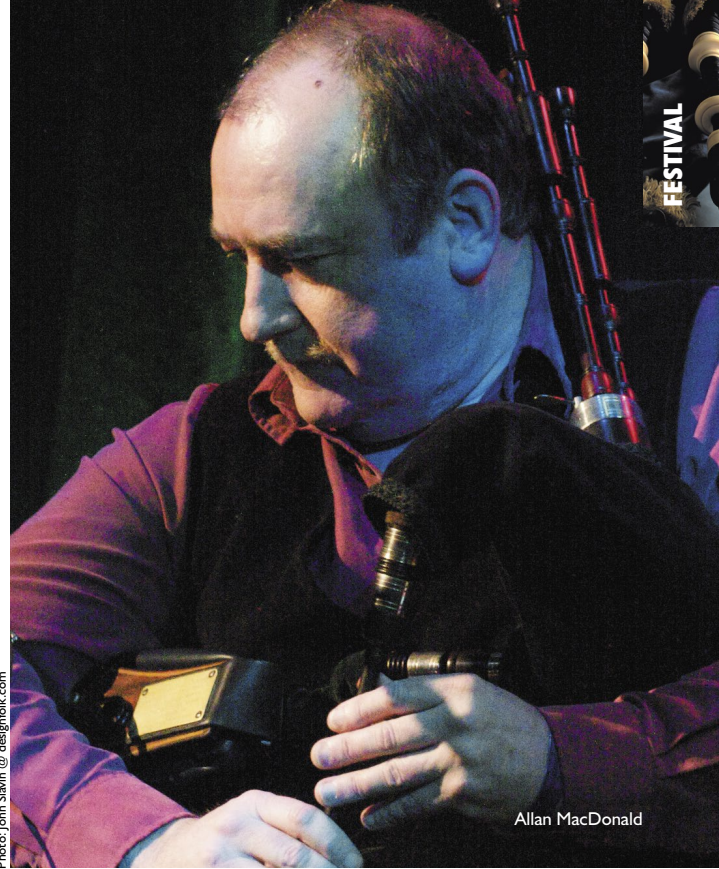


Photo: John Shevin @ designfolk.com

Allan MacDonald

FESTIVAL



Photo: Marc Marnie



Gary West & Wendy Stewart

Photo: Ryan MacDonald



Jori Chisholm

with six of the best

— *The Musical Pulse of Scottish History*. It will look at events from a ‘Clan’ perspective and use Songs, Airs and Piobaireachds. There will be a Gaelic theme running through the evening with composer and performer Allan MacDonald, Margaret Stewart and other instrumentalists involved. This will take place in St Andrews in the Square.

Thursday night’s main concert is dedicated to two instruments — *Pipes and Strings*. There will be performances by the Glenfiddich Solo Piping Champion, Gordon Walker, and the

Glenfiddich Solo Fiddle Champion, Raemond Jappy. Iain Morrison will perform with friends and Gary West and Wendy Stewart will be performing tracks from their new album *Hinterlands*.

Earlier in the day on Thursday, the *Silver Cap* competition takes place at the College of Piping. This new solo piping contest showcases some great pipers and new compositions. It’s a busy night as there is also a *Pipes of Peace* concert at Oran Mor with the Manuwatu Scottish pipe band, Celtic Spirit and friends while Todds

Bar hosts the University of Strathclyde Piping Recital Challenge with Alasdair Gillies, Stuart Liddell, Angus MacColl and Alan Bevan.

The *International Piping Concert* takes place on the Friday, the eve of the Worlds. The Strathclyde Suite at Glasgow’s Royal Concert Hall will host Fred Morrison and f-friends, Paddy Keenan and German/Scottish group Homebound. There might even be a chance Fred and Paddy will get together on stage – which would be great for all traditional music fans!

The now legendary *After-Worlds Shindig*

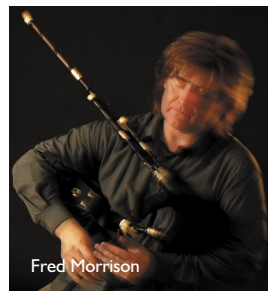


Dràm



Photo: Matej Slavik

The Finlay MacDonald Band



Fred Morrison



Ross Ainslie & Jarleth Henderson



Photo: John Stavin @ designfolk.com

Margaret Stewart

on Saturday, August 15, will take place at the Old Fruitmarket and is the perfect after-show party following the World Pipe Band Championships. Prepare to dance your socks off to the Peatbog Faeries, Ross Ainslie and Jarleth Henderson, The Finlay MacDonald Band and Skerryvore.

Piping Live! culminates with eight of the world's best competitive solo pipers battling it out on the Sunday morning after the Worlds. Alan Bevan, Jori Chisholm, Murray Henderson, Angus MacColl, Willie McCallum, Niall Matheson, James Murray and Niall Stewart will go head-to-head to land the prestigious Masters Solo title.

There's also a *Survivors' Sunday Session* in the afternoon featuring Finlay MacDonald and Chris Stout among others.

These concert highlights just scratch the surface of a packed programme of events featuring global piping talent.

Young pipers from around the world will battle it out to be crowned Pipe Idol in a series of free heats in The National Piping Centre Street Cafe while bands competing in the worlds will also give a sneak preview of their repertoire with free performances throughout the week.

The Festival Club also boasts an impressive list of performers including Xeremiers De Soller from Majorca, Hepta from Portugal and Scandinavian Celtic band Dràm. And of course, there's more than just music on offer with workshops in composing, bellows, bagpipe manufacturing and reedmaking, a barrel-making and whisky display, art and photograph exhibitions, come and try sessions, whisky tasting and even a Homecoming Dance.

Roddy McLeod, Director of *Piping Live!*, said: "We have put together a fantastic programme that will once again see Glasgow become the centre of the world for international piping from August 10 to 16.

"Last year's festival attracted 25,000 people to events throughout the week but this year we aim to attract even more fans and we have made sure there really is something for everyone.

"Glasgow is a hub of musical talent and *Piping Live!* is a great opportunity to experience the best names in traditional music and everything from the pipes to fiddles to a bit of rock 'n' roll and dancing. I would encourage people from across the UK and further afield to come and enjoy a couple of days at both events and to take advantage of the free events in George Square daily which make a great day out during the summer holidays."

The festival is an outstanding precursor for the amazing spectacle that is the World Pipe Band Championships, organised by Culture and Sport Glasgow on behalf of the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association (RSPBA), at Glasgow Green on Saturday, August 15.

"The Worlds' have been associated with Glasgow since 1948 and this year's event will see more than 8,000 pipers and drummers from as far afield as Australia, Eastern Europe, New Zealand, Pakistan and the USA competing for the coveted title of World Champions 2009.

Ian Embelton, the Chief Executive of the RSPBA, said: "There's little that can match the sight and sound of 8,000 pipers and drummers assembled on Glasgow Green as they battle it out to be crowned world champions.

"We have no doubt that this year the com-

petition will be fierce and the entertainment spectacular."

Bailie Liz Cameron, Chair of Culture and Sport Glasgow and Vice-Chair of Glasgow City Marketing Bureau, said: "Come August, Glasgow once again will be the focus for world piping, creating a spectacle which enthral both citizens and visitors alike. This year, both *Piping Live!* and the World Pipe Band Championships promise to be bigger and better than ever before, reinforcing our position as a UNESCO City of Music.

"We very much look forward to welcoming visitors and pipers from across the globe and hosting a festival of traditional and modern music which is quite simply unmissable."

Paul Bush, Chief Operating Officer of EventScotland, the national events agency, added: "These are world-class events that place Glasgow at the centre of the global piping community during August and attract thousands of visitors to the city every year. 2009 is the national Homecoming year and we are celebrating many of Scotland's great contributions to the world and welcoming home many of the millions of people around the world who have an ancestral link or love for our country. EventScotland is co-ordinating the Homecoming celebrations, we are delighted to be supporting *Piping Live!* and the World Pipe Band Championships and look forward to a fantastic week of celebration."

Advance tickets for *Piping Live!* and The Worlds can be obtained by visiting www.seeglasgow.com/piping with prices starting from just £7. There is also a range of free events throughout the week so don't miss out. ●

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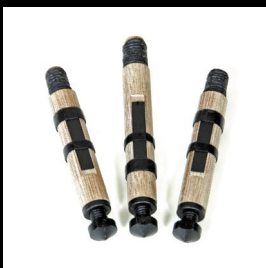
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Pipe Major
Hervé Le Floc'h

The role of the manufacturer in the recent revival of Border pipes

AS part of my final year studies for a BA Scottish Studies (Piping), at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, I had to write a dissertation on a topic of my choice. Having studied the history and repertoire of my main instrument, the Highland bagpipe, extensively throughout my degree, I felt a study of Border pipes would be of great interest as I had little knowledge of their history, despite having played them for around seven years.

The main aim of my study was to look at the recent revival of Border pipes and, in particular, the influence of the pipe manufacturer in this.

I began by looking at the concept and meaning of “revivalism” and “tradition” generally; before carrying out more specific research into revival in Scotland, piping and ultimately Border piping, as well as studying the characteristics of other revivals worldwide.

I interviewed leading Border pipe manufacturers – Hamish Moore, Nigel Richards, Stuart McCallum and Colin Ross. I am indebted to these guys for their patience in sharing their knowledge and insights with me. Without their input, I doubt I would have been able to complete my dissertation – and, I certainly doubt if we would be in the position we are today with the great resurgence in the playing and popularity of the Border pipe!

Having prepared my background I used a model devised by American ethnomusicologist Tamara E. Livingston to compare and analyse this particular revival with the characteristics she found common to all revivals. The “basic ingredients” usually necessary for a successful revival are:

1. an individual or small group of ‘core revivalists’
2. revival informants and/or original sources (e.g. historical sound recordings)
3. a revivalist ideology and discourse
4. a group of followers which form the basis of a revivalist community
5. revivalist activities (organisations, festivals, competitions)
6. non-profit and/or commercial enterprises catering to the revivalist market.



Photo: John Shawin @ designfolk.com

GILLIAN CHALMERS' love of piping began at the tender age of seven. She heard a pipe band playing at the harbour in her home town of Fraserburgh and decided she wanted to take up the Highland pipes.



She started with the town's British Legion pipe band before moving on to be tutored by Pamela Smith (now Pamela Whyte) who introduced her to Buchan pipe band under pipe major Malcolm Whyte.

After playing in junior competitions, she joined Ellon British Legion band and then moved to the National Centre of Excellence in Traditional Music at Plockton High School aged just 12.

She then gave up the pipe band scene and studied piping under Dougie Pincock and Ian McFadyen at Plockton, where she also played the fiddle.

It was there she met the other young musicians who she plays with in Bodega, the Radio 2 Young Folk Award-winning band.

Gillian plays Highland and Border pipes, whistle and fiddle, with Ross Couper on main fiddle, Tia Files on acoustic and bass guitar and occasionally on the pipes; Norrie MacIver on accordion, guitar, djembe and vocals with June Naylor on clarsach and piano.

They've toured extensively in the US and Canada and are now concentrating on the UK and Europe. Their performances have been limited with the demands of studies this year but they played at Celtic Connections and also had a gig there with Brian McNeill. They are looking forward to appearing at some major festivals this summer. As well as a performance at *Piping Live!* in Glasgow, they are also playing at a Highland Games in Bressuire, France, during June with dates at Tønder Folk Festival in Denmark as well as gigs at Speyfest and the City of London festival.

They're signed to the Greentrax label with two albums, *Bodega* and *Under the Counter* already under their belt.

After leaving Plockton in 2005, Gillian moved on to the RSAMD for the BA in Scottish Studies (Piping) course. She was tutored by Gavin Stoddart and Allan Macdonald for the first years of her course and later by Stuart Samson and Finlay Macdonald.

