

PROMOTING THE MUSIC, HISTORY & STUDY OF THE BAGPIPES

# PIPING TODAY

**CHRIS ARMSTRONG**

A BIG YEAR FOR SCOTTISHPOWER

**Piping Live! takes off  
in George Square**

*Glasgow International Piping Festival*

**Drookit in Dumbarton**

*Scottish Pipe Band Championships photo feature*

**Stuart Robertson's Nine Notes**

*With Michael Grey*

**Playing Highland pipes  
with other instruments**

*Part Two — Exploring the theory*

**Grey's Notes by Michael Grey**

*What Motown can teach pipers*

**Youngstars**

NYPBoS newsletter No. 49

**Piping  
Live!**  
GLASGOW INTERNATIONAL  
PIPING FESTIVAL

THE NATIONAL  
**Piping**  
CENTRE

ISSUE NUMBER 52 • 2011

PRICE - UK £3.30 • EUROPE €5 • CANADA AND USA \$6.50





R. G. Hardie & Co. Ltd.

*Makers of the worlds finest bagpipes*



Projection. Stability. Pitch.

Introducing the

# Peter Henderson<sup>®</sup> Pipe Band Chanter



Oval Sound Holes  
for Maximum  
Projection



New Reed Seat  
Design for Improved  
Stability

Find out more. Visit us online.

[rghardie.com](http://rghardie.com)

t: +44 (0)141 333 5696 | e: [info@rghardie.com](mailto:info@rghardie.com)

# contents



FRONT COVER PICTURE:  
Pipe major Chris Armstrong in  
George Square at the launch of  
*Piping Live!* 2011. See *Piping Live!*  
feature on pages 10-13, and interview  
with Chris on pages 14-19.

## Editorial

Roddy MacLeod

## News

**Piping Live! takes off in George Square**  
Glasgow International Piping Festival

**A big year for ScottishPower**  
Pipe major Chris Armstrong

**Drookit in Dumbarton**  
Scottish Championships photo feature

**Youngstars newsletter No.49**  
The National Youth Pipe Band

**Stuart Robertson's Nine Notes and more...**  
with Michael Grey

**Sun warms the Italian Spring School**  
Fifth Italian Spring Piping School

**CLASP Q & A with Francesco Toiati**  
Competition League for Amateur Solo Pipers

**Playing Highland pipes with other instruments**  
Part Two — Exploring the theory

**A mentor to many...**  
Tribute to Lewis Turrell MBE (1936-2011)

**10 out of 10 for Swiss School**  
The Swiss Piping and Drumming School 2011

**Northwest Collection**  
Tune book review by Allan MacDonald

**New Products**  
CD Reviews

**Grey's Notes by Michael Grey**  
What Motown can teach pipers

[www.thepipingcentre.co.uk](http://www.thepipingcentre.co.uk)

5



6

10

14

20



24

30



32

32

36



40

43

44



49

50

# Bannatyne Ltd

Piping & Drumming Centre



Bannatyne Ltd is now an official UK

**Premier** Drums Partner Centre

As part of our extensive product range we also offer the following services

- New Drum Sales Direct From the UK
- Replacement Parts and Repairs
- Drum Tuning and Maintenance
- Skins, Snares and Carriers
- Sticks, Pads and Books
- Cases

All direct from our Factory Store in Whitburn, West Lothian

For all your Premier, Andante and Pearl Drumming Enquires please don't hesitate to contact us at

Bannatyne Piping and Drumming Supplies  
Unit 20, Burnhouse Industrial Estate  
Whitburn, EH47 0LQ

info@bannatyne.ltd.uk – 01501 740500 – www.bannatyne.ltd.uk





Patron HRH The Prince Charles  
Duke of Rothesay, KG, KT, GCB



**The National Piping Centre**  
Founders

Sir Brian Ivory CBE FRSE MA CA  
Lady Ivory DL MA ARCM FRSA  
Sandy Grant Gordon CBE MA

**The National Piping Centre Board**

Sir Brian Ivory CBE FRSE MA CA  
Lady Ivory DL MA ARCM FRSA  
Alan R. Forbes BSc FFA  
Dr Martin J.B. Lowe OBE BSc PhD  
Allan G. Ramsay BA CA  
Fraser Morrison MA CA

The National Piping Centre  
is a company limited by guarantee  
with charitable status.

Registered in Scotland No. 139271  
Registered Charity No. SC020391

**The National Piping Centre**  
30-34 McPhater Street  
Glasgow, Scotland. G4 0HW  
Tel: +44 (0)141 353 0220  
Fax: +44 (0)141 353 1570

**PIPING TODAY**

ISSN 1479 7143

Editor: **Roddy MacLeod MBE BSc**  
Features and all editorial enquiries:  
**John Slavin/Designfolk**  
email: pipingtoday@designfolk.com  
Mob: 0781 513 1116

**PUBLISHED BY THE NATIONAL PIPING CENTRE 2011**  
Unless otherwise noted, the text, photographs and adverts  
are copyright © of the writer, photographer or designer.  
All rights reserved. The contents may not be copied or  
reproduced in any manner without written permission of the  
editor, Roddy MacLeod. Excerpts and entire reviews may be  
printed as long as credit is given to the author, artiste and/or  
photographer and the Piping Today magazine.

## Bigger and better

**T**HIS is the time of year when a great deal of our attention within The National Piping Centre is centred around the arrangements for the forthcoming *Piping Live!* festival. This is the eighth year and we hope that the festival will be bigger and better than ever with some new and interesting dimensions.

Some of the new things to look out for include the Glenfiddich Champions recitals which will feature Jack Lee, Gordon Walker, Willie McCallum, Angus MacColl and Stuart Liddell and these recitals will be held in the Glenfiddich marquee at George Square, which will be the venue for the *Pipes and Drums* photographic exhibition. This exhibition of work by photographer Derek Maxwell features photographs from 30 years of Glenfiddich-sponsored piping events and so should provide the perfect setting for the Champions recitals.

While talking of exhibitions, we are hopeful to include another interesting exhibition entitled *Tunes from a Silent Chanter*, which is about the legendary piper G.S. McLennan. The title of the exhibition is reflective of the time G.S. McLennan spent in the trenches during World War I practising and composing on a practice chanter which had the reed removed so that the noise could not be heard by the enemy. The collection of memorabilia includes photographs, letters, medals, handwritten manuscripts, pipes, uniform equipment and other curios. One of the letters is from Angus MacPherson of Invershin writing to thank G.S. McLennan for the composition of *Mrs MacPherson of Inveran* in which he says very prophetically "you have made yourself immortal in the history of pipe music". Hamish McLennan, the grandson of G.S. McLennan, is responsible for putting the collection together and he will be present at the exhibition to provide further insight into the life and works of his famous grandfather.

Also new this year is a collaboration with Gourmet Glasgow which runs its own festival coinciding with *Piping Live!*. People come together over food and so food should be an integral part of a good festival. This year, visitors to the George Square bar marquee will be able to enjoy free food samples from upwards of 15 of Glasgow's finest restaurants while enjoying the music which will also be pretty diverse. Adding further to the ambience will be what we humorously initially referred to as the "Craft Clachan" (now its official name!) which will be occupied by traders offering a range of art, craft and food items.

Performances throughout the day by pipe bands at George Square always draw a large crowd and with the high calibre of bands participating including Inveraray and District, Manawatu, Oran Mor and 78th Frasers, to mention a few, we expect this year will be no different. The other must-see George Square event will be the Edinburgh Military Tattoo performance on Tuesday, August 9.

On the subject of pipe bands, the annual quartet challenge is being expanded this year to include eight bands as opposed to the usual six. The participating bands will be current world champions St Laurence O'Toole, ScottishPower, 78th Frasers, Manawatu, Strathclyde Police, Inveraray and District, Lothian and Borders Police and a surprise inclusion of the Spirit of Scotland Pipe Band. This promises to be a fantastic night!

The National Piping Centre and the Street Cafe marquee play host to many other events. New this year is a series of talks useful to the working musician addressing issues such as musician's health and business matters. Guest speakers include Patrice Berque, who provides physiotherapy services to performing musicians and assists musicians with focal dystonia, and Duncan McCrone of the Performing Rights Society, who will talk about composer's rights and royalties.

Needless to say that the music goes from morning till night at the Centre and favourite events such as Pipe Idol, Come and Try sessions, museum tours, lunchtime recitals, whisky tastings, international piping features all add to the great spectacle.

The headline concerts are not to be missed so be sure to get your tickets early. No doubt the Red Hot Chilli Pipers will sell like hotcakes and the After Worlds Shindig featuring Lúnasa, the Angus Nicolson Trio and Fiddler's Bid will be a fantastic night of high-energy music.