Her Border pipes are the Fred Morrison Reel pipes made by McCallum Bagpipes, but she has a Nigel Richards Garvie chanter so, as she says, "it's a bit of mix and match". She also has a set of Ian Kinnear smallpipes.

For her dissertation at the RSAMD she decided to investigate the revival of the Border pipes.

As she explains: "Despite common perception that Lowland/ Border piping refers specifically to that geographical area, bellows piping was equally common in the Northeast and the Highlands. Coming from the North-East of Scotland, I was intrigued to find that one of the last notable Border pipers, Frances Jameson, came from New Byth in Aberdeenshire, just a few miles from my home town. Despite this I had never heard of him which rather sums up my ignorance and, I think, the general state of the Border pipe world, generally until very recently, showing the desperate need for not only a revival in terms of playing but also for the history element."

The following is an extract from my dissertation, which aims to summarise the main aspects of the Border pipe revival and in particular, 'the role of the manufacturer in the recent revival of Border pipes'.

THE REASONS for the original decline in popularity of the Border pipes are rather unclear but it is likely that it involved a number of factors: limitation due to keys available, a lack of quality instruments, and even, something as mundane as the introduction of mechanised town clocks outdating its use to "strike the hour".

Although there have been many revivals worldwide, the 1950s Folk song revival seems to have been pivotal in awakening Scotland's traditional musicians to many other possibilities, both in terms of an increased awareness of the need to preserve our musical heritage and tradition and in the number of folk groups and the greater experimentation they have shown, such as the present common inclusion of the Border piper.

Through the great work of collectors such as Hamish Henderson, a great deal of our oral tradition was collected and recorded before the tradition had been allowed to decline to the point that much was lost forever. The work of Hamish is so well regarded by the Travellers themselves that many of them are now aware of their own decline and are making concerted efforts to collect, publish and record before it is too late.

Unfortunately, it seems that there were few original sound recordings of the Border pipe, or records of their fingering and repertoire and few, if any, old players surviving by the time curiosity was once again aroused in pipers "looking for more", as Hamish Moore puts it. As discussed at length by each of the manufacturers interviewed, initial attempts to "revive" the Border pipe were hampered by the inability to find an instrument of acceptable quality, yet the interest grew as the possibilities of this instrument were realised, and the desire to move away from the narrowness of the pipes as a solitary and separate instrument, used only in competition or pipe bands, increased.

Although, retrieving the "old style" is vital as part of our history and heritage, it has been seen, to some extent, to cause stagnation and "fossilisation". There must be continuation and selection; an old tune isn't necessarily

a good tune. I personally prefer the now commonly quoted definition of tradition, as being "living and breathing", feeling it holds true as there can be no specific date or point in time marking a definitive break between "old" and "new", thus allowing for "continuation".

The human mind is curious and enquiring, why else would we feel drawn to learn about the past? Equally, it is only natural that we will explore and experiment with new tunes and elements from other genres and cultures. In the past, we had little access to outside influence such as foreign music and, indeed, little access to anything outside our own immediate circle and neighbourhood. Modern communication, travel and technology are constantly widening the possibilities and it will be very interesting to see, in the next few years, just how much instrument manufacture will be affected by technology, as being trialed by the likes of Stuart McCallum, and how much traditional craftsmanship will still be needed.

In terms of Livingston's framework (item 1), the Border pipe certainly satisfies the requirement to have a "core group of revivalists", with a combination of players, collectors and historians leading the way. It is interesting, but not unique, that several of this core group went on to become manufacturers; their motivation, however, ran a lot deeper than simply realising the commercial potential (Livingston item 6). Their love, enthusiasm and appreciation for the instrument together with growing frustration at the lack of quality pipes led them to experiment for their own benefit before eventually becoming full time manufacturers.

Although, we again satisfy Livingston's requirement for "enterprise" in that we now have a number of manufacturers to fulfil our need for good instruments, the enterprise only occurred after an individual developed such a love and interest that they were drawn into manufacture. There is not a huge amount of commercial activity in other areas such as trying to make money from running Border pipe festivals, classes, books or the like; most people just want to play, although some will make money playing in a band. Often an entrepreneur sets out to look for a product/business idea, or to "fill a gap in the market", with the sole goal being to "make money". This was not the case for any of my

case studies, who all became makers almost by accident in order to satisfy, primarily, their own need for a better instrument.

Ideology, discourse, activities and followers (to satisfy the remaining elements of Livingston's framework) are certainly not lacking and continue to grow with a number of Border pipe publications and events now underway. As to followers, I personally sit in the middle of this group, and am a typical example of what Moore wanted to change.

As one of the first pupils at the National Centre of Excellence in Traditional Music, I was introduced to bellows pipes by its Director, Dougie Pincock. Prior to this, I was very much the stereotypical solo and pipe band player with very little knowledge or experience in anything outside this circle. Playing bellows pipes opened whole new avenues I had not previously explored and is now my main interest allowing me to enjoy a far greater range of possibilities.

I THINK this Border pipe revival seems to have "sparked the imagination" of many pipe players

and seems to have filled the "gap", giving us back the option of a much wider opportunity to play as part of the folk community; rather than just being pipers — a separate, isolated group for ceremonial purposes and competitions only.

Having seemingly satisfied all the elements required for a "revival," have we reached the point where the Border pipe revival has been successful, and can we say it is complete?

I believe it has been very successful given the amount of players we now have with several very successful manufacturers around the country struggling to meet demand. In terms of the level of raised awareness, it would also seem fair to say that this "revival" could now be considered complete. However, if we adhere to the principle that we should have exploration, continuation and development then this, and all revivals, should never be complete. Only time will tell if this is the case, and only then can the revival be truly defined as successful.

And the role of the manufacturer in the Border pipe revival? I believe the

manufacturer is crucial, as a good quality instrument is extremely important to its popularity and the desire to play it.

However the availability of a good instrument is not enough in itself to prompt a revival. Just because the instrument is there is not enough to make someone want to go and buy it and play it. The other elements are required, too.

It is unlikely that a revival could succeed if the only motivation was "commercial". Again, people won't buy the instrument just because it's there. The enthusiasm and devotion of all the manufacturers I interviewed was as important to the success of this revival, as their instrument.

Finally, referring to the idea that a revival consists of a kernel group including an activist, a researcher, and a pragmatic practitioner; could it be said that some manufacturers, such as Moore, served all three categories? It could be argued that without pragmatic practitioners such as these, a revival would have been unlikely to succeed. ●



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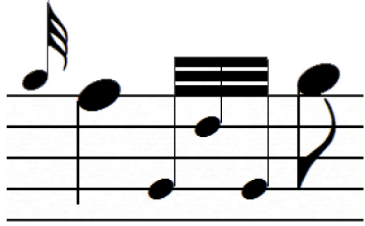
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PIPE MAJOR

Emma Buchan

Q. Where are you from and how old are you?

I'm from a village just outside Falkirk called Shieldhill and I'm 19.

Q. How did you get into piping and when?

About 12 years ago, my dad decided he wanted to play the pipes and started going to lessons with his friend James Grant, who played for ScottishPower at the time. He practised religiously and eventually I persuaded him to give me a go and he then agreed to take me to lessons. Six months later I was at McCallums getting my first set of pipes. The addiction had started.

Q. Who is your tutor and what pipe band do you play with?

My tutor is Roddy MacLeod and I play for the grade one Boghall and Bathgate Caledonia Pipe Band.

Q. How many hours a week do you spend on piping and how much practice is on your own, with a band or on the pipes/chanter?

I have two band practices a week, starting at 7pm as I help out with our Juvenile bands, and I don't leave the band hall till 9pm. Then I teach in Falkirk, when I can, for an hour and a half on a Thursday. I'm also at the RSAMD, so I play my pipes as often as I can at uni and of course in my lessons. I try to do some chanter practice every day too, to keep on top of my technique. Of course, if there is a NYPB practice at the weekend, I'll spend my weekend playing as well. So really, the majority of my week is taken up.

Q. What are your piping strong points and what do you most need to improve on?

I think my strong points are piobaireachd and my high A. I need to work on my light music to bring it up to the same level as my piobaireachd.

Q. What do you want to achieve in piping?

Well, I'm already pipe major of the NYPB so that's one thing ticked off. I'd love to win all the big solo prizes too, and eventually take over a competing pipe band. Of course that depends on how I do with the NYPB. I'm taking education electives with my degree at the RSAMD so I'm hoping to become a high school teacher at the end of it. **cont. on p.28**



Photo: John Slavin @ designfolk.com



NYPBoS welcome guest

THE National Youth Pipe Band of Scotland's calendar remains busy as the year passes us by in a bit of a blur. Following on from an eventful and action-packed beginning quarter of 2009, May and June have proven to be equally productive for the project.

The month of May saw both the senior and development bands take a step back from public performances and sit down as a group to begin learning a large pile of new material for the re-launch concert which will take place in the Usher Hall in Edinburgh this coming November. Members of the senior band have welcomed a brand new repertoire which will feature a healthy balance of traditional and modern compositions and the band will continue to push the boundaries of concert performance. In particular, the drum corps will air a brand new drum fanfare building on their workshops with world-renowned percussionists Pete Lockett and Jeff Queen which took place at the beginning of the year. Meanwhile, the development band continues to perfect their existing concert set-list and have enthusiastically added some additional pieces which they will perform on stage with the senior band at the aforementioned November concert.

Many of our members continue their involvement with the *Tam O'Shanter* youth project, a joint venture with the Scottish Youth Theatre and Y-Dance. A full week of rehearsals at the beginning of June have ensured that the production continues to make strides towards the final performances which will take place at Stirling Castle in late October. Even at these early stages, members are excited by what is shaping up to be a unique and innovative interpretation of the Robert Burns story and Scottish culture and heritage as a whole. We are very proud to be a part of such a production and would like to thank both the Scottish Youth Theatre and Y-Dance for their continued support in this fantastic youth initiative.

June 2 saw the celebration and commemoration of the 10th anniversary of The National Piping Centre. The National Youth Pipe Band of Scotland was extremely proud to have played such an important role in the day's proceedings. The senior band treated members of the public as well as invited guests and dignitaries to a mini concert on the steps in front of The National Piping Centre.

The band provided an excellent prelude to the arrival of the guest of honour,

HRH Prince Charles, who returned to the centre a decade after officially opening the building in 1998. HRH Prince Charles graciously took the time to meet every member of the band, asking them questions about their studies and the number of years they had been members of the project before listening to the band perform one of their signature pieces.

After being escorted into the main building, HRH Prince Charles was eagerly awaited by three of the project's youngest players, Lucy Ferguson aged 11, Conor Sinclair aged 13, and Ciaran Sinclair aged 14. The trio delighted our guest of honour and the extensive guest list of dignitaries, including Scotland's First Minister Alex Salmond with a short programme of music before meeting HRH Prince Charles. Once again the talents of all members of The National Youth Pipe Band of Scotland were highly commended by all who enjoyed a listen. Many thanks to everyone for putting on such a great show and being such fantastic ambassadors for the project and The National Piping Centre.

Our members continue to drum up successes on the solo circuit. In the past month the prize-list continues to feature many of our members from both the development and senior bands. Congratulations to the following for some excellent results:

ABERDEEN

- Andrew Clark** : 1st Under-18 MSR / 2nd Under-18 Jig
Keith Christie : 1st Under-18 Jig / 2nd Under-18 MSR
James McPetrie : 5th Under-18 MSR

BLAIR ATHOLL

- Struan Thorpe** : 2nd Piobaireachd C Grade
Conor Sinclair : 1st Under-18 Jig / 2nd Under-18 MSR
David Shedden : 4th Under-18 Jig / 4th Under-18 MSR
Jonathan Graham : 5th Piobaireachd C Grade

STRATHMORE GAMES

- P/S Craig Muirhead** : 5th Piobaireachd

BATHGATE GAMES

- P/M Emma Buchan** : 3rd Strathspey & Reel

Also a special mention to Ciaran Sinclair for winning the Ayrshire Piper of the Year Prize for 2009.

THE coming months will see no change in the busy schedules of both the development and senior bands. July will host two more band practices which will be focused on perfecting several pieces from the new repertoire in preparation of their debut at several events in August during the *Piping Live!* Festival. If you have some spare time, please come along and support the band at this excellent festival.

Once again I would like to close by thanking the Scottish Arts Council and The National Piping Centre for their continued support and assistance, as well as the parents and families of our members whose support is unrelenting. Thank you. ●



of honour to the Centre



Photos: Derek Maxwell

- Q. What is your favourite tune and why?**
I have several tunes that I really like but I think *The Little Cascade* might actually be my favourite. I like it because it's such a quirky tune and is very versatile too for either solos, in a band or even in a traditional band.
- Q. Have you written any tunes?**
I have written a few tunes, but most of them were for assignments at uni. I would like to write some more and hopefully a few may be good enough for the NYPB.
- Q. What make of pipes do you play, and are they set up with sheepskin and cane or synthetic?**
I play a set of full silver McCallum Bagpipes with a sheepskin bag and my reed set-up changes whether I'm playing in the band or in solos.
- Q. What is the best trip or playing experience you have had with the NYPBoS?**
The best trip was the first one, when we went to China. It was such an amazing trip because we were treated like royalty with a five-star hotel and lots of press. However, I think the best playing experience is the very first concert we did at the RSAMD away back in 2003. I played the first solo which opened the concert, I don't think I'll ever forget that.
- Q. What is your favourite part of being in the NYPBoS?**
My favourite part is probably the people that are in it. There are a lot of great people in the band which makes my job as PM much easier. I'm also learning a lot and gaining vital experience for the future.

- Q. What are the other band members likely to say about you, or what are you most known for in the band?**
I'm not a morning person so I'm never in a good mood with early morning rehearsals. I'm probably most known for my laugh though... I think it's pretty infectious!
- Q. What is the secret of your success?**
Probably practice and being focused, especially on the week up to competitions and concerts. It's what I do for a career so I think that really helps when it comes to motivation to practice. I also had a really good grounding. My first tutor, James Grant, was a real inspiration and I owe my initial success to him. In terms of pipe bands, I started with Bo'ness RBL in the Novice band, and the tutor there, William Simpson, believed that all the kids should get a game, regardless of ability. Some people may frown upon this but I believe that this helped me gain a wealth of experience early on in my career and helped towards my promotion to grade one aged 14.
- Q. What would be your ideal uniform if you were allowed to choose it for your band?**
I actually really like my band tartan, Ancient Hunting Fraser. It's a really nice blue on the back, and I think blue socks and long sleeve shirt with a blue jacket and waistcoat would work quite well.
- Q. What would you do or say to encourage other youngsters to learn the pipes?**
I've travelled all over the world with the NYPB, something which some people will never get the chance to do. The Highland pipes

- are a national instrument and are recognised instantly all over the globe. It opens doors for teaching home and abroad and it has an amazing social life.
- Q. Do you have any superstitions or any pre-performance rituals?**
I don't think so. I did have a St Christopher necklace that I liked to think was 'lucky' but the pendant broke recently, which is quite annoying. I'm always at a venue at least an hour before the competition to avoid stress. My uniform is always out the night before so I don't stress in the morning. When I get to a competition, I have to go and see exactly where I'm going to be playing, so I can prepare. If I'm playing outdoors, I work out what kind of distractions there might be, like generators from vans, playground rides or guns from races.
- Q. Who is your pipe idol?**
When I was younger, it was Gordon Duncan. I met him a few times and going to his concerts really inspired me. Now though, I look upon Roddy as my pipe idol. He's an amazing teacher and I have learned a huge amount from him. He also used to help me with my maths homework from school.
- Q. What are your interests outside of piping?**
Shopping and driving and making my car look pretty... shoes and handbags too.
- Q. Are you sporty, and do you follow any teams?**
Ha! I used to play basketball for my school but I gave up as I decided staving my fingers wasn't a good match with a promising piping career. I still dabble with badminton occasionally and enjoy swimming to keep fit. I like to watch rugby if that counts. I don't really follow any teams but I like to see Scotland win.
- Q. Do you prefer sweet or savoury?**
Sweet. Duh.
- Q. What do you want to do for a career?**
I want to be a secondary school music teacher or a piping tutor, anything in the teaching sector.
- Q. What other music do you like? What's on your MP3 player?**
There's a lot of traditional stuff on there but I like easy-listening stuff like The Killers and Snow Patrol, any bands like them and most recent stuff that's in the chart.
- Q. Who are your heroes?**
Probably Roddy and Gordon Duncan. And my mummy and daddy of course. I wouldn't be where I am if dad hadn't started all those years ago. They also used to ferry me around from competitions to band practices. At one point, I was playing for David Urquhart Travel pipe band and dad would come in from work and we would go straight to Glasgow to get me at band on time. I'm really grateful for everything my parents have done for me. ●



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We can do better

The Festival of Juvenile Solo Piping

HOW many times have you come away from solo competitions thinking or saying: ‘I could have run it better than that!’

Insufficient tuning facilities; unknown judges; lack of stewards; cold, inappropriate venues; minimum competitions. These were the same sentiments shared by myself and Colin McCallum in March 2000 after being stuck away on the outskirts of another indoor competition as an afterthought, where even the Judge was asking the audience: ‘What happens next?’

Colin and I started the Caledonian Piping Club together in January 2000 and discussed the pros and cons of staging our own solo piping competition. We mulled it over for the next two years – continuing to visit and support other solo piping competitions, hoping they would see for themselves why only the same, small number of entries turned up, year-on-year.

Fate intervened when Colin died of cancer in October 2002, leaving his family (a wife and two children), and a legacy of giving his all to piping in North Ayrshire, over the previous 20 years and more. It was a very moving tribute when a band of almost 30 pipers and drummers from all grades who had either known or played with Colin over the years turned out to parade him to his final march past.

Colin always loved to hear the pipes. He would have been the first to admit he was never the best – but that didn’t deter him from playing anywhere, anytime, (usually to the annoyance of everyone around). Nor did it stop him from teaching and encouraging youngsters not to make the same mistake that he had. He learned as a youngster in Stevenston, but gave it up for too many years



Gerry McClumpha and Colin McCallum pictured during their time in the Cunninghame Pipers’ Society



Bradley Parker of Portavogie in Northern Ireland, pictured with his former tutor Norman Dodds. Bradley is one of the most successful pipers to attend the Festival of Juvenile Solo Piping, winning prizes every year and scooping the over-16 Senior Piobaireachd in 2008.

before renewing his passion with Ardneil Pipe Band, followed by the Cunninghame Pipers' Society, the Isle of Cumbrae RBLs and finally, the Caledonian Piping Club.

A more fitting memorial to his piping commitment in his local area, was for the group to take up that challenge of 'we can do better', and organise a solo piping competition. The Festival of Juvenile Solo Piping was inaugurated for the first anniversary of his death in October 2003 and the rest, as they say is history.

The event started in 2003 with 90 entries from all over Scotland competing in a range of chanter and piping events in four competition arenas, all over our venue (St Andrew's Academy, Saltcoats).

We knew what we wanted to do, but did we have the experience, the knowledge, the manpower and the venue to actually pull it off?

Compliments were received from all sides after the first event – from parents, players, tutors and even the volunteers who helped make it all possible. It was an excellent day – but the real proof of the pudding would be in how many would return next year, and for the years to come.

Last year, our sixth competition, we had over 300 entries primarily from Scotland but we are also now attracting a few regular entries from Northern Ireland and for the first time an entry from England. These spanned 18 events in both chanters and piping, in eight competition arenas, all running simultaneously. As well as having to contend with all of the above – we also had to cope with a move to a new venue in Auchenharvie Academy, Stevenston, as our previous venue was demolished to make way for a new school.

We now offer 55 trophies and are unique in offering individual age groups in both chanters and piping from 10 - 18 years of age, (five in chanters and 13 in piping), allowing each player the opportunity to play against opponents of the same age. In recent years, we have added a junior (under-15 years) and senior (over-16 years) piobaireachd event and with such a huge entry (over 70), we have had to run morning heats for the Open Jig competition, The Colin McCallum Memorial Trophy.

We realise that although we do our best to make the playing field as level as possible through the individual age groups, we will never make it 100 per cent as obviously players begin at different ages and progress at different rates.

Some previous winners...



Steven Leask
Winner of Open Jig
2008



Bradley Parker
Winner of Over-16
Piobaireachd 2008



Connor Sinclair
Winner of Under-13
Piping 2008



Jonathan Graham
Winner of Under-18
MSR 2007



Fiona Mitchell
Winner of Under-16
MSR 2007



Emmett Conway
Winner of Under-16
Strathspey & Reel 2006



Amy Rose Shanks
Winner of Under-12
Piping 2005



Emma Buchan
Winner of Open
Piobaireachd 2005



Keith Bowes
Winner of Under-16
Strathspey & Reel 2003



Nathan Drysdale
Winner of Under-16
Strathspey & Reel 2004



Gerry McClumpha pictured with the trophies for the solo piping competitions. There is also a separate display for the chanters.

However no other event even comes close to us in this respect. We then allow the individual pipers an opportunity, if they wish, to test their playing skills against older opposition by allowing them to play up one age group.

One of the most gratifying statistics for us, is that for each of the years our entry has improved and increased even although that wasn't our number one priority. We never started out to organise the biggest solo event in Scotland – only the best! That may sound big-headed but our aim was merely to provide the best possible experience for pipers, the audience and judges.

We offer individuals of the same band, a room of their own to tune up in and no more than four individual players to share a room. If you are really lucky you may even get a room of your own! No one is allowed to tune up in the corridors and plenty of time is given by the stewards to let competitors know when they will be playing next. With each piper having the possibility of playing up to a maximum of six times throughout the day, all stewards have to know what is going on in each arena, and are updated regularly via walkie-talkie. That means they can update each player in good time – making sure they are not flustered before they get to meet the judges which can be a daunting enough challenge in itself.

Competitions are held in eight different locations throughout the whole school with two judges in each arena. Each arena has sufficient seating for the audience and has a final tuning area as close as possible, without

being too close. Stewards travel back and forth picking up players and taking them from their own practice room to the final tuning room in plenty of time.

ScottishPower piper and competition adjudicator Peter Hunt is in charge of supplying the piping judges on the day, and they are all prize winning soloists and/or judges in their own right. What we try to do with the chanter judges is invite players who wouldn't usually be given the honour of judging at any level – but all have taught or have years of experience listening to, or playing in pipe bands and solo piping competitions. This is certainly not to demean the value of this event, but to give them the chance to experience what it also feels like to be on the other side of the table and maybe even give them a better understanding of just how difficult it can be, to actually sit, listen, concentrate, and judge at any level.

This past year, our two chanter judges were Emma Buchan and Jonathan Graham, both of whom have graced our arenas almost since the event started, and are now too old to compete in it. After winning 13 trophies between them, they were invited to judge to give something back to this event. They were both very pleased to be asked and accepted and both said they thoroughly enjoyed the experience. We hope this is a trend which may be introduced by other competitions and one we would hope to continue with, as much as possible.

It is so heartening to see players having won chanter events with us going on to win piping events and charting their careers as they

continue to grow and enhance their playing. At this time we are doing exactly the same with young players like Bradley Parker, Connor Sinclair, Ciaran Sinclair and many more.

We believe that a secondary school is the ideal venue for an event of this sort and size. We thought long and hard where to hold the event initially and more recently, when we were forced to move, discovered there was no other option for us. We need the practice rooms, competition arenas, catering facilities and a large presentation area. The secondary school has everything – ideal.