There is really too much to mention in this editorial so you can check out the full programme at [www.pipinglive.co.uk](http://www.pipinglive.co.uk) where you will see that *Piping Live!* really is getting bigger and better.

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



## Debut for Edinburgh championship

**THE Royal Highland Centre on the outskirts of Edinburgh is to play host to its first pipe band championship on Sunday, July 24.**

More than 500 of Scotland's leading pipers and drummers are expected to compete in the inaugural Edinburgh Pipe Band Championship 2011 in association with The Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association Lothian & Borders Branch.

The event, which organisers hope will attract an audience of more than 3500, will be held in the main ring at the Royal Highland Centre.

Around 35 bands will contest seven categories to be crowned championship winners with a prize fund of over £5000.

Highland dance and Drum Major competitions, heavy events including the caber toss and family entertainment will also take place.

John Hughes, chairman of the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association Lothian & Borders Branch, said: "The Edinburgh Pipe Band Championship will put Edinburgh firmly on the piping calendar.

"This inaugural event offers bands the opportunity to compete in one of the most exciting competitions of the year and an ideal platform to prepare for the European Championships the following weekend in Belfast.

"The Edinburgh Championship will provide competition for all grades of band, from Novice to Grade 1, as well as Drum Majors.



"With more than £5000 in prize money available, it is hoped to attract some of the world's most successful bands to compete."

Archie Glendinning, director at the Royal Highland Centre, said: "This is an exciting opportunity for Edinburgh and we're delighted to be putting piping back on the agenda, bringing the capital its first ever pipe band championship.

"The Centre is the perfect place for a piping championship, with an abundance of space and parking, and visitors can soak in the music and Scottish culture."

The family day out starts at 9am. For more information or to enter the competition, visit: [www.edinburghpipebandchampionship.com](http://www.edinburghpipebandchampionship.com)

## News in brief...

**PIPES and Strings is bringing together some of Scotland's finest traditional and classical musicians for a tour of the Western Isles and Skye from July 12 -16.**

The centrepiece of the concerts will be *A Suite for Alan*, commissioned by The National Piping Centre as a tribute to the life and music of piper, composer and teacher Duncan Johnstone.

The tour also features performances from Roddy MacLeod MBE (bagpipes), Iain and Allan MacDonald (flute, pipes, whistles), James Ross (piano) and Neil Johnstone (cello).

More details can be found on the website, [www.pipesandstrings.co.uk](http://www.pipesandstrings.co.uk)

**● DECEMBER seems ages away but places are already selling fast if you want to book your Christmas party at The National Piping Centre and Pipers' Tryst.**

Revellers can sign up for Christmas ceilidh parties, family ceilidhs, intimate meals in the Pipers' Tryst and Hogmanay celebrations.

Find out more at [www.thepipingcentre.co.uk/hotel-events/christmas-2011/](http://www.thepipingcentre.co.uk/hotel-events/christmas-2011/)

## The 45<sup>th</sup> Annual MacCrimmon Memorial Competition

# THE SILVER CHANTER

*Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> Aug, 2011 at 7.30pm*

**Dunvegan Castle, Skye**

**Pipers: Roddy MacLeod • P/M Gordon Walker • Angus MacColl**

**Dr Angus MacDonald • William Geddes • Stuart Liddell**

**For tickets contact Sheila Beaton: 01470 592212 • Price £17.50 including buffet**



# Glasgow's a-Live! with the sound of piping

**THE packed programme for the eighth Piping Live! festival was unveiled in fine style in Glasgow in May.**

Our four-page feature on the event, which runs from August 8 to 14, culminating with the Masters Solo Piping Championship, gives details on the star-studded line-up on pages 10 to 13 of this issue.

However, there are a number of other notable pre-Worlds concerts taking place.

Two of the biggest names in the pipe band scene in recent years are teaming up for a major concert at Glasgow's SECC on August 11.

The Pipes of Peace performance will feature Canada's Simon Fraser University as well as current World Champions St Laurence O'Toole from Dublin.

The Grade 2 Lomond and Clyde Pipe Band and the pop piping and drumming group Celtic Spirit will also take the stage, as will Canadian soloist Bob Worrall.

SLOT's Terry Tully said: "As a pipe major, I am constantly looking for ways to motivate people, to keep everyone in the band fresh and focused.

"The prospect of participating in a joint concert



PM Terry Tully of SLOT



PM Terry Lee of SFU



PM Chris Armstrong of ScottishPower

with the Simon Fraser University band, six-time World Champions, ticks all those boxes.

"It also provides a great opportunity for the public, with two of the many contenders for the World's title in direct comparison with one another so close to August 13."

The concert is not part of the *Piping Live!* schedule

of events, and it follows the night after the traditional pre-Worlds concert which this year features ScottishPower Pipe Band on August 10.

Pipe major Chris Armstrong is promising something different for the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall crowd, as he reveals in our feature on pages 14 to 19.

Tickets are available online from the venues.

**Belfast**  
part of it

**Music,  
Dancing  
and family  
fun**

## European Pipe Band Championships

✋

**Belfast 2011** in association with the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association

**Saturday 30 July**  
**Stormont Estate**






Call 028 9024 6609  
for more details

[facebook.com/europipes](https://www.facebook.com/europipes)



**northernireland**  
Explore More



[www.belfastcity.gov.uk/europipebands](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/europipebands)

# Stirring spectacular at Stormont for Europeans

**THE idyllic backdrop of Belfast's Stormont estate will be transformed as pipers, drummers and highland dancers descend on Belfast to compete to be crowned European Pipe Band Champions on Saturday, July 30.**

This iconic setting, on the outskirts of Belfast, will be alive with colour and the sound of pipes and drums will ring through the trees.

Bands from across Europe will showcase their musical talent and skills to an expected audience of 15,000 people.

Visitors to the Championships can be assured of a warm welcome as Belfast prides itself on its hospitality. The city offers a wealth of activities for all ages and a fun weekend awaits for participants, spectators and visitors alike.

The European Pipe Band Championships event will commence at 10am and will finish close to 6pm. Entry into the event is priced at £5

for adults, £3 concessions and £14 for a family ticket (two adults and two concessions).

A spokesperson for the event said: "Come rain or shine, this promises to be a fantastic day out for all the family, as spectators get to see first hand what it takes to be a European Champion."

To coincide with the European Pipe Band Championships Belfast City Council, supported by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, is staging the Piping Is Class Festival.

It runs from July 28-31 and will feature live music, workshops and showcase activities.

For more information about these events contact the City Events Unit on (028) 9027 0516 or visit [www.belfastcity.gov.uk/europipebands](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/europipebands).

You can also keep up to date with preparations for the Festival by 'liking' our European Championships Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/europipes](http://www.facebook.com/europipes)

## The Highland Bagpipe Company Home of Marr Bagpipes

Situated in rural Perthshire, The Highland Bagpipe Company manufacture high quality, hand crafted bagpipes and accessories for the piping community. We are here to ensure your experience in selecting your instrument is relaxing, enjoyable and more importantly stress free. We can offer you bagpipes from our standard range, or for the personal touch, why not discuss your own custom requirements with our tuner.

Our entire product range is manufactured from the finest raw materials available and are supplied with a full warranty.



A few of our other products...



Derek J. Marr, Master Craftsman  
Sarah Marr, Managing Director  
Tel: 01350 724303 - Mob: 07593 967202  
Lochview, Butterglen, Butterstone, Dunkeld, PH8 0EZ  
[www.highlandbagpipecompany.com](http://www.highlandbagpipecompany.com)

## MacDonald Quiaich win for Angus



Photos: Derek Maxwell



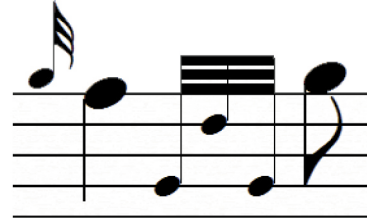
From left: Robert Watt, Angus MacColl, Roddy MacLeod, Niall Stewart and Dr Angus MacDonald.

ANGUS MacColl, from Benderloch, celebrates winning the Donald MacDonal Quiaich. This year marks the 25th Anniversary of this prestigious Piobaireachd event which has been held annually at The Clan Donald Centre, Skye.

The other competitors were: Robert Watt, who played *Glengarry's March*; Niall Stewart, *Too long in this Condition*; and Roddy MacLeod, who performed *Lament for the Departure of King James*. Angus's winning tune was *Lady MacDonald's Lament*.

The Fear an Taighe was Dr Angus MacDonald of Portree and the Adjudicator was Dr Jack Taylor.

# Get a Grip!



Better yet...get the whole tune.

Superb settings of hundreds of traditional tunes, as well as authorized, copyright material from today's best composers.