When we first thought about holding this event it was always our intention to make sure it paid for itself. It has taken a lot of time and effort, but with a lot of help from a lot of interested local businesses and hard work from all the team – we have certainly also achieved this aspect of our dream. Among all of this, we have never forgotten why we started and through the generosity of all the parents and performers through the years, we have donated

over £1000 to the Ayrshire Hospice through the sale of the programmes – a very worthy spin-off.

We have involved the local community and businesses as much as possible and also gain a lot of help and encouragement from North Ayrshire Council. We are glad to say that most of the invitations sent out for the day are accepted and many guests come down to present the trophies they have donated. The overwhelming consensus is amazement. They can't believe we have attracted so many youngsters and that they don't run riot and wreck the place. They are even more impressed with the standard of playing and the enthusiasm displayed by all – players, family, tutors and bands. A credit to all – long may it continue.

It would be grossly unfair to talk of an event like this and not talk about the unsung heroes. We are indebted to all the friends of Colin, and in particular those from the Isle of Cumbrae RBLs, for giving of their time and talents to MC, stewarding, registration, general running

about and fundraising, not only on the day but for some time before it.

The competition has been made all the more special by the support received from Colin's family every year. Without realising it, you will pass and say, 'Hello' to his wife, who will gladly take your money at the door and give you directions.

It never ceases to amaze all the volunteers just how much they are appreciated, and they get many compliments from players, parents and judges for all their efforts, and patience in what is a very long, hard and physically demanding day – but they keep coming back as well.

We hope that we have whetted your appetite, or at least tugged on your curiosity, enough into entering someone, or coming down and seeing for yourself. You will not be disappointed. ●

The competition is on Saturday, October 17, 2009. For more information contact Gerry McClumpha on 01294 601432 or email: germau@hotmail.com

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RSPBA Scottish Championships, Dumbarton, May 16, 2009

IT was a typical Scottish 'four seasons in one day' for the Scottish Championships, with overcast skies, then wind and heavy rain in the morning, followed by a bit of everything in the afternoon including enough sunshine to merit plenty of sunscreen. So the weather did not provide a level playing field for the bands, with conditions changing so quickly that the short march from the final tuning area saw the conditions and temperature change radically.

The weather may also have had an effect on the public attendance. There was plenty of people about, but it certainly wasn't crowded, meaning there was comfortable space for spectators and easy access to see the bands. I suspect most of the public don't

come to hear the bands compete – instead heading for the public entertainment areas. But the bands use every available bit of ground for practice, so there is no escaping the sound of the pipes where ever you are.

One aspect of the event that I really enjoyed was the use of grade two bands playing for the drum major contests. The bands would finish competing in the circle, march up the field, and reform at the entry/exit area, which bordered the main route around the arena. Some of the larger bands actually had to use part of the thoroughfare, which meant the public could get right up close and personal when the bands were playing. It was a real treat to get so close and watch the musicians at work, and my young son was enthralled by the sights and the sounds.

The results for the top three bands on the day in each grade were as follows. ONE: 1. Field Marshal Montgomery, 2. St Laurence O'Toole, 3. House of Edgar Shotts and Dykehead. TWO: 1. Inveraray and District, 2. University of Bedfordshire, 3. Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary. THREE A: 1. Aughintober, 2. Howard Memorial, 3. Williamwood. THREE B: 1. Castlerock, 2. Badenoch and Strathspey, 3. Methil and District. JUVENILE: 1. George Watson's College, 2. Boghall and Bathgate Caledonia, 3. Kintyre Schools. FOUR A: 1. Letterkenny and District, 2. Quinn Memorial, 3. Dunoon Argyll. FOUR B: 1. Thiepval Memorial, 2. Balleybolley, 3. Fraserburgh. NOVICE: 1. George Watson's College, 2. Johnstone, 3. North Lanarkshire Schools.

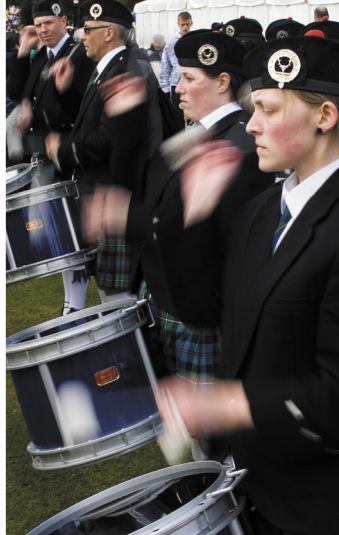


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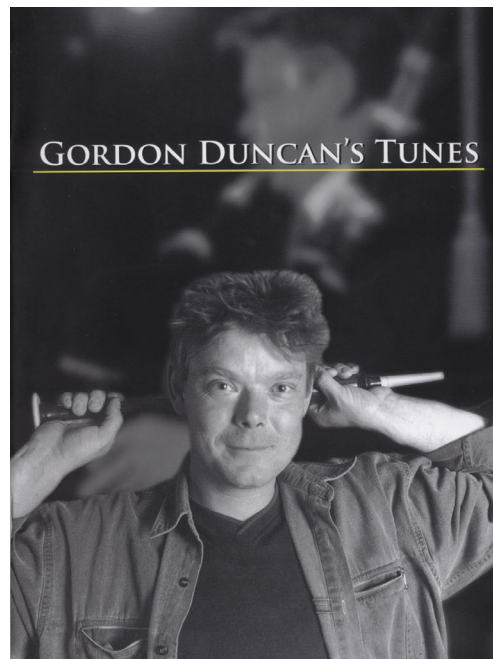
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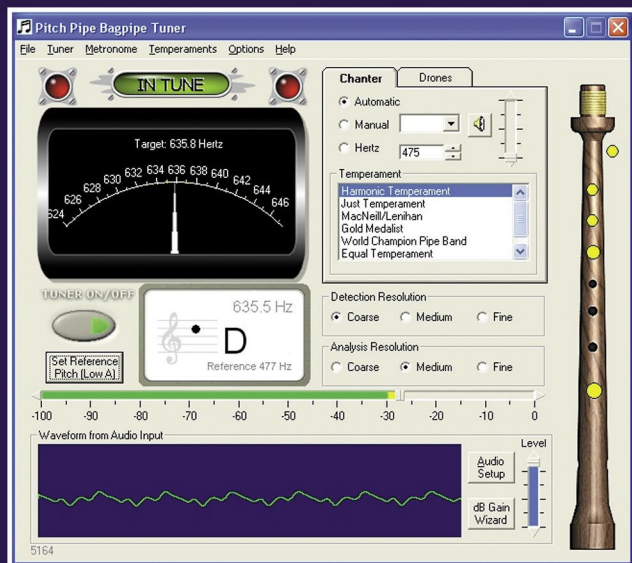
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Donald Sutherland

I SUPPOSE most families have long-gone relations who've had unusual character traits, notable exploits or outstanding talents, and whose stories get passed down the generations. Within my own family history there are fascinating tales of Lithuanian great-grandparents on my mother's side, and on my father's side, and my wife's family, there is a whole host of interesting characters and talents, including a fiddle-maker, an artist, a Glasgow music-hall performer, various ne'er-do-wells and a grandfather who could harmonise to just about any tune on the radio, but only when he thought no one was listening, and was never heard to sing in public or even in front of close family. I've always loved these family stories, and find it interesting when you see a talent reappear further down the family tree which can be traced back to an ancestor.

Alasdair Mearns is a piper from Rogart, in Sutherland, and he has a distant relation with a very colourful history, but also has possession of a set of pipes made by this relative from the wood of a wagon that crossed America and a book of his tunes.

The man in question was his great-grandfather's nephew, Donald Sutherland, born in 1888 and who lived in Rogart until his early 20s when adventure took him across the world. Donald was working on the roads when he got notice that his immigration papers had come through. Alasdair explains: "The place he was working is called Craigton, or in Gaelic, Creagach an Nathrach. The road to Craigton goes well over 1000 feet. They were working on that road, breaking metal as they called it at the time, the stones and stuff. Hard, hard work. Apparently the postman came with Donald's papers that he could go and he just downed tools and left, saying 'I'm oouta here'. He was just so fed up with the way things were. It was a tough life and he saw another chance. He had an older brother Neil, who was out in Billings, Montana, where an awful lot of people from the Highlands had gone, and I believe this is where Donald eventually joined him."

Donald did not go straight to America, and his 1922 application for a United States passport shows that he travelled to America from Peru in 1913. "He worked as a sheep farmer in Peru for a little while," said Alasdair. "Seemingly he had a favorite chanter which he lost somewhere in the mountains of Peru. We have always wondered if somewhere there are Peruvians who can take a tune out of a chanter because they found it and thought they'd have a go at it. Donald also lived in Australia for a while. Just recently when I was talking to Mrs Johan Sutherland, the widow of Donald's brother Andrew who is still alive at 95, and she said that he had a watchmaker's shop in Australia."

The intrepid traveller seems to have been a man of many talents and hit the headlines in his youth for his athletic prowess. "He was just a notable person," reveals Alasdair. "There was something about him in the Northern Times in Golspie, in which he was described as the Rogart Hercules. They have a section looking back to 100 years ago and it mentions his winnings as a heavyweight athlete in the Highland Games, which one of his brothers was also really well known for. His brother, John William, who also went to America, held records at the Halkirk Games that stood for decades. Donald was just a man of many talents, in fact the whole family were."

It is not known who taught Donald to play the pipes but it seems there were plenty of pipers in the Rogart area and they all learned from and influenced each other. "I did ask Johan where did all these people learn, and she said it was just that there was lots of pipers in Rogart. It was like, I like what

you're doing there, and you'd show me a wee bit and then maybe someone else would. There just seemed to be loads of pipers."

The last time Donald Sutherland visited Scotland was in 1938, and he settled and lived the rest of his life in America. He was married twice and still has family there. Alasdair added: "There is certainly family from a second marriage: relations there I've never met, but I know that the Sutherland family in Rogart, from whom I got the pipes, are in contact with them from time to time. There are also relations in Nova Scotia as well."

The set of pipes bequeathed to Alasdair have an interesting story about their creation. The wood and metal for the pipes came from an old trailblazers' wagon that Donald came across on a farm in Oregon. The pipes came into Alasdair's possession via a nephew of Donald Sutherland, Mr Neil Sutherland.

Alasdair picks up the story: "When Donald died they were sent to his nephew, Bert Sutherland, up in Rogart where I now presently stay. Bert and I have been quite close over the years and just before Bert died we had been talking about putting the pipes into a museum."



Photo: John Slavin @ designfolk.com

Alasdair Mearns



Photo: John Savin @ designfolk.com

Alasdair Mearns performing with the 'Oregon Pipes' in St Duthus Collegiate Church, Tain, on May 1, 2009.

ALASDAIR MEARNS started his piping career with Branch 34 Legion pipe band in Orillia, Ontario, Canada, tutored by Gerry Raycroft, who was a banker working in the town at the time. He was taken on by Brian Lee, a friend of Gerry's, who eventually encouraged Alasdair to go to Guelph University because there was a grade one band in the city at the time. The Guelph pipe band was under pipe major Ed Neigh when Alasdair joined, and the pipe sergeant was Jim McGillivray. Alasdair spent the next two years practising constantly before being allowed out with the band, although he played with them for quite a number of years and acted as pipe major for a year. His post-graduate degree, among other things, eventually brought him back to Scotland and for the last 15 years, on and off, he has been having tuition with Uilleam Muc (Willie MacDonald), Benbecula. Alasdair has not been involved with pipe bands since he returned to Scotland, but "keeps his hand in" playing solo at the local games and usually gets into the prize lists when he goes out. He currently divides his working week between teaching Gaelic language and history at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, the Gaelic college on Skye, and working at his shop in Tain as an alternative health practitioner.

Bert died at the very start of 2008, and after a while I had a word with his brother Neil, who is currently living in Rogart, and said 'look, do you remember that Bert and I were chatting about maybe looking for a home for his pipes'. And Neil said 'Look just take them. They're sitting in a corner rotting in a box, not doing anyone any good. If you can look after them, you take them'. And his mother Johan, was there at the time just said 'well make sure you don't sell them'. So that's how I ended up with the pipes.