Available online at:

**pipetunes.ca**  
Sheet music on demand,  
from McGillivray Piping



**H**ARRY Potter star Natalia Tena added her magic touch to the official launch of *Piping Live! Glasgow International Piping Festival and The World Pipe Band Championships*.

The actress, who plays Tonks in the hugely successful movie series, is also a traditional musician in the gyp-step band Molotov Jukebox and she's backing the festival's drive to urge all visitors to pick up the pipes during the event, which runs from August 8 to 14.

"People have such misperceptions of traditional music which, like any genre, can take many forms and be interpreted by different musicians and bands in many ways," said Natalia.

"I play accordion in Molotov Jukebox. Our roots firmly lie in traditional music, but our sound is anything but traditional. I would encourage anyone to pick up traditional instruments and have a go. It has been brilliant having a go at the pipes, I thought Harry Potter fight scenes were tough but the pipes really take it out of you!"

She played in Glasgow's George Square for the official launch in May, alongside piper Jonathan Graham, ScottishPower pipe major Chris Armstrong, drummers from House of Edgar Shotts and Dykehead Pipe Band and fiddler Tricia Mullan.

*Piping Live!* Festival Director Roddy MacLeod hailed the eighth year of the event and said organisers were keen to foster potential



The preparation starts in George Square for this year's festival

# *Piping Live!* takes on

piping talent by urging music fans of all ages to try the bagpipes.

He added: "We are encouraging people to Pick up the Pipes and we'll be hosting special come and try sessions over the festival. You can look out for more special guests having a go themselves on our website."

Of course, there's much more to the world-renowned festival, which has established itself as a leading celebration of Scottish culture, showcasing a diverse blend of traditional music.

The 2011 programme will include concerts at the

Glasgow Royal Concert Hall and the Old Fruitmarket by the likes of Fred Morrison, Red Hot Chilli Pipers and Anxo Lorenzo Trio. Throughout the event, George Square will play host to a range of free events, including a special Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo performance, while The National Piping Centre will offer recitals, workshops and the popular Family Fun Day.

The week includes the World Pipe Band Championships at Glasgow Green on August 13, organised by Glasgow Life on behalf of the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association (RSPBA) and rounds off with the Masters Solo Piping Championship on August 14.




**Piping  
Live!**  
GLASGOW INTERNATIONAL  
PIPING FESTIVAL

link between Gaelic language and piping music. Scottish tradition band Manran will showcase their blend of high energy tunes and phenomenal songs with Armagh Pipers Club and Brian O'hEadhra and Calum Stewart completing the Scots/Irish blend.

The International Piping Concert on the Thursday at the Strathclyde Suite puts the spotlight on two phenomenal pipers with their trios. Firstly Galicia's Anxo Lorenzo and his trio, who fuse the unadulterated natural sound of the Gaita with a wide variety of alternative music styles, and sharing the bill are the Fred Morrison Trio with their unique and powerfully exuberant style.

Get ready to rock on Friday, August 12, when *Piping Live!* present The Red Hot Chilli Pipers at the Old Fruitmarket. They have taken their signature 'Bagrock' sound around the world and return to Glasgow to play tracks from new album *Music for the Kilted Generation* along with their crowd-pleasing classics.

# ff in George Square

Roddy added: "*Piping Live!* hosts over 170 events across all forms of traditional music as well as the finest pipers and pipe bands from across the globe. We constantly challenge people's perception of our national instrument and every year we have new fans coming to the festival surprised by the diversity of the music."

The concert programme kicks off on the evening of Monday, August 8, with a Pipes & Strings performance by Mr McFall's Chamber, an orchestral ensemble with a difference. They'll be joined by Finlay MacDonald and Chris Stout to bring their progressive form of pipe

music to the stage at Glasgow Royal Concert Hall's Strathclyde Suite.

The headline attraction on the Tuesday night is the International Quartet Challenge at the same venue. Current World champions St Laurence O'Toole won the title last year but rival quartets from ScottishPower, Inveraray and District, Manawatu Scottish, LA Scots, the 78th Fraser Highlanders, Strathclyde Police and Spirit of Scotland are keen to take their crown.

Wednesday features the Orain nam Piobairean – Songs of the Pipers – concert at The National Piping Centre, which is dedicated to highlighting the

Lorne MacDougall Trio  
Live at the Street Cafe  
Monday, August 8 • from 12noon



Kyle Warren  
Live at the Street Cafe  
Tuesday, August 9 • from 12noon



Inveraray Pipe Band  
Piping in the Square  
George Square, Glasgow  
Wednesday, August 10 • from 11am



Stuart Liddell  
Glenfiddich Recital  
George Square, Glasgow  
Friday, August 12 • 1.45pm

Fred Morrison Reelpipes Pipe Idol  
The National Piping Centre  
Monday 8 to Friday 12 • 3pm  
Pictured: Last years winner  
Alex Gandy

Oran Mor Pipe Band  
Piping in the Square  
George Square, Glasgow  
Tuesday, August 9 • from 12noon



Anxo Lorenzo Trio / Fred Morrison Trio  
International Piping Concert  
GRCH, Strathclyde Suite  
Thursday, August 11 • 7.30pm



Angus MacColl  
Glenfiddich Recital  
George Square, Glasgow  
Thursday, August 11 • 1.45pm

Angus MacColl, Andrew Bonar,  
Niall Stewart, PM Gordon Walker,  
Stuart Liddell  
Lord Todd Recital Challenge  
Lord Todd Bar, Strathclyde Uni  
Thursday, August 11 • 7.30pm

International Quartet  
Challenge  
Inveraray & District,  
Manawatu Scottish,  
ScottishPower, Spirit of  
Scotland, St Laurence  
O'Toole, Strathclyde Police,  
78th Fraser Highlanders  
GRCH, Strathclyde Suite  
Tuesday, August 9 • 7.30pm



Red Hot Chilli Pipers  
The Old Fruitmarket  
Friday, August 12 • 8.30pm



Fred Morrison Trio / Anxo Lorenzo Trio  
International Piping Concert  
GRCH, Strathclyde Suite  
Thursday, August 11 • 7.30pm



Finlay MacDonald & Chris Stout in the  
Pipes and Strings Concert with Mr McFalls Chamber  
GRCH: Strathclyde Suite  
Monday, August 8 • 7.30pm



78th Fraser Highlanders  
Piping in the Square  
George Square, Glasgow  
Thursday, August 11 • from 11am

All photos: John Slavin @ designfolk.com

The above events are just a small sample of *Piping Live! 2011*. For full event listings go to [www.pipinglive.co.uk](http://www.pipinglive.co.uk)

They will be supported by RURA, winners of the Celtic Connections 2011 Danny Kyle Open Stage Award.

The After Worlds Shindig at the Old Fruitmarket on Saturday, August 13, is shaping up to be a truly phenomenal affair. With performances from the tour de force of Irish music, Lunasa, the Shetland sensation Fiddler's Bid and the Angus Nicolson Trio, this will be a spectacular extravaganza to round off a great day of piping.

As well as the evening concerts, *Piping Live!* offers a wealth of daytime activities giving visitors the chance to experience the cream of piping talent from around the world.

This year, there are two amazing recital series. At The National Piping Centre, the Lunchtime Recital Series will feature Alastair Dunn, Alan Bevan, Niall Stewart, Glenn Brown and Cameron Drummond.

At the new Glenfiddich marquee in George Square, the Glenfiddich recital series will feature past champions – Jack Lee, Pipe Major Gordon Walker, Willie McCallum, Angus MacColl and Stuart Liddell. This new venue will also house the *Pipes and Drums* photo exhibition featuring photos from the past Glenfiddich Championships and other sponsored events.

George Square is the backdrop for a plethora of international pipe band performances, as well as the Edinburgh Military Tattoo on the Tuesday and Beat The Retreat from the World Pipe Band Championships on the Friday.

The Cafe Bar marquee in George Square will have Music of the Nations with talks about bagpipes from Croatia, Greece, Austria, Germany and Spain and performances. The Pipers' Trail will be providing Come and Try sessions.

New this year is the Craft Clachan at George Square featuring some of Scotland's best food and craft producers.

At The National Piping Centre, the Street Cafe is back with an array of great performers including trad groups and pipe bands. On the Tuesday, the centre stages a Family Fun Day which features an under-fives morning.

There are two new collections of music being launched: Allan MacDonald's *The Moidart Collection II*, and Stuart Samson's *The Land of Bens and Glens and Heroes*, on Wednesday and Thursday respectively. There are talks on Canntaireachd, The Mackaays of Raasay and a range of other piping issues, all topped off with the nightly Festival Club.

For competitive pipers coming to Glasgow, a



Natalia Tena gets some tips from pipe major Chris Armstrong

Photo: Chris James

FESTIVAL

major highlight is the World Pipe Band Championships, the prestigious piping contest which dates back more than 60 years.

Thousands of pipers, drummers and spectators will descend on Glasgow Green on August 13 as Irish band St Laurence O'Toole defend their Grade 1 title.

Ian Embelton of the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association said: "The Worlds are an iconic event and a must on any traditional music fan's calendar. As well as being the pinnacle of competitions for the crème de la crème of pipe bands from as far and wide as Australia to Aberdeen, the Worlds is also an unmissable family day out.

"We have Highland dancing, Highland games, a massive kids' zone and delicious local food and drink on offer."

Scott Taylor, Chief Executive of Glasgow

City Marketing Bureau, added: "The World Pipe Band Championships and *Piping Live!* draw thousands of people from across the UK and overseas to Glasgow to experience what is a truly spectacular week.

"In addition to attracting some of the world's leading bands and pipers, both events can boast a strong local identity and provide great platforms for our home-grown pipers to showcase their talents on the global stage. Their continuing popularity reinforces the message that Glasgow in August is the place to experience world piping of the highest quality."

For more details on the *Piping Live!* line-up and to book tickets see [www.pipinglive.co.uk](http://www.pipinglive.co.uk). Further information, including accommodation booking and tickets for the Worlds, visit on [www.seeglasgow.com/piping](http://www.seeglasgow.com/piping) or call 0141 353 8000. ●

by John Slavin

# A big year for ScottishPower

PIPE MAJOR CHRIS ARMSTRONG

**A**S the pipe major of ScottishPower Pipe Band, a Gold Medallist and winner of many other top solo piping titles, and prolific composer of bagpipe music, Chris Armstrong has an impressive reputation and is incredibly well known throughout the piping scene.

I first heard about him in the late nineties when he was recorded by Greentrax for their *Young Pipers of Scotland* CD, along with Gordon Maclean, Stuart Cassells and Andrew Wright — complete with the distinctive Dalmatian dog bagpipe cover on the front of the CD. Since that recording, Chris has released three of his own critically acclaimed CDs, *Notes In Ma Heid*, *Quantum Leap* and *X-treme*, and the path that has led him to these piping achievements started at the tender age of six.

Chris's local band was Torphichen and Bathgate who were playing in Grade 2 at that time. They started up a Novice Juvenile band which Chris joined along with another dozen youngsters, and was taught from scratch by pipe major Mark Bennett.

"It was a good system and I was very fortunate to be taught well from the start," said Chris. "After the youngsters got to a certain level, they were asked if they were interested in solo competition, and if so were sent to Pipe Major John Matheson (BEM) for further tuition. I learned a lot of music from John and he taught many of the good players from that area — Simon Marshall was taught by John before he went to Duncan Johnstone.

"He was a big influence on my playing in my younger years, until I was about 12 or 13, but when he passed away I didn't do much with solos for a while."

Chris next went to Andrew Wright for piobaireachd, as up until then he had been only interested in playing MSR's, jigs, reels and hornpipes. Andrew became a big influence on his playing of piobaireachd and continued to be Chris's tutor through his successful period of solo competition, including the Gold Medal at the Northern Meeting in 2003.

It was only time constraints that brought the tuition to an end. Chris explained: "It was commitments to my family, work and the band which meant I just didn't have the time to continue my lessons with Andrew. He was a big influence on my playing and a really good teacher, able to put things across and make them easy to understand."

Chris still puts in a bit of practice for his solo piping, but not as much as he did when he won his Gold Medal or Former Winners MSR — certainly not every day for an hour-and-a-half. He recently competed in the Donald MacLeod Memorial Competition in April and got a fourth place in the piobaireachd and fourth in the MSR and was satisfied with his playing.

"I got into the prizes which was pretty decent considering the quality of the players I was up against," he admitted. "So I'm still doing it, and every now and again

Photo: John Slavin @ designfolk.com



I will go along to John Wilson, maybe two or three times a year, to have him listen to my playing and keep me in line. He is not teaching me on a technical level, but more to do with the musicality of my playing — though I haven't yet been to see him this year."

From the aspect of learning his bandcraft, Chris credits a lot to watching and listening to Mark Bennett, starting from the early days of the Torphichen and Bathgate Novice Juvenile band.



*‘I believe a pipe band should be an extension of how a pipe major does things — from maintaining the pipes, to playing the pipes, and the players have to conform to my ideas and do what I ask them’*



Photo: John Stavin @ designfolk.com

“Mark oversaw the practices of the Novice Juvenile band, and when I stepped up to the Grade 2 band, he was the pipe major. He always had a good-sounding, well-maintained bagpipe and I paid attention to how he went about achieving that. So just by watching, observing and experimenting I learnt how to get a band going and set up a sound, and there are other people over the last 10 to 15 years who I have kept my eye on.”

One of those is Richard Parkes, pipe major of Field Marshal Montgomery Pipe Band, Chris added: “I’ve heard lots of stories and even now seen videos on YouTube of what Pipe Major Ian McLellan was doing with Strathclyde Police Pipe Band during their successful time in the late 70s and 80s.”

Mark was also influential in taking Chris to various pipe bands in his younger years. Chris moved on from Torphichen and Bathgate with Mark and a few other players to join Seafield and District in Grade 3 in 1991. Then Chris took some time away from bands and concentrated on solo competition, before joining Coalburn I.O.R for two seasons. He then intended to re-join Mark at Seafield and District when Mark’s plans changed and Chris, Mark and another two players headed to Northern Ireland to play with the Eden Pipe Band in Grade 1 under pipe major David Caldwell. The stint in Northern Ireland only lasted one season before Mark was approached to become pipe major of Dumbarton and District in 1996 and Chris became his pipe sergeant for a few seasons. After that, they all ended back at Torphichen and Bathgate again where Chris stayed for a season.

“By that time I had a lot of ideas of my own on how things should be done,” explained Chris. “I had been helping out with the sound of the bands in pipe sergeant positions, so that pushed me towards leaving Mark and pipe bands again for four or five years. I did miss the bands for a while, but I did a lot of serious work on my solo piping and it was in that period I won the Gold Medal and Former Winners title.”

It was in the months immediately following his Gold Medal success in 2003 that Chris was approached to be the pipe major of David Urquhart Travel Pipe Band in Grade 1.

“I took a bit of time to consider taking this position as I was very selfish towards the time I needed for my solo piping, but I took it on and was there for two seasons,” he said.

“By the end of the 2005 season, for one reason and another, I’d had enough and decided to finish with the band and perhaps go and play with another band. Just at that time I got a call from pipe sergeant Peter Hunt asking if I would like to put my name into the hat to be considered for pipe major of ScottishPower Pipe Band. The call came at an ideal time as I was no longer attached to any band. Although it did look as if I had left David Urquhart Travel to go to ScottishPower, that was never the case.

“I attended an interview for the position, which was pretty hardcore: being questioned for about an hour by eight members of the band committee, including Roddy MacLeod. It was like a job interview, and I had a splitting sore head after it.

“I got a phone call a few days later to say they were happy with me and I had the job subject to a meeting with ScottishPower. The band still had a concert commitment to fulfil

could do the job but also very receptive to learning how to get what I was looking for.

“It was a different band experience from what I had encountered before in terms of standard of player but also how receptive the players were in what I was asking them to do. The bar was raised on my expectations because I knew what I wanted and what I was trying to achieve, and I had better tools to do the job.

“I believe a pipe band should be an extension of how a pipe major does things — from maintaining the pipes, to playing the pipes, and the players have to conform to my ideas and do what I ask them. As the quality of player was higher it was much easier to reach and maintain the standards I was asking of the players because the experience was there in the first place. So when I asked them to do x, y and z, it was done.

“When you think about chanters, reeds and types of bags you are getting into a system that

*‘Whatever you play, be it a sheepskin, Ross bag or Gore-Tex bag with a tube, you need to manage that system, and if you do it right your pipes will be good’*

that year at the William Kennedy Piping Festival in Armagh, which was to be Roddy’s final performance, so I attended practices, watching what was going on and started to get to know the guys in the band. Once the concert was over the band had a short break and then I took over and gave out the new music.”

You would imagine there would be some apprehension for anyone taking on the pipe major position of a band who were well established in the top six of Grade 1, especially with only three years of Grade 1 experience as Chris had at the time.

Considering he was a Gold Medal winner he certainly didn’t lack the musical ability, and he had a self-belief which allowed him to walk into the top position in such a band knowing he could do the job required. Chris explained: “One thing I wanted to do was make sure we maintained our top six position but I have always had the attitude that I wouldn’t try something if I didn’t believe I could succeed. What’s the point, if you don’t believe you have the ability? So I joined the band believing I

a band should follow. We play sheepskin bags, and the general consensus is that sheepskin gives a more harmonic sound, but if you don’t do the right things it will give you a horrendous sound and it will become unmanageable.