"I think the pipes are made of oak. In fact, that's what Hugh Cheape thought when he had a look at them as well, and the interesting thing about them is the oak came from the tongue of a covered wagon that crossed to Oregon with the settlers. There's a chanter with them and at the bottom of the chanter it says 'Donald Sutherland Glide, Oregon 1962'. Bert Sutherland told me that the pipes crossed America twice – 'once as a covered wagon and once as a set of pipes. Even the metal came from the fittings that were on the wagon'. If you look inside the drone, the tuning slides are lined with metal. Donald made a really nice job of them.

"The only thing he didn't make was the chanter, he ordered that from a company in Canada. I was trying to get the original chanter going but I found it awful squeaky.

I really didn't have the time or the reed resources to sit down and get it going so I just stuck my modern chanter in it... I'm not sure that that's a good thing because my feeling is the pipes would be happier a lot flatter than the modern pitch. I've stuck in an old set of ezeedrones and I had to screw the nut right in to get them as sharp as I possibly could and they're still tuning quite low. They squeak when they start, though if you touch the drones they'll go all right, I think they've got the proverbial neck squeeze to get up to modern pitches and they just don't like it.

"The one other thing that may have some relevance to the Oregon pipes is that Donald Sutherland also had a set of pipes which, if the stories be true, were said to have been played at The Battle of Waterloo. These pipes presently belong to a cousin of mine. I did have a chance to look at them for a wee bit and I thought I



Donald Sutherland

would try putting the drones into the stocks of my modern pipes to see how the drones sound. And they wouldn't go in to my modern pipes. They were too big to go in, and to make a long story short, I can't get the drones of the Oregon pipes into my modern stocks either. So I wonder, did Donald take his sizes and his bores for the Oregon pipes from those old pipes.

"Hugh Cheape has seen pictures of these old pipes and he dated them, owing to certain external features, probably about 1830 which would obviously be too late for Waterloo but at the same time, stamped on the drones is DC Cameron Dundee. However, the Cameron in Dundee that Hugh knew of at that time had different initials so perhaps they were made earlier by the father, I don't know."



The Oregon pipes are not the only artefact Donald Sutherland has left to his family, or indeed the wider piping community. In the 60s, Hugh Macpherson Highland outfitters in Edinburgh published Donald

Sutherland's Collection of Highland Bagpipe Music. In the preface to the book, Hugh Macpherson writes:

"This unique pipe music book compiled in the United States by Donald Sutherland, a native of Rogart, contains some very attractive tunes, which will appeal to pipers in all parts of the world. It has been a labour of love, because, like so many Rogart men, Donald Sutherland reared in a lovely Highland parish, thrills to the sound of the piob mhor, which is all the sweeter when one is six thousand miles from home.

"I am particularly pleased to publish this music book, because Donald Sutherland and

⁴
Farewell to Craigton and Strath. – Brora – 1910. MARCH. Donald Sutherland.

my father, Robert A. Macpherson, were boyhood friends in Rogart, and, indeed in their early days, were heavyweight athletes of no mean prowess.

“To all those who have assisted, Donald Sutherland expresses his sincere thanks. He is particularly indebted to Pipe-Major Donald Shaw Ramsay, B.E.M. for his helpful advice.”

The last time Donald visited Scotland was in 1938 so he must have sent these tunes across for Hugh Macpherson to publish, and it seems that he was in regular correspondence with Donald Shaw Ramsay. “Donald Sutherland seemed himself to be pretty strong on 6/8 marches although he did produce a couple of piobaireachds as well,” said Alasdair. “There are a few jigs in there by him, and a few 2/4s but other tunes in the book, like the MSRs, tend to be credited to other players. The 6/8s are kind of interesting: they’ve got kind of a nice bounce to them. There are also a lot of tunes in there by Donald Shaw Ramsay, so there must have been some coming and going between the two of them. I think Donald Shaw Ramsay was in

the West Coast of the States for a while as well, but I’m not exactly sure.

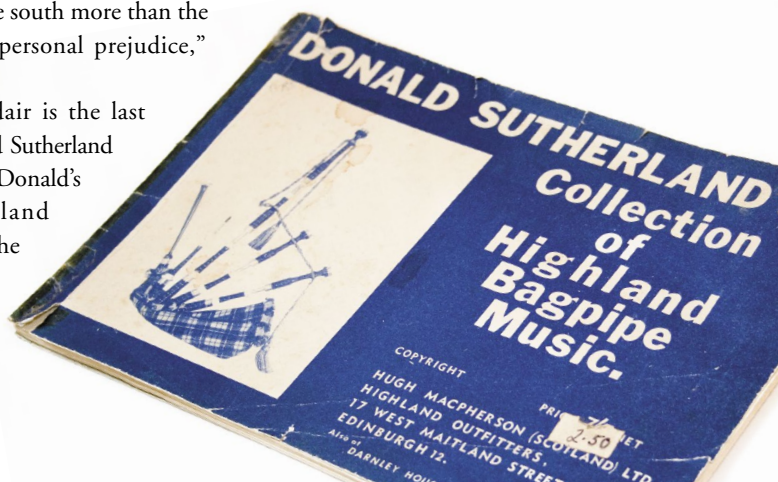
If pipe bands were looking for something a wee bit different, particularly in the medley sections, they could find something of interest in the Donald Sutherland Collection, but they may have to adapt the tunes somewhat to suit pipe band competition.

“With the amount of work that’s in the tunes, I don’t think you could play them at modern tempos. You’d have to hold back a wee bit, maybe even if I may say, play in a more Highland style. I associate the quicker tempos with the players from the south more than the north. Maybe that’s a personal prejudice,” Alasdair said.

Unfortunately, Alasdair is the last Scottish relative of Donald Sutherland who plays the pipes, and Donald’s nephew, Bert Sutherland now deceased, played the Button Accordion. “Bert was a five row box man and a

superb player,” said Alasdair. “I played the small pipes along with him, and tried my best to keep up with his encyclopaedic memory of tunes — I just couldn’t believe it.”

However, thanks to Alasdair’s hard work and research, the story of Donald Sutherland’s pipes and tunes is now being passed on to future generations and also among the local community. He has been doing his bit to keep the family heritage alive by playing concerts featuring Donald’s tunes and pipes and telling the story of the pipes made from the wagon that crossed America. ●



Ten years and growing

Bannatyne Ltd

THE zip fastener is now almost a century old, and has become an everyday technology that we take for granted all over the western world, if not the whole world. However, it was just over 10 years ago that Craig Bannatyne had the idea of adding one to a synthetic pipe bag and made the life of pipers everywhere just a wee bit easier. Craig was working with W. L. Gore making filtration bags for industry when Gore developed the first synthetic pipe bag around 1987, and Craig was involved in the technical details of trying to seal and weld synthetic pipe bag materials. He then set up his own company in June 1999, Separation Filter Media – now called Bannatyne Ltd, working with industrial filtration. This led him to ideas that could be applied to the development of pipe bags, and eventually gave him the idea of adding a zip to the bag. It then became a whole new ball game with easy access to the bag and it opened up the possibilities for Bannatyne Ltd, and a few other competitors, to explore moisture control within the pipe bag.

The first bag developed for Bannatyne Ltd was the Hide Zipper Bag in 2001, made from a laminate which is bonded to the inside of leather, and gives the feel and weight of a traditional hide bag. This was the bag that established Bannatyne Ltd throughout the piping world, and the bag was well received and a welcome development for pipers. They soon secured McCallum Bagpipes as their first customer to order large quantities, and this further helped to establish their name and build a reputation. They now also have the synthetic nylon bag for a more lightweight option, and both their bags come in the standard S, M and L sizes, but they also have the AG extended small which was developed in conjunction with Alasdair Gillies. The AG extended small bag is aimed at players who are looking for the comfort of a small bag but need more of an air reservoir than what the small bag offers. So they added the length of the medium bag to the width of the

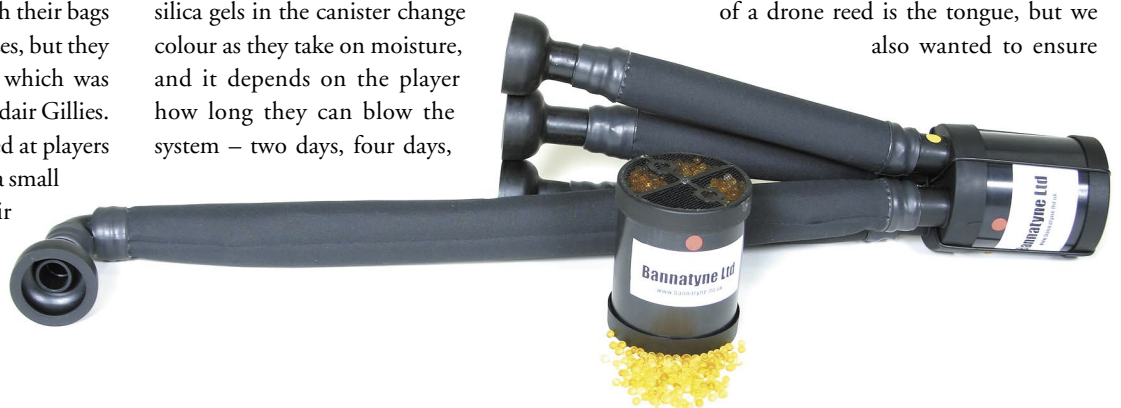
small bag, to give the best of both worlds.

Using feedback they have received from pipers over the last 10 years, Bannatyne Ltd have also stayed at the forefront of developing moisture control systems for themselves and other piping suppliers. The most basic moisture control system on the market is a water retention sleeve, with one small step-up to a tube with a plastic bottle on the end, and either of these are more than adequate for many pipers. However there are lots of ‘wet-blowers’ out there, so the moisture control system has had to develop over the years and now comes in a variety of shapes which hold drying desiccants or silica gels to filter the warm, moist air before it reaches the drone reeds. Craig Bannatyne has researched and developed various techniques, until they reached the Bannatyne Canister Moisture Control System which came on the market last year. “I believe this will take us forward,” said Craig, “but we are always looking to improve our products though working closely with solo players and bands, and that has brought us to where we are today with Gordon Stafford and sponsorship of Torphichen and Bathgate pipe band. We can design and develop the products, but it is only when working closely with a band that you find the wee niggly problems that you need to refine, and it is through working with Torphichen and Bathgate pipe band that our Canister Moisture Control System came to fruition.”

Gordon Stafford, who has been pipe major of Torphichen and Bathgate pipe band since 2003 and an employee of Bannatyne Ltd for just over a year, explained how the band use the Canister Moisture Control System. “The silica gels in the canister change colour as they take on moisture, and it depends on the player how long they can blow the system – two days, four days,

six days, a week perhaps – before there is any signs of moisture getting to the drone reeds. You want very little, if any, moisture getting to synthetic reeds, but you can manipulate the system by using less gels if you are using cane, as you need a bit of moisture for cane reeds. What I have found over the past year with the chanter reed, is that you need a certain amount of moisture to give maximum depth to your sound — you don’t want a reed that is too dry or it will get thin on the top hand, and you don’t want a reed where there is too much moisture or it will start to flatten-off. You need a middle ground, and to achieve this I only use 50% of the chanter gels and only dry a quarter of that once a week. This allows the individual to control the moisture to the chanter to suit their blowing and also to control the amount of moisture that a particular chanter reed may need — so you have total control. I also tell the band members to remove the canister from the bag after every time we have played, have a look at the levels of moisture, and if it does not need drying put it into the plastic bag that it comes supplied with. I’m finding that most of the guys in the band are only having to dry the gels once a week, and some even less.”