“I tell this to students when I’m teaching every day, ‘Whatever you play, be it a sheepskin, Ross bag or Gore-Tex bag with a tube, you need to manage that system, and if you do it right your pipes will be good’. Now my opinion of good will be different to the next person, but the most important thing nowadays is steadiness of sound. It is arguable, but I believe the band have a good sound playing sheepskin bags. If you look at other bands in the past who had a good sound, Victoria Police for one, they had a totally different pipe set-up — but they had a system which they managed and it worked.

“You need guys in the band to do what you ask them, put the work in and be at the required level of ability. I don’t teach the guys — what I’m trying to do is bring the best out of them collectively as a group and get them all to play to a certain style. I think the way we play the

tunes, our style, is very clear, and in particular I believe our MSR's have a distinctive style."

ScottishPower's first competition under Chris's leadership was at the Scottish Championships in 2006 and they got good results which kept them in the top six. With similar results at the following two majors he was more than pleased with the way the band were doing. However, that was about to change. As Chris explained: "The week before the Worlds we played at Bridge of Allan Highland Games and placed seventh, even though I believed we had played better than at any other time that season. It was a huge knock to our confidence and I think it unsteadied us a bit for the Worlds. At the Worlds, we didn't make the top six, finishing ninth and then we got seventh place at Cowal and that was pretty hard to take — up until that point the band had been doing well.

"It took us the whole of the following season to get back into the prize lists, when we got a sixth place at Cowal, and it was quite hard going till we got that, especially when the band had been a regular in the prize lists. I was quite worried about it till we got back in to the top six at the end of 2007.

"Since I joined the band it has been a building process in terms of personnel and it is a very different band to what it was when I joined. There are only two of the original pipe corps still there from when I joined — John Bowes and John MacLeod. Donald Mackay joined us as pipe sergeant in the winter of 2009 and he has been a big help in terms of running the band and it has enabled me to do things I was struggling with. It has also allowed us to expand the size of the band."

It is these changes in personnel which Chris cites as one of the main factors for the steady progress the band has made since 2007, establishing themselves once again in the top six and gradually improving their placings at the majors. They had their most successful season so far under Chris's leadership in 2010, achieving fourth place at the British Championships and at Cowal, fifth place at the Scottish and Europeans and sixth at the Worlds.

"There are a few reasons for our improvement," revealed Chris. "If you look at last year, we had a bigger band for a start and the quality of player has improved year on year. Most of the pipers who now play in the band are the best young players in central Scotland and because we have a good number of those it attracts others to join. They meet each other around

## *'It was not just as straightforward as learning jigs, reels and hornpipes, an MSR and a medley — as me being me, I don't like to do things by the book'*

the games and they talk. With the changes in personnel there has also been a change in attitude — there is a much more positive, driving attitude behind the band with some big focuses for us to work towards."

I was interested to know what targets Chris had set for the band this year, especially with the extra planning and practice needed for the band's pre-Worlds concert performance.

Simply consolidating their position in the top six could have been the main priority but Chris is aiming higher, and having placed third at the Scottish Pipe Band Championships in May, he has made a great start to achieving his aims.

Chris added: "We have shown constant improvement over the last four or five years and to continue that trend we would need to be getting into the top three now and again. If the band play to their capability, then I believe it could be possible for us to win a major. There have been two instances where we have produced a better sound in final tuning than we did in the competition — or even in the practice hall — and you are under more pressure in final tuning than in the practice hall. You always hope to take your best practices into your performance.

"Any band in the top four are capable of winning a major. What you hope for is to go on to the park and play at the top end of your ability and have people think, 'that was good and worthy of winning'. The whole thing is subjective, what I think is good might be someone else's idea of a nightmare, but I realise more and more that it comes down to ability. If you consistently go out there and play as well as you possibly can, there are no hiding places — eventually something will happen for you.

"Judging is all about personal preference and each judge will have a preference for a particular style of playing or sound. That is why a band might get very different piping scores from the two judges — it is so subjective and that is why it is a difficult subject to nail down."

So ScottishPower are not only striving to improve their competition results this year, they

have the added challenge of preparing for the prestigious pre-Worlds pipe band concert run by The Glasgow Skye Association. The concerts have been running for the past 19 years, and performing in front of a 2000-strong audience made up of the gurus and devotees of the piping world is very big undertaking for any band. When I asked Chris what difference it has made to the band's practices this year he summed it up in one word — huge.

"I always knew it was going to be a big commitment for all of the band," he admitted. "Finlay MacDonald has had a big input in the music the band plays, and still continues to — we have both been planning to do something like this for a long time.

"We worked on concert sets in the past to prepare them and then put them on the back burner. So at the end of last season the band got two weeks off, rather than two months off, and I gave out the sets of music that we already had prepared. Then the work started on the rest of the material to build up the concert repertoire.

"Normally we would only have one practice a week until the end of December, but this time we have had two practices since we started back, with an occasional weekend practice.

"The main focus was getting the concert sets up and running and it was very much the responsibility of each player to make sure they learned the concert material. At this stage of the year our focus has shifted back to competition material and we have a new MSR, although both medleys have not changed a great deal as time-wise it would have been impossible.

"The guys have had to learn about an hour-and-a-half of new material but it was not just as straightforward as learning jigs, reels and hornpipes, an MSR and a medley — as me being me, I don't like to do things by the book."

While the audience will get a flavour of traditional pipe band performance, Chris is determined to bring something different to the pre-Worlds concert and create a spectacular gig while trying to raise the profile and appreciation

of the Highland pipes throughout the wider musical world.

He revealed: “The format has just been finalised and the first half will be ‘kind of’ in a pipe band style. We will play an MSR and a medley but that will be as far as it will go in terms of hardcore pipe band music — there will be no 6/8s or 3/4s in the first half. There will be jigs, reels and hornpipes, a Breton set from a mini-band, a quartet playing one of Mark Saul’s latest compositions, a pipe solo and a drum fanfare, with some backing musicians on the jigs and perhaps the reels, but nothing like on the scale that we will have in the second half.

“The Breton set is being taken care of by Maël Sicard-Cras, and Maël’s dad has written and arranged two gavotte type tunes. I have delegated Maël to pull it all together because he understands what is needed and I’ll just make sure that they sound good.

“There is only a few of my tunes being used in the concert, a slow air in the second half and a couple of jigs and reels. We don’t play a lot of my tunes as they don’t suit the style that we play. Occasionally I will write a tune for a medley if we need something in a specific key or are looking for a particular effect or rhythm but a lot of what I have written does not suit the band.

“In the second half, the band will be playing along with a small orchestra. We have a string section of about 25 musicians and the material is being scored by Chris Stout. Chris is coming up with some amazing arrangements to back us with the orchestra and there will be strings, brass and a harp, and probably voice. In total, there will be about 90 musicians on stage — pretty much full-on!

“There is a set of 3/4s in the second half but what we are doing with them is not traditional. We are not simply starting with two three-paced rolls and cracking through the set, we will be playing along with the orchestra and have an arrangement which should give an anthemic feel to the set. There is also a set of

7/8s with the orchestra which should be interesting rhythmically, and there are some reels.

“Hopefully, we will also be doing *MacKay’s Memoirs*, a composition by Martyn Bennett based on the ground and first variation of the piobaireachd *Lament for Mary MacLeod*. That is the one piece we need to sort out yet, as it was written for solo pipes so we need to get an arrangement for the full band.

“There is a lot of really good piping going on in the wider traditional music scene which has not made it to pipe bands yet — why not?

The only difference is that you have one piper playing instead of a full pipe corps.

“The planning behind the concert is fairly sizeable and the music is the easy bit. Once we had the tunes and sets sorted and agreed on,

it was just a case of the band learning to play it. We are only going to get one rehearsal with the orchestra and that will be on the Tuesday before the gig.

“In terms of tuning we think we have it cracked, as we are just going to play in regular pipe band pitch and have the scores for the orchestra written in the key of B. If the orchestra play in B and have their instruments tuned slightly flatter than normal they should be in tune with the pipes, as last year we were just three or four hertz flatter than B.”

It seems like Chris and Finlay have decided to tear up the pipe band concert rule book, and on the face of it, it doesn’t sound like they are preparing for a concert of traditional pipe band music.

“In terms of what we have planned, there is a couple of different things going on in the music and we are not using the typical style of backing, but we’re not doing anything wacky,” re-assured Chris.

“We are not playing lots of naturals or slides or trills, we are just playing good tunes so I would hope that it would appeal to a traditional pipe band audience.

“At the outset I stated that this would not be the typical style of pipe band concert and I want that to be very clear to people.

“What we are producing will be different and it is different because I think it needs to happen — and I think it can happen.

“I think the knowledge exists to allow this to be done and for it to be done well and it has got to be done to allow us all to move forward.

“We have our traditional piping formats and I enjoy playing and competing, but I think this could help us elevate piping within the broader musical world, and not ScottishPower as a band alone, I mean the whole of piping in general.

“Hopefully that is what we will achieve and that the concert will be well received. I did have a nightmare recently that we started off with a full house and ended up with only three people left in the audience — but I’m hopeful that won’t be the case.” ●



Photo: John Savin @ designfolk.com

# Drookit in Dumbarton

SCOTTISH PIPE BAND CHAMPIONSHIPS, MAY 21, 2011



**T**HERE was a promise of bad weather all morning and for the whole afternoon it made good on the promise with constant heavy rain.

It impacted on the attendance as there was not as many people taking in the sights and sounds but the pipers and drummers just got on with it. It was interesting to look on in the Final Tuning areas and see how focused the bands were, going through their routines and ignoring the fact that they were very wet and very cold.

It was announced during the afternoon that there would be no marchpast, and the atrocious conditions made me fear a repeat of the "end-of-the-world" torrential downpours accompanied with strong winds the West of Scotland had experienced the previous week.

Thankfully it never happened and we can only hope for better weather in Annan for the British Championships on June 25.

**RESULTS — Grade 1:** 1. Field Marshal Montgomery; 2. St Laurence O'Toole; 3. ScottishPower; 4. Boghall and Bathgate Caledonia; 5. Inveraray and District; 6. Fife Constabulary.

**Grade 2:** 1. Grampian Police; 2. Buchan; 3. Phoenix Honda Glasgow Skye; 4. Denny and Dunipace Gleneagles; 5. Seven Towers; 6. Ravara.

**Grade 3A:** 1. Oban; 2. Pitlochry and Blair Atholl; 3. Police Service of Northern Ireland; 4. Quinn Memorial; 5. City of Edinburgh; 6. RAF Halton.

**Grade 3B:** 1. Stockbridge; 2. Stamperland; 3. Glenrothes and District - 2010; 4. Troon Blackrock; 5. Badenoch and Strathspey; 6. Rothesay and District.



COMPETITION



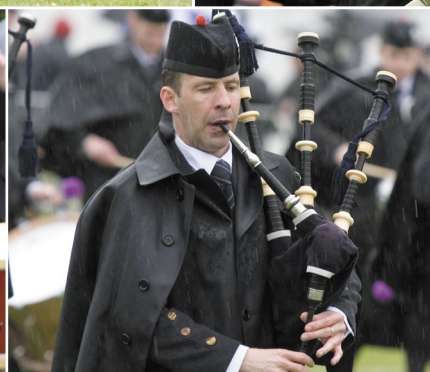
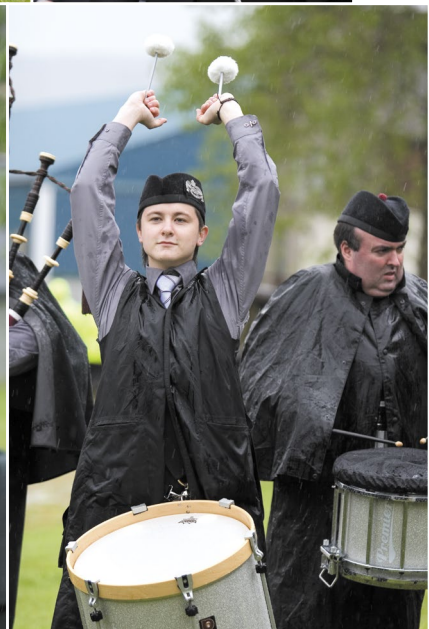
**Grade 4A:** 1. Scottish Borders; 2. Thiepval Memorial; 3. Upper Crossgare; 4. University of Bedfordshire; 5. 2622 (Highland) Squadron RAF Lossiemouth; 6. Arbroath Royal British Legion.

**Grade 4B:** 1. Closkelt; 2. Bo'ness Royal British Legion; 3. Nottinghamshire Police; 4. Strathendrick; 5. Lanark and District; 6. Stockbridge.

**Juvenile:** 1. George Watson's College; 2. Dollar Academy; 3. Boghall and Bathgate Caledonia; 4. North Lanarkshire Schools; 5. EP. Oban High School; 6. EP. Robert Wiseman Dairies Vale of Atholl

**Novice:** 1. George Watson's College; 2. Kintyre Schools; 3. Craigmount High School; 4. Erskine Stewarts Melville Schools; 5. 1st Troon Boys Brigade; 6. George heriot's School.







*McCallum Bagpipes are now supplied  
with threaded mounts for no extra cost*



New McCallum alloy and imitation ivory with threaded mounts

[www.mccallumbagpipes.com](http://www.mccallumbagpipes.com)

# Ciaran Sinclair



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

I am 16 and from Saltcoats in Ayrshire.

**Q. How did you get into piping and when?**

I started playing the pipes nine years ago and got into it because my uncle played the pipes, my grandpa was a drummer and my great uncle was a Cowal Champion Drum Major and also a drummer. I started lessons with Gerard McClumpha at the Caledonian Piping Club then when I joined the North Ayrshire Schools Band, I was taught by Jim Butler. During that period I played with the Isle of Cumbrae RBLs Juvenile Pipe Band.

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

My tutor is Gordon Bruce and he teaches me everything I need to know about piping. I'm currently registered with Johnstone Pipe Band (Grade 2).

**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 play my chanter every day whenever I have a minute and when I am learning tunes I try to play my pipes for about 30 to 60 minutes every day.

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

I would say that my strong points are my piobaireachd and MSR. I need to improve on my hornpipe and jig and trying to express my MSR more fully than I have been doing.

**Q. What do you want to achieve in piping?**

I want to be successful in the solo piping competitions and to join a Grade 1 band, hopefully winning the World Pipe Band Championships.

**Q. What is your favourite tune and why?**

My favourite tune is *The Dust Gatherer* because I think it is a catchy wee tune. *Major Manson's Farewell to Clachantrushal* is also a lovely tune. I play it as my solo march and it has brought me success.

**Q. Have you written any tunes?**

I have attempted writing tunes but never fully established a piece.

**Q. What make of pipes do you play, and are they set up with sheepskin and cane or synthetic?**

I play McCallum pipes with a synthetic bag for my solos, and a set of McLeods with a sheepskin bag for my band pipes. **continued on page 29** ➔

Ciaran pictured playing with the NYPBoS at Celtic Connections 2011.



by ALISDAIR McLAREN  
DIRECTOR, NATIONAL YOUTH PIPE BAND OF SCOTLAND

Supported by



ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL

Youngstars

# NYPBoS shine in the Old Fruitmarket



This evening's concert:  
The National Youth Pipe Band  
of Scotland  
**SOLD OUT**  
(returns only)

**A**PRIL and May have continued to be a very busy couple of months for The National Youth Pipe Band of Scotland Senior Band.

The beginning of April saw the band utilise two practice weekends to rehearse for its major concert for 2011 entitled *Illumination*. Both weekend rehearsals were very beneficial to the band as both pipe and drum corps were able to add the final touches to all the new material and also work on refining the band's sound for the show.

On April 23, 50 eager members arrived at the Old Fruitmarket in Glasgow looking forward to a busy day ahead with sound checks and the evening performance which was a sell-out show. After a few technical glitches the band took to the stage to run through some of the feature sets of the evening. From the opening rendition of the band's signature piece, *The Dragon's Lair*, you could tell that the excitement was starting to kick-in.

From the outset of the evening's concert you could feel the brilliant atmosphere that the Old Fruitmarket had been renowned to create, and in front of a very enthusiastic full house the young musicians put on a superb

performance, showcasing the fantastic talents of every individual within the project. Not only did the band perform to a very high standard but they did so in style, incorporating many lighting effects and animated video screen footage which was used to help enhance the band's music and the audio-visual experience for the audience.

The audience's enjoyment and appreciation was clear to be seen with a deserved standing ovation as the band played their encore with a reprise of the opening number *The Dragon's Lair*. It was a concert that I'm sure all of the members of the NYPBoS and the audience will remember for many years to come.

I would like to say a special thank you to pipe major Emma Buchan, one of the longest serving members, who led the band for one final time before her "retirement" from the NYPBoS. The night also saw Simon Murray, and David Shedden perform their last concert with the band. On behalf of all the members of the NYPBoS and The National Piping Centre I would like to thank you for your continual commitment to the project and I wish you all the very best in your future piping aspirations. ●

ALISDAIR MCLAREN

All photos: John Slavin @ designfolk.com

**Youngstars**



BACK ROW from left: Neil Bruce; James Gray; Suzanne Birney; Louise Augaitis; Grant Cassidy.  
 MIDDLE ROW: Caitlin MacDonald; Craig Weir; Alex Duncan; Seamus O'Baoighill; Daniel McDermott.  
 FRONT ROW: Chris Gray; Ciaran Sinclair; Connor Sinclair; Ross Miller; James Harper; Andrew Clark.