Constantly looking to expand their range of products and aiming to become a one-stop-shop for the piper, Bannatyne Ltd have been developing their own drone reeds over the past couple of years, and this culminated in their synthetic drone reeds coming onto the market last year. Once again Torphichen and Bathgate pipe band were involved in the development and as soon as the design was optimised they were in use by the whole band. “The most important part of a drone reed is the tongue, but we also wanted to ensure



that we gave the reeds maximum movement for tuning. Our drone reeds have a unique grub screw adjuster and screw set-up which gives greater flexibility in the reed chamber,” explained Craig. Gordon added: “We wanted to develop a drone reed that we know would work, and fit, in any set of pipes regardless of age and manufacture, and that is why we designed the grub screw adjuster. So far, touch wood, we have not found a set of pipes that they will not go into and play well, and a lot of people have found that after 20 minutes of blowing, they are locked in and will stay there.

“We have had pipers come in, perhaps with an old set of pipes, and tell us that they have always had a drone which they could never quite get going, but when they put our reeds in they can get all three drones going well. It might take 15 minutes of set-up in some cases: moving the bridle, the screw at the end, a wee bit of manipulation here and there, but in most



instances it is just a case of putting the reeds in and away they go.”

Craig Bannatyne realised that to grow his business he would need to offer more to the piper, so two years ago he employed Derek Marr, pipe major of Lanark and District pipe band, as his pipe maker. “Derek has been making bagpipes since he was 15, and is now 24 — he is one of the best makers I have seen,” said Craig. “Bannatyne is not a name that people associate with making bagpipes, chanters or chanter reeds — we have still to establish ourselves in those fields and it will take time, but we know we have the quality. So it is just a case of getting them onto the market place, and getting people to play and hear our pipes.”

Craig, Gordon and Derek must have real confidence in their pipes, as they took a gamble last year in sending a set of pipes equipped with all of their own products to Andrew Berthoff at pipesdrums.com for a review. Gordon explained: “We asked Andrew if he would do a review of our whole system: pipes; chanter; drone reeds; moisture control system and bag. So Andrew sent them to Bob Worrall without telling us who he had sent them to. We had no idea what the review was going to say, but thankfully our faith in the products was proved correct and we got a very pleasing review.” Craig continued: “There was one problem that he picked up on with the chanter reed, but when he tried another reed, the chanter proved to be excellent.”

The Bannatyne name is now well established in the piping world as a maker of pipe bags, but they still have some way to go to reach that name recognition for their other products. “We are new to this side of the business, and are striving as a company to offer the piper the right instrument and the complete system that they are confident and happy with,” said Craig. “We make a quality, hand-crafted instrument, and we won’t be mass producing them as other makers do — not in the short term anyway. We can tailor our pipes to the individual, and if the piper has anything specific that they want, we can work with them.”

So Bannatyne Ltd are providing the full

instrument for the piper, and apart from ongoing development of their chanter reed (or maybe discovering piping’s ‘philosopher’s stone’ — a good synthetic chanter reed), they don’t foresee any other new developments for the bagpipe in the next 10 years. “Not unless pipers want a set of pipes that will play themselves,” said Craig, “and I think they would all just fall out with me if I designed those.” ●



The search for the Lost Volume

Campbell Canntaireachd Manuscript

THE two manuscript volumes known as the *Campbell Canntaireachd* contain 168 pieces of classical bagpipe music (piobaireachd) written by Colin Campbell, piper in Nether Lorn, Argyll, in the late 18th century. They disappeared in 1816 and were rediscovered in 1909. A considerable number of the tunes have been published since then, and are now part of the mainstream repertoire of piping.

There is evidence however that a third volume existed. It has never been found, and the search for it has now been going on for nearly 200 years.

Three generations of Campbell pipers are known: Donald; his son Colin; and Colin's son John. Donald, born circa 1727, became piper to MacDonald of Glenalladale. After the 1745 Jacobite Rising, he ended up under the patronage of a different laird, Campbell of Carwhin, who settled him on a farm near his house at Ardmaddy, at the western extremity of the Breadalbane estate (the Earls of Breadalbane had their seat at Taymouth).

In 1778, Colin joined the newly raised Western (Argyll) Fencible Regiment, and served under major Campbell of Airds, presumably as a piper. But he was invalided out in 1781, after which he had a croft at Ardrioch, close to Ardmaddy. Colin lived at least until 1814, but he seems to have died by 1824.

We have no record of Colin's ability as a piper, but his son John certainly became a first-class player. John was born in 1795. He attended the piping competitions in Edinburgh at least from 1815, and won the top prize in 1819. He became an employee of Walter F. Campbell of Shawfield and Islay, and by the

1820s he had charge of the upbringing of Islay's son John Francis.

As previously mentioned, the first two volumes are known to us, and can be viewed in the National Library in Edinburgh. It might help you to know what they look like, as the third volume is likely to look very similar.

The two books are on slightly different sizes of paper, bound in different ways, and it has been known for a long time that they were written at different times. Volume One is thought to be the earliest version and has a somewhat home-made look. The original outer cover seems to have been from a large piece of cardboard folded in four, with an inner cover of paper which was actually cut from an

old map. There are 96 pages, the whole thing secured with just one row of stitches through all the layers. The title is written on the first page of the main volume and the text begins immediately on the other side of the page. It runs continuously, with no breaks from one quire to the next, and no sign of any leaves being missing. Evidently the whole text was written in one continuous operation, perhaps not taking very long, though whether the date 1797 was the beginning or the end of the work is not clear.

Volume Two does not have quite such a home-made look. The physical make-up is consistent with this volume having been a ready-made book of 96 leaves, bought in 1814

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or later, and the text again seems to have been written in one continuous operation.

An example of what the script looks like is the tune shown above — *Cheotrao hodro*. As you can see it is not “music” on the staff, as we would call it nowadays, but a series of vocal notes, like this tune. I have also written out the urlar and thumb variation above left — ie what it might look like on the staff — though obviously what it sounds like is up to the individual player to interpret.

If you compare the Campbell Canntaireachd to other sources of pipe music from the early 1800s, it appears that something like a quarter to a third of the whole collection has been lost. There are number of reasons to suspect this, and if you are interested then please read the

been scanned into the Piobaireachd Society website¹. The reference at the end of this article will take you directly to the tune called “Cheotrao hodro”. Many of the tunes have no names and are known only by the first few notes, like this tune. I have also written out the urlar and thumb variation above left — ie what it might look like on the staff — though obviously what it sounds like is up to the individual player to interpret.

If you compare the Campbell Canntaireachd to other sources of pipe music from the early 1800s, it appears that something like a quarter to a third of the whole collection has been lost. There are number of reasons to suspect this, and if you are interested then please read the

detailed reasoning written by Roderick Cannon in 2009².

The Highland Society of Scotland arranged competitions for the writing of bagpipe music in the early 1800s, and after that several writers (mainly pipers) provided music written on the staff. In 1816, Colin Campbell’s son John brought a volume of the Campbell Canntaireachd to the Highland Society competition, but the judges refused to accept it. John stated that there were “two other volumes with his father at home in Argyll”.

Another famous piper, Angus MacKay, (perhaps the most prolific writer of bagpipe music on the staff) said in 1841 that there was “a manuscript collection in three volumes

written in language not in notation". He seemed to have access to a copy of the Campbell Canntaireachd, judging by some of the work that he produced.

We have reason to believe that Colin Campbell made more than one copy of his manuscripts. One volume of the Campbell Canntaireachd was bought by Sir John MacGregor Murray in 1816. This copy has also, for some reason, been lost. The upshot of all this is that today, in the National Library of Scotland we have the original version of Volume One, and a slightly newer version of Volume Two, but Volume Three is still missing.

Volumes One and Two were discovered by chance in the house of Ann Campbell, Oban, in 1909. Ann was a niece of John Campbell, and is our last known link with the family. She never married, and had no idea of the im-

portance of the music she possessed. If she had some volumes, it is possible that other family members preserved the others.

It is likely that, if the third volume survived, it is in the hands of someone who does not know what it is.

The manuscript can only be interpreted by relatively few people with an interest in the topic. Some work has already been done on the family tree of Colin Campbell but no living relatives have yet been traced. However the present world-wide interest in genealogy, plus the increasing amount of information on the internet, opens up new doors for widening the search for Colin Campbell's family, and the lost volume.

Therefore, while the search has been going on slowly for many years, there is a case for using these IT developments to aid us.

The following plan has been set up —

- I have joined some genealogy websites and am actively seeking relatives of Colin Campbell. The family tree of the Campbell family is shown below and is on the Piobaireachd Society website, www.piobaireachd.co.uk. There is a button on the left of the home page called "The Search", so if you think you might be related, go and have a look.

- A radio broadcast on BBC Pipeline will be done over the summer, when a couple of nameless tunes, including *Cheotrao hodro*, will be played.

- I have contacted the following communities:

Genealogists;

Piping enthusiasts — that's where this article comes in;

Archivists/historians/those interested in old books and manuscripts;

Relatives of the Campbells of Breadalbane;

Relatives of Sir John MacGregor Murray;

Owners of old libraries including private owners of stately homes and National Trust properties.

- The use of the internet to attract interest will include a video of the above information being explained, with the advice to go to the Piobaireachd Society website for more. This video will go on YouTube.

- A video for *YouTube* will also be made of one of the tunes from Volume Two being played on the pipes. This is to help explain the music, better than the written word can ever do. The above recordings will be done at Kilbryde Castle, still the residence of a branch of the family of Campbell of Breadalbane.

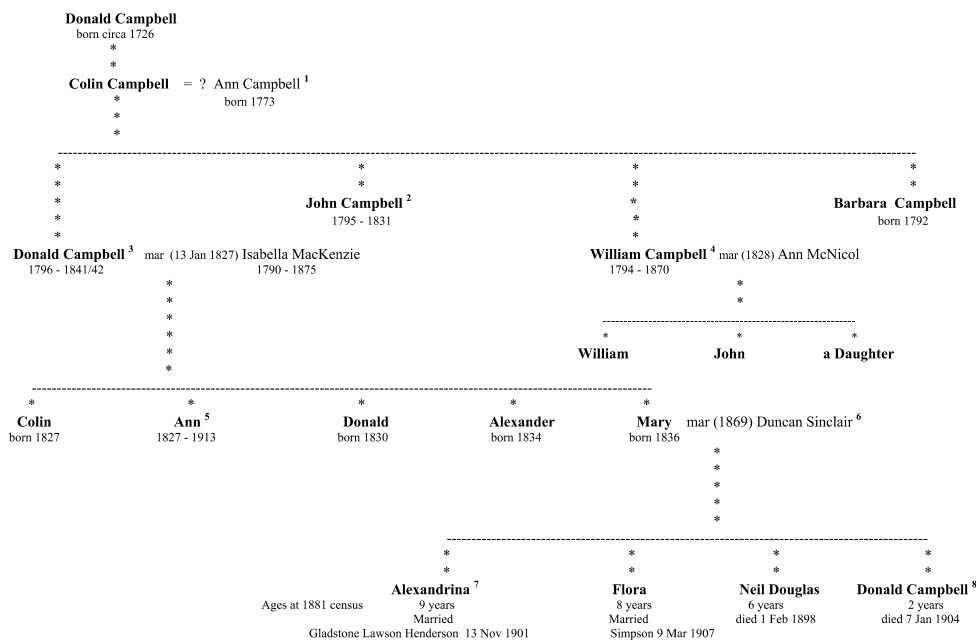
- Social networking sites (Facebook, MySpace) will also be used to disseminate information.

All documents and internet links will ask for any information to be emailed back to the Piobaireachd Society website, to be collated by me there.