# illu<sup>ma</sup>

THE OLD FRU



FROM LEFT: Connor Sinclair; Ross Miller; Chris Gray; David Wright.



FROM LEFT: Keith Christie; Ciaran Sinclair; Connor Sinclair; Emma Buchan; David Shedden.



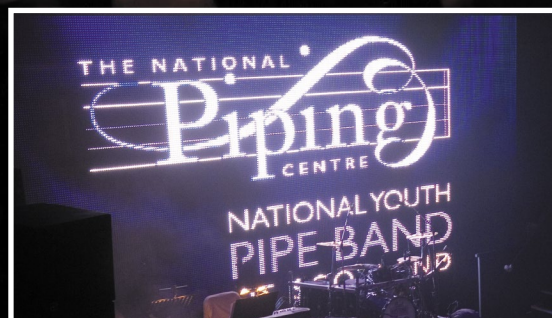
FROM LEFT: Ciaran Sinclair; Connor Sinclair; Ross Miller.



David Wright; Scott Findlay.



PM Emma Buchan retires from





by ALISDAIR McLAREN  
DIRECTOR, NATIONAL YOUTH PIPE BAND OF SCOTLAND

Youngstars

# ination

ITMARKET, GLASGOW • 23 APRIL 2011



FROM LEFT: Iain Crawford; Steven Gray; Lucy Ferguson; Andrew Gray; Ross MacKay; Scott Wood.



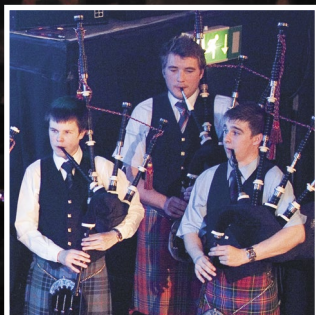
SNARE DRUMMERS from left: Grant Cassidy; Mark Dobbie; Andrew Coutts; Grant Edwards; Steven Shedden; Ryan McKinnon; Fraser Bruce; Chris McNicholl.  
BASS SECTION: Christina Duncan; Louise Augaitis; Neil Bruce; James Gray; Suzanne Birney.



Daniel McDermott.



om the band.



Ross MacKay; Simon Murray; David Wright.



FROM LEFT: Andrew Clark; Timothy Ness; Griogair Norris; Aimee Craig; Alex Duncan; Andrew Gray; Iain Crawford; Ross MacKay.



FROM LEFT: Craig Weir; Ross Miller; Emma Buchan; Lucy Ferguson; Andrew Clark; Timothy Ness; David Wright.

Youngstars



BACK ROW: Daniel McDermott; Ross MacKay; Chris MacDonald; Scott Wood.  
FRONT ROW: James Harper; Andrew Clark; James McPetrie; Griogair Norris.



FROM LEFT: Lucy Ferguson; Andrew Clark; Griogair Norris.



Lucy Ferguson.



FROM LEFT: Emma Buchan; Ciaran Sinclair; Connor Sinclair; Ross Miller; David Wright.



Aimee Craig; Iain Crawford.



FROM LEFT: Lucy Ferguson; Chris MacDonald; Griogair Norris; Andrew Clark; Emma Buchan; Aimee Craig; Timothy Ness; Lewis Olsson; Ciaran Sinclair; Ross MacKay; Simon Murray; David Wright.

► continued from page 24

**Q. What is the best trip or playing experience you have had with the NYPBoS?**

My best playing experience was playing at The Old Fruitmarket in Glasgow because it was one of the best concerts that I have played in with the band. I was also honoured to be picked as one of the three NYPBoS pipers to play for and be introduced to Prince Charles at The National Piping Centre in 2009.

**Q. What is your favourite part of being in the NYPBoS?**

It is a fun and enjoyable experience. There is always a new challenge for the NYPBoS to take on and you meet lots of great people.

**Q. What are the other band members likely to say about you or what are you most known for in the band?**

I think they would say that I am the funny one — sometimes.

**Q. What is the secret of your success?**

I don't really have a secret. I work hard and enjoy playing my pipes.

**Q. What would be your ideal uniform if you were allowed to choose it for your band?**

My ideal uniform would be the kilt I wear for solo piping and the NYPBoS, which is the weathered McLellan tartan.

**Q. What would you do or say to encourage other youngsters to learn the pipes?**

I would say that piping is a great thing to get into, that there are lots of opportunities and things to do in the world that involve piping. You also meet lots of really nice people either through bands, competitions or performing.

**Q. Do you have any superstitions or any pre-performance rituals?**

Nope, just hope for the best.

**Q. Who is your pipe idol?**

I have two pipe idols — Stuart Liddell and Roddy MacLeod. They are both fantastic pipers.

**Q. What are your interests outside of piping?**

I like photography and playing golf.

**Q. What do you want to do for a career?**

I want to go into photography as a career but also continue with my piping and music interest.

**Q. What other music do you like? What's on your MP3 player?**

I like all types of music. On my iPod I have folk, traditional and Freddie Mercury.

**Q. Who are your heroes?**

My family have to be my heroes. They were the ones who got me involved in piping and are the ones who have encouraged me to progress through the years and supported me.

**Q. Are you sporty, and do you follow any teams?**

I play golf and I support Celtic but don't really follow the football as I am too busy piping most of the time.

**Q. Do you prefer sweet or savoury?**

I like both. But I love Kung Po chicken from the Chinese takeaway.

Nine Notes and more...  
by Stuart Robertson



# Michael Grey



Michael Grey: ignored in Glasgow

Photo: Ryan MacDonald Photography

**W**ITH many major solo titles to his credit, successful books of music on the shelves, compositions in the repertoires of bands the world over, Michael Grey is undoubtedly one of the world's foremost pipers.

He received his first lessons at 12 from George Walker of the 48th Highlanders of Canada and was a member of this illustrious band for three years. He studied under John Wilson, one of the twentieth century's greatest players, and received extensive tuition from Bill Livingstone and John Walsh. He has four times won the North American Championships, the overall title at the Vancouver Indoor Meet twice, the Piobaireachd Society Gold Medal and that venue's March, Strathspey & Reel and Former Winners' MSR on the same day. In 1989, he won the aggregate championship at the Cowal Highland Gathering. He has 17 times won the professional Ontario Championships Supreme awards for both Piobaireachd and light music. In 1995, he won the Toronto Pipers' Society

Knock-Out final; in 2003, he again won this testing event — for the third year in succession.

Since his early piping years, Michael has been a prolific and innovative composer. Evidence of this remarkable composing success is apparent in the ongoing popularity of his tunes with bands and individuals at the major competitions: at 1990's World Pipe Band Championship in Glasgow, there were more examples of bands performing Grey's tunes than any other composer, living or dead.

In 2001, he was commissioned by Piper & Drummer magazine to compose a new piobaireachd aimed at pushing the musical boundaries of the traditional form.

A founding member of the 1987 World Pipe Band Champions, 78th Fraser Highlanders Pipe Band, he left that organisation in 1995 and became pipe major of Peel Regional Police Pipe Band, one of the world's top bands. In 1999, Michael left the PRP Pipe Band to focus on solo piping; this same year he won the Scottish Piping Society of London's (UK) Strachan Cup

and again was the aggregate winner of the Vancouver Indoor Meet.

In 2003, Michael consulted with renowned composer John Beckwith on Beckwith's commission for pipes and orchestra, *A New Pibroch*. He performed the piece's premiere in March 2003 and it aired in June of that year on CBC Radio 2. An adjudicator, workshop leader and a serious student of written pipe tunes and their composers, Michael has five published books of music and nine solo recordings including the October 2003 release, *Nine Blasted Notes*. His fifth book, *Music for Everyone*, was published in November 2006. His sixth solo recording, *Shimla Hum*, was released in May 2006.

In October 2007, he joined the premier grade Toronto Police Pipe band in the capacity of pipe sergeant. In December 2009, he released a new recording project, *Unqualified Favourites*.

A native of the Eastern Townships of Quebec, Michael Grey resides in Dundas, Ontario. I put the usual questions to him.

### When did you start composing?

I started playing around with notes on the chanter when I was around 15. I really hesitate to call it composing, at least early on, as most everything I “composed” sucked, not to put too fine a point on it. I had the chance to take some lessons from the great Edinburgh (and Toronto) player, John Wilson. He’s the guy with those three great books of music; the first one published in 1936 and known for a long time to be “the bible of jigs”. Anyway, I had been learning the strathspey *Captain Duncan MacGregor*, John MacColl’s lone strathspey. The tune is full of darado movements (aka bubbly notes). I had it in my mind to write a tune with this movement. How inventive, I imagined. So I wrote this 6/8 march with bubbly notes all through it — in every other bar — and actually had the brass bits to show it to the great John Wilson. “Rubbish,” he said. I guess some credit to me for persevering!