If you have any knowledge of the Campbell family, or any other ideas to help find the lost third volume, please contact me — again best done via the "contacts" button on the Piobaireachd Society website. ●

References

1. www.piobaireachd.co.uk/images/stories/CampbellVol2/cheotraohodro.pdf
2. Cannon, Roderick D., (2009) *The Campbell Canntaireachd manuscript: the case for a lost volume*. The Highland Bagpipe, Music, History, Tradition, Joshua Dickson (Ed.) Ashgate, ISBN: 978-0-7546-6669-1



NOTES on the family tree

1. Ann Campbell 'Head of household at Ardriok' in the 1841 census.
2. Competitor at the Highland Society Competitions and later piper to Campbell of Shawfield and Islay. Probably the piper shown in a painting of Bowmore on Fair Day painted by William Heath about 1830.
3. Remained on croft at Ardmaddy. Various descriptions as 'Farmer, Stone mason and piper'. Died sometime between the 1841 census and a petition to Breadalbane from his widow in 1842.
4. Appears in the Glasgow Directory as a 'Clothier at 62 Argyll Street in 1831' and 'Tailor and Clothier, 1 Argyll Arcade in 1841'.
5. Died at 14 Peter Street, Oban. This was the lady from whom the two volumes of canntaireachd were obtained in 1909. Her niece 'Mrs Henderson' of 1 Grandtuly Gardens, Shawlands, Glasgow was the 'informant' on her death record.
6. Mary Campbell, domestic servant of 216 Bath Street, Glasgow married Duncan Sinclair, Joiner Journeyman of 150 Helen Street, Glasgow in 1869. In the 1871 census they were at 14 Hill Street, Glasgow but by 1881 they had returned to Lorn and were living at 6 Battery Terrace on Seil. In 1891 the whole family were back in Glasgow and living at 124 New City Road.
7. Gladstone Lawson Henderson was a Law Student at the time of their marriage in 1901. Alexandrina died on the 7 March 1929 and her death was reported by her husband described as a Solicitor of 2 Lynedoch Street, Glasgow. Gladstone L Henderson died on the 29th March 1947 and his death was recorded by his son G S Henderson of 3 Turnberry Road, Glasgow.
8. Death recorded by G L Henderson, Brother in Law of 95 Great Western Road, Glasgow.

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Nine Notes and more...

by Stuart Robertson

IN this first of what I hope will be a regular feature, we are going to look at today's trends in bagpipe music composition.

Each feature will concentrate on individuals who are at the forefront of today's popular bagpipe music, and explore the inspiration and styles of these composers, who I hope will share a tune or two with us. In this first feature I will share what inspires me, how I go about creating a tune, and generally how I go about putting a tune together.

Most of today's new music is written with pipe band repertoires in mind, and my own style is heavily influenced by the ensemble and rhythmical effects that can be produced by a band. A lot of tunes these days are pieces with ensemble specifically in mind and these tunes tend to be presented in a dramatic fashion with emphasis being placed on the effects the snare line and, in particular, the mid/bass sections can incorporate to create a powerful statement.

The best tunes come out naturally, and my own always start with a melodic hook, a phrase or passage that catches the ear. From here it's usually easy to build around this hook and expand the piece from there. There's no science or detailed explanation I could give to describe the process in moulding the hook, it just comes naturally. After I have the tune as a whole, I tend to leave it for a day or two then go back to it and see if it's a) still catching my attention, b) needing altered or c) thrown in the bin! This process can go on for a while until I'm happy with the finished tune. The best tunes will usually stick in your head.

Over the course of my writing career I've been lucky to have various folk groups and pipe bands pick up my music and play it. It's always the biggest compliment of any composer to hear their tunes being played by another band, piper or musician. The culmination of my early writing career was a book of my own compositions released in 2000 entitled *Skybound*, and was the first publication to feature Ryan Canning's *The Full Monty* and luckily for me, was well received in the piping world. I would like to publish another book in the future, but time and cost is always a deciding factor.

You can never please everyone when writing music, something one person likes is often disliked by another. I'm lucky to be in a position where I have someone like pipe major Robert Mathieson to give sometimes an all too "honest" opinion! But I think this honesty has helped improve the quality rather than quantity aspect of writing music for me. Tapping into the musical mind of one of the most prolific composers of our time has had huge advantages and has given me a better understanding of what works for a band.

There are several composers who have influenced me and whom I admire for their work like Robert Mathieson, who gave me my very first inspiration to write. Gordon Duncan, who I think everyone will agree, was a genius, and his rhythmical style of writing and playing has had a huge influence on many new composers today. Pipe major Don Bradford, who has written some unbelievable music, and is always in demand to write for the very top bands. Mark Saul and Murray Blair, who pretty much shaped the pipe band repertoire in the late 90s with a unique antipodean style that bands are still playing today. Mike Grey, Bruce Gandy, Bill Livingstone and

Ailish & Rebecca (Beanies) Jig

Stuart Robertson

Jig

Miss Mandy Steele

Stuart Robertson

Jig

Terry Tully – again all prolific composers who shaped the musical style of bands for many a year. Modern day composers like Chris Armstrong and Ryan Canning are steadily producing top quality tunes that will stand the test of time and have become popular with soloists and bands alike. Ryan, in particular at the moment, is arguably becoming the most popular composer of modern bagpipe music, and never ceases to impress with his work. Another composer you might not be so familiar with is Chris Djuritschek, who wrote a good portion of Torphichen and Bathgate pipe band's repertoire along with me a few years ago. Chris thinks outside the box with his compositions, and gave me the drive and desire to write bigger and better pieces. I hope we see his work coming into pipe band repertoires soon.

Here are two of my own tunes, the first written with more of a rhythmical feel than strong melody and the second with a stronger melodic motif.

Ailish & Rebecca (Beanies) Jig was written for my daughters, and features in the Shotts medley this year. In my head I hear the different voicing achieved by tenor drums these days, and with that in mind I started out with the second part, and in particular the first, second and third bars which give the overall effect some punch. From here I built the remainder

of the tune in pretty much 10 minutes. Once I have that hook, or motif, it's pretty easy to fill in the gaps.

Miss Mandy Steele is stronger melodically. This tune started with the first two bars and from here I felt a key change would be the natural progression. The second part became a bit of a quandary, and as in many cases with writing tunes for an instrument with nine notes, the integrity of the piece starts to cast doubt. I have in the past written tunes, like every other composer, and pondered for a while if I have heard the melody somewhere else. But usually I will proceed with the piece and get feedback from friends and guys in the band.

The hardest thing to do is to write on demand, and there are a few occasions when I have been commissioned to write a tune for a band and struggled to produce anything I was extremely happy with. I tend to go through spells where hooks and sometimes full tunes come thick and fast, and then there are times your creative juices dry up!

Writing music for me is something I'm always looking to improve on. I'm always looking to write a better tune than the last, and something someone once said to me is totally relevant to every composer out there, "I haven't written my best tune yet"... ●

All of these products can be bought or ordered through The National Piping Centre

Email: shop@thepipingcentre.co.uk Visit: www.thepipingcentre.co.uk

To have a product included in this column send an e-mail to John Slavin at pipingtoday@designfolk.com and/or post the product to John Slavin, DesignFolk, 27 Portland Road, Kilmarnock, Ayrshire, Scotland. KA1 2BT.

NEW PRODUCTS

CD & DVD reviews

The Cosmic Piper

15 Inventions for the Highland Bagpipes

Monarch CDMON879



Billy McNeil (Aberdour) and PM Brian Lamond (Dunfermline), who is ex-Victoria Police and a World Pipe Band Championship winner in 1998, have teamed up to produce a CD containing no fewer than 19 of Billy's own pieces.

Billy, who has been learning the pipes for two years under Brian's instruction, also plays flute, whistle and keyboards. Brian, who needs no introduction, provides the entire piping content for this recording and from the sleeve notes the assumption would be Billy has provided the backing.

The CD kicks off with an Eastern rhythm and feel in the first track named *Camel*. I'm a huge fan of Eastern music and rhythm so for me this was a pretty good way to catch my attention. But what was most apparent was the one-dimensional feel to the backing with all the sounds seemingly coming from the one source, or that's the way it came across anyway. From here we skip into a calypso! *Sol Cardendo* is reminiscent of a 70s Spanish holiday advertisement, but in a strange way is actually very listenable.

Without going through track by track, this CD offers a wide variety of waltzes, hornpipes, reels, jigs and airs. Brian's pipe is nicely tuned, and his playing as we would expect is clean and crisp. The accompaniment at times borders on the demo sequence you would find on your average Casio keyboard from Toys R Us, but certainly doesn't distract too much from some very nice tunes.

The tunes themselves are not your run-of-the-mill pipe pieces, and as the title of the CD suggests there is certainly a more futuristic, alternative feel in places. There's nothing difficult in any of the tunes, and you actually get the feeling the composer is in his early years of learning the bagpipe.

Highlights for me would be tracks one, five, six and 14. Track 14 starts with the Paul Dukas slip jig, *Sorcerer's Apprentice*, followed by Billy McNeil's *Piper's Apprentice* which follows on as almost a third and fourth part. It's the only completely backing-free track on the CD and a welcome break, but unfortunately it takes until the second last track to appear.

Track five *For Kate* is a nice easy-listening, *Highland Cathedral*-sounding piece. I am not a fan of *Highland*

Cathedral in any way, but I kind of liked this. It was one of those tunes you could relax into an armchair and listen to. Track six gives us a couple of reels to liven the listener up and both tunes and backing are pretty decent, more akin to what you would expect from a modern day piping album.

Overall the CD offers what I think is nice relaxing background music. You can't fault the piping — Brian gives you the quality you would expect — but the backing lets the CD down in places. It sounds very one-dimensional and at times it's apparent the keyboard used is being loaded up with different drum loops and effects. At times there's a space between the pipes and the backing, an oversight in the mixing process perhaps, but certainly something the ear picks up on.

I listened to this CD about six or seven times and each time something else grew on me. This CD will grow on the listener, and I think for someone who has only been learning the pipes for the past two years, his compositions are pretty damn good. This CD is worth a listen, and both Billy and Brian should be proud of this collaboration. **STUART ROBERTSON**

15 Tracks, Total Playing time: 60+ minutes.

John Mulhearn

The Extraordinary Little Cough



John Mulhearn is a successful solo piper and a tutor at The National Piping Centre. This CD is a big departure from that side of his music, though it draws inspiration from his piping background and experiences.

Bleedbleep-Bleedbleep — Bleedbleep-Bleedbleep-BOOP ... BRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR... BUP-BUP-BUP — so starts the first track on the CD till the *Battle of Waterloo* joins the electronic groove. I remember one of my uncles had a very cool digital watch back in the early 80s which played *Scotland the Brave* as its alarm — and that is the style of sound that starts the melody. Then a phalanx of practice chanters take over, playing through the tune once till the BRRRRs, BUP-BUP-BUPS, and BOOPS come back to accompany the melody and take the track to a conclusion.

The closest that we get to a traditional piping sound is the strathspey, *Captain Jack Murray*, at track two when the melody is played on practice chanters

again, and it has a infectious funky rhythm. It also has a humorous sampling of Roddy MacLeod's voice teaching the tune, out of breath, saying, "pay particular attention to the upbeats for example, just a little lift on these upbeats."

Allan MacDonald also features on two tracks singing the piobaireachds, *Lament for Owen Roe O'Neill* and *The Desperate Battle of the Birds*. I don't think I have heard anyone singing piobaireachd better. He is the real deal, with a voice that sounds like he has spent way too many nights sitting up late singing tunes and drinking malts by a smoky peat fire — his voice has the authentic traditional sound, if there is such a thing, and it adds so much stature and gravitas to the tunes. I do find the first of his tracks slightly funny though, as I can picture him sitting reading the newspapers on a Sunday morning, singing the tune to himself, with John Mulhearn hiding behind the seat, microphone in hand, capturing the glorious melody.

Track six takes me back to the 80s again and it is *The Little Cascade* as you have never heard it before. Picture Crockett and Tubbs in their pastel suits, rolled up sleeves, and Ray-Ban glasses, jumping into a Ferrari Testarossa in hot pursuit of some criminal in the sweaty Miami night — this version of *The Little Cascade* would be the perfect sound track. Track five, *Gravel Walks*, does something similar but this time it is the New York burbs with a police car slowly cruising around Harlem eyeing up the Gangsta Hoodies on the street corners.

Track three is the only "dance" track on the CD which is rather surprising considering the electronic nature of the music, and here we have Gaelic group Bannal sampled singing a waulking song, *An Long Eirennach*, and the arrangement has a bit of a techno feel. I was never into hardcore techno dance music, but I can just picture my brother throwing some serious shapes to the heavy baseline in this track.

Finally Allan MacDonald comes back to finish the CD with the very musical canntaireachd interpretation of *The Desperate Battle of the Birds*, accompanied with all sorts of musical birdsong and the caa'ing of half a dozen crows.

John Mulhearn is an artist, but rather than paint and brushes, he uses rhythmic samples and melody to create canvases of sound which unveil a cinematic picture in the mind of the listener. Not every picture is immediately easy on the ear, and a few of my canvases remain blank, but careful listening will be rewarded with little gems of art which are the work of considerable talent. **JOHN SLAVIN**

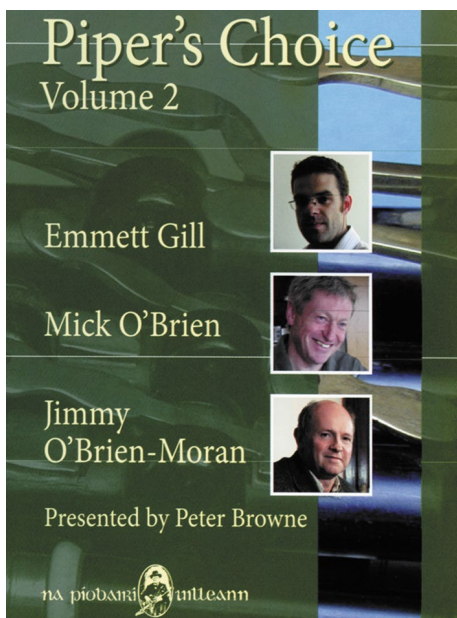
9 Tracks, Total Playing time: 60+ minutes.

Emmett Gill, Mick O'Brien & Jimmy O'Brien-Moran

Piper's Choice 2

Na Piobairí Uilleann NPUDVD007

I never saw the first *Piper's Choice* DVD, featuring Liam O'Flynn, Ronan Browne and Tommy Keane, but I imagine the format was much the same as for Volume 2: three respected pipers, each playing six tracks of tunes and discussing them with piper and broadcaster Peter Browne. The video and sound quality are both excellent,



Emmett Gill



Mick O'Brien



Jimmy O'Brien-Moran



Presented by Peter Browne

na piobairí míleann

allowing every nuance of tone and fingering to be appreciated. NPU classes this as a tutor rather than an entertainment DVD, and I'd agree on the whole, except that it is also quite enjoyable as a documentary-style view of the world of Irish pipes and piping.

The pipers on Volume 2 represent a wide spectrum of styles and backgrounds. Emmett Gill is probably the most accessible player here, a young-ish piper born and brought-up in London who moved to Ireland to pursue piping full-time a number of years ago. He plays more in the style of folk pipers, appealing to a wide audience, following the likes of Keenan, Spillane, Masterson and others, and it's perhaps surprising to hear that his interest in piping has taken him further and further back in time. He cites several very early recordings as major influences now, playing versions of tunes such as *Hennessy's Hornpipe* and *The Gardener's Daughter* learnt from archive recordings of Patsy Touhey, Tommy Reck, Tom Busby and others.

Mick O'Brien is a well-known Dublin piper, a direct product of the Piper's Club lessons and sessions over a couple of decades. Mick plays two lovely slow airs in his selection, starting with *The May Morning Dew* which just happens to be the title of his solo CD. He also begins a discussion of different drones and regulators, a favourite topic of conversation among pipers, second only to the care and manufacture of reeds. Mick's style seems intuitive, very aware of the different sounds of tunes and keys and sets of pipes. He gives us a lovely rendition of *The Heather Breeze*, and my favourite version of *The Maid in the Cherry Tree* paired with another air *The Conneries*. Along with his excellent air-playing, and masterly interpretations of some big reels, Mick plays charming versions of the jigs *When Sick is it Tea You Want* and *An Buachail Dreoite*.

Waterford piper Jimmy O'Brien-Moran recently completed a PhD on the music of the blind Galway piper and singer Paddy Conneely who died unrecorded in 1851. Jimmy is able to discuss the nuances of several piping styles, going back to the earliest transcriptions of 19th-century players, and plays a wide range of tunes including a couple of flings and two contrasting versions of the classic air *An Buachail Caol Dubh*. He also offers a pair of lovely slip jigs, starting with *A Kiss in the Shelter* which was one of Paddy Conneely's 180-odd transcribed tunes. All in all, there's enough music and talk here to keep any competent piper happy for many hours, and quite a lot of general documentary interest too. The range of music and styles on this DVD is enormous, and I'd say even the pipers featured here would learn a thing or two from it. **ALEX MONAGHAN**

18 Tracks, Total Playing time: 106+ minutes.

Bagpipes

McCallum plastic pipes

McCallum Bagpipes have launched a new set of plastic pipes aimed at beginners and also at overseas pipers who play in extreme temperatures.

They are made from black acetyl, the same material plastic pipe chanter reeds are made from. The firm say they are an ideal choice for juvenile bands in the UK as they are cheaper, "virtually indestructible" and can be washed, which means with a new mouthpiece they can be passed on to another learner without any hygiene worries. They also have a 10-year guarantee.

They can be played in 100 degree heat or freezing temperatures which would make wooden pipes susceptible to cracking in such extremes.

Moisture control can be an issue for the plastic pipes, as the bores are shiny and smooth, so if any moisture condenses it could run down on to the drone reeds. So when playing in the UK and colder climates a moisture control system would be needed.

But playing in the extreme heat of California or Australia, for example, then moisture control isn't necessary.

The real question is what do they sound like compared to a wooden set? According to McCallum's the player would notice the difference in sound and vibration on their shoulder, but in a blind test, 99 per cent of pipers wouldn't be able to tell the difference between the sound from plastic or wooden pipes.

As with any pipes, the quality of the sound will depend on how they are set up but the plastic set are very consistent and great to get going and play.

With a good moisture control system, this new plastic set could be well worth considering as a cheaper alternative for a beginner piper or second set.



Bannatyne goose and split stock chanter

Having developed their product range to include almost everything that a piper could need for his pipes (see article on p.40), Bannatyne Ltd turn their attention to making life easier for the learner by developing a practice goose (below right). The stock of the goose bag has been designed to allow a practice chanter or a pipe chanter to be inserted, giving the learner the option to step from the normal practice chanter, to the goose with a practice chanter, and when ready for a harder reed, the goose with a pipe chanter.

Another useful development is the split stock for your chanter (below left) which is designed to stop you damaging your perfect chanter reed. The split stock fits in your bag as normal and when you want to remove your chanter you just pull apart the split stock and put the plastic stopper on top. Your reed is now fully protected. When you want to put your chanter back into the bag, remove the plastic stopper and join the split stock together – you won't even see the join.





Expressing personality through your music

'Imitation should remain a stepping stone for a player to find his or her own voice, but never become his or her voice; no one should emulate their heroes to the point of note for note mimicry, guitar is too personal of an expression for that; it should be exactly what it is – a singular extension of the player.' SLASH



I DIDN'T think I'd ever be quoting Guns n' Roses in Piping Today but as my first year in charge of Piping Studies for the Scottish Music course at the RSAMD draws to a close, Slash's words ring truer than ever. I have been really encouraged by the level of musicianship shown by all of our students both during their exams and in performances this year. As this quote so rightly points out, music at this level is more than just the notes you play, it is an extension of each individual personality.

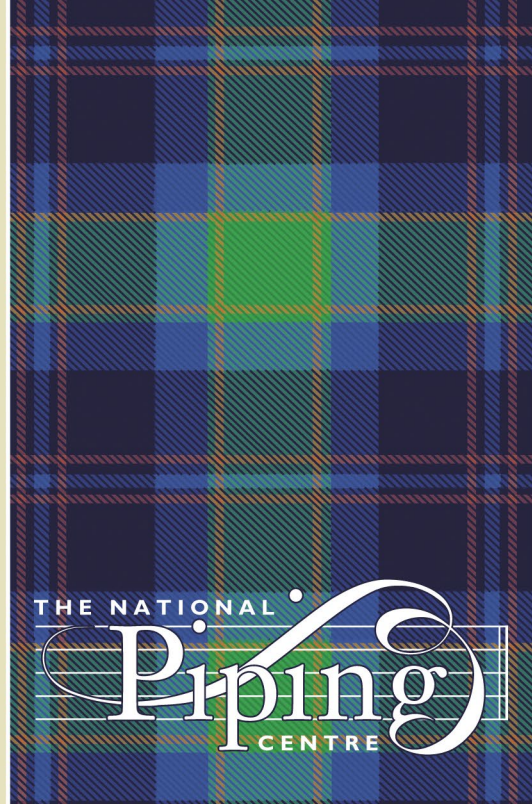
The development of any musician or performer involves them finding their unique musical voice and it is instantly recognisable when you listen to or watch someone who has successfully found it. Technical mastery is such a fundamental part of piping and every other musical instrument but the overall aim must surely be to portray the music with passion and a true belief in the way you feel it should be expressed, not just technically correct.

In December, The National Piping Centre hosted two informal student concerts, the aim of which was to give each piper the chance to perform a selection of the material they had been working on during the first term. Playing in front of your peer group and teachers is probably one of the most daunting prospects for any musician but the standard of these performances was first class and a testament to the high level of instruction being given on varying styles of pipe music. The music covered a full range of styles from classical March Strathspey and Reels to 18th century

and competition style Piobaireachd. Just as importantly these nights provided a social occasion and the chance for a beer and chat — so important in creating a socially creative atmosphere amongst musicians and helping them to understand that what for some has been a hobby for years may now be turning into a way of life.

Then came the *Future of our Past* concert at Celtic Connections in January. This was a showcase event celebrating the 10th anniversary of the first graduations in Scottish Music from the RSAMD. It's hard to believe I was there at the start but it was quite inspiring to see how the scene as a whole has developed and grown. When I was studying at the Academy it was rare to find young pipers playing as part of an ensemble, but at this concert I counted at least 20 pipers playing a variety of pipes, whistles and other instruments with an infectious fluency and passion. Long gone are the days of pipers being categorised as some obscure and kitsch minority but accepted and nourished as musicians who play the bagpipes in an eclectic and exciting living tradition.

Whether it be rock guitar playing or piping, what Slash says should apply to any musician or performer and it is a frame of mind that I feel is being encouraged in our music today. I get the feeling there is a really positive teacher/student relationship being used to bring out real 'personal expression' with the eventual aim of each individual adding their 'own voice' to the music and helping to keep the tradition not just alive but ever developing. ●



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Study Abroad

Piping Programme

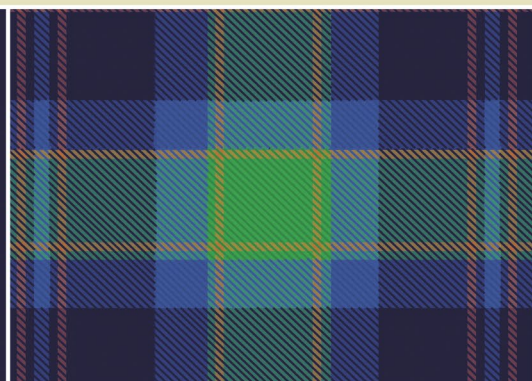
Course Title: Bagpipes

History, Repertoire and Performance

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