### What inspires you to write?

Hmmm. Good question. A lot of times I write for my own amusement — I mean someone has to like it so I’m a good start. There’s real satisfaction in quietly creating something that pleases — even if it’s only yourself. I’d also have to say the band can really fire me up. Their enthusiasm and appetite for material is an absolute motivator.

### Modern day composers...who do you rate?

Not sure what your definition of “modern day” is but for me post-WWI composers fall under this category. I’d feel awkward singling out any one living contemporary.

I think it is very hard for anyone to argue against the genius of Gordon Duncan. Gordon was a real trail-blazer in creating pipe tunes that had rhythm-driven melody. His tunes are highly original — derivative is not a word one could ever use to describe any of what he built.

I was checking the score of *The Knightswood Ceilidh* the other night with a pupil and got to turning pages. It struck me in a big way that Donald MacLeod may have never written a bad tune. His tunes are tunes — very tuneful, melodic. His output of prolific and consistent quality is amazing. Tune after tune of merit with handfuls of brilliance thrown in to the mix. Remarkable. For me, *Susan MacLeod* is his best of the best.

George S. McLennan wrote what I considered the greatest light music composition of all time in *The Little Cascade* but wasn’t prolific. Interesting to me that he died at the age of 48 and yet produced only one slim volume of tunes. Some great tunes, for sure, just not a lot of material. Great quality, to put it mildly, but not quantity. I’d take that any day. So there’s three names from three sub-sections of what I suggest is piping’s modern day.

### How do you mould a tune from conception to completion?

I’m a terribly impatient sort of person and I don’t take a lot of time to write music; that is, to take an idea to completion. No surprise, I know, to those who don’t find my stuff appealing. I do think I’m OK at stopping a tune-in-progress if I sense it’s going nowhere, or inappropriately derivative. I seldom get bolt-out-of-the-blue ideas for tunes while doing something else. I need to be somewhere quiet, chanter in hand, manuscript paper on the table [by

## HUFF

Michael Grey

the way, there’s an interesting concept of “creative flow” developed by the Hungarian academic, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. If you haven’t already, I encourage you to check it out — *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*].

Writing long pipe-bandy pieces take much longer, especially when harmonies and all the elements of a pipe band are taken into consideration. In more challenging tune-building cases like these, I start with an idea in my mind as to how the thing might start and finish while seriously mindful of the overall feeling I’m looking to create. I then start the thing at the beginning, the start, the opening — call it what you will — and write sequentially to the resolution of the idea. Helps the flow — for me.

### The tune you have given us, how did it come about and what was the inspiration?

The tune I’ve included here is from the start of the Toronto Police Pipe Band’s most recent medley of tunes. I’ve included the original rough notes.

I would have taken this first page and scored out a legible copy for one of the guys in the band who’s an especially speedy typesetter. The words on the page are just random thoughts about what might happen next in the medley. This is one of those tunes made for percussion: driving with lots of syncopation. It really isn’t at its best without the help of percussion.

“Huff” seems like a funny sort of word. An example of onomatopoeia, I think. Who hasn’t seen someone turn on their heel (or been that someone) and leave a room after being annoyed? It seems to me it happens all the time in pipe bands. With banter often close to the bone and music and ego and all that mixed together, well, a “huff” isn’t uncommon in bands. Probably true of any highly competitive scene, let alone one based in music. I’m surprised there hasn’t been a tune to mark the huffability of bagpipes. ●

by Mike Paterson

# Sun warms the Italian Spring School

5TH ITALIAN SPRING PIPING SCHOOL

**G**REY bands of chilling rain and showers were blowing across Scotland... but, in central Italy's Molise Region, sunshine and mild temperatures greeted participants for the fifth *Italian Spring Piping School*: a unique week-long event organised by the Associazione Pipers Italiani, The National Piping Centre and the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, that is putting the town of Isernia on the world piping map.

The international school, held from April 6-11, this year featured Stuart Liddell and Finlay MacDonald from Scotland... but, in central Italy's Molise Region, sunshine and mild temperatures greeted participants for the fifth *Italian Spring Piping School*: a unique week-long event organised by the Associazione Pipers Italiani, The National Piping Centre and the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, that is putting the town of Isernia on the world piping map.

The week of intensive study was directly supported by the RSAMD and The National Piping Centre in Scotland, The Midwest Highland Arts Fund in the United States, the Bagpipe Italian Group (B.I.G.) and the public middle school Giovanni XXIII of Isernia.





The first of the Italian Spring School's students arrived at the four-star Grand Hotel Europa on the evening of April 5 to experience the warm welcome that has become the school's hallmark. It included the presentation to each teacher and student of a personal kit that, along with a workbook and music pack, included a large chocolate Easter egg from the Isernia-based Harrods supplier, Papa Chocolate, and a bottle of wine from Valerio Wines: two of the school's various local supporters.

The school's commercial sponsors, together with the support of six local authorities — the Regione Molise, the Provincia di Isernia, the Comune di Isernia, the Comune di Scapoli, the Comune di Venafro and the Comune di Monteroduni — together all help to make the

annual schools affordable as well as memorable and allow the school to sustain the student-teacher ratio that is one of the Italian Spring School's strong attractions: never more than four student to an instructor or tutor, with six hours of quality tuition a day, including opportunities for one-on-one lessons. Each teacher had his or her own teaching room: a small suite provided by the hotel.

"This really does help each student to make the absolute most of this chance to work with some of the best pipers and piping teachers in the world," said Duilio Vigliotti, president of the Associazione Pipers Italiani (API), the school's energetic founder and principal organiser. "We are greatly helped by our artistic supporters who include Wallace Bagpipes, RG Hardie & Co., McCallum Bagpipes and MG Reeds. The school is very much an undertaking that's sustained by a lot of goodwill all round."

Students this year included 18-year-old Alex Brown, recipient of this year's Midwest

Highland Arts Fund's Italian Spring Piping School Scholarship, awarded at the *Winter Storm* event in Kansas City. As well as being a Grade 2 solo competitor in the Midwest United States circuit, he plays for weddings, funerals, curling bonspiels and other paying events near his home in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The son of a piper, he began piping four years ago, and takes his lessons via Skype with Adrian Melvin.

A popular public highlight of the annual programme is an international piping concert that this year introduced the 14 young Highland piping students from Isernia's Giovanni XXIII intermediate school to an audience of more than 350 people at the magnificent old Savoia theatre in the region's capital city, Campobasso.

One of the spin-offs of the Italian Spring School has been the provision of piping tuition at the school. "This is an exciting development for us," said Duilio. "We have long seen the need to start teaching youngsters if Highland piping is going to really take hold here.

"This year, for the first time ever in Italy, a piping school was joined by a group of school-aged learners.

"They are members of the piping course introduced at their school by API last year, and supported by The National Piping Centre, RG Hardie & Co., Wallace Bagpipes, McCallum Bagpipes and MG Reeds who generously provided tutor books and practice chanters for the entire group."

The night also featured tutor Jamie on snare drum as well as the great Highland bagpipe; fellow tutor Finlay on Border pipes; RSAMD students Hayley, Jonathan and Eddie; the *Eceletnica Pagus* ensemble led by Piero Ricci on the zampogna molisana; Stuart Liddell; the Italian group *A' Brigà* from Liguria in the northwest of Italy; and Alberto Massi's traditional-rock group, the *Garden Dwarf Killers*, with a repertoire inspired by some of the best tunes of traditional piping.

For five days, classes were held 9am to 5pm with a break at 10.30am and a typically lavish Italian lunch at 1.30pm.

"The teaching was outstanding," said Duilio.

For the students from the RSAMD, the Italian Spring School provides cross-cultural teaching experience that is likely to stand them in good stead later in their careers. All are accomplished players, selected by audi-



tion for the degree programme. Said Jonathan Graham: "The week of teaching at the Italian Spring Piping School in Isernia was a great experience. I made many friends and I'm very grateful to API."

Some evenings were taken up with band practices or workshops, and public mini-concerts were staged in the town of Venafro and in the medieval Pignatelli castle in Monteroduni. The rest of the evenings were spent in informal sessions and unwinding in the hospitable atmosphere of Isernia's newly-established Bavarian pub, the Holzhaus.

"The Italian Spring School was an amazing event, and what a great place," said tutor Jamie. "This was my second visit to Italy as guest of API and I was extremely fortunate to be invited to this event. There is such an enthusiastic and passionate community thriving in Italy for the bagpipes and Scottish music... the people and enthusiasm make it a pleasure to teach here. I'm very grateful to API for having me back."

On the Thursday evening, 14 students took part in the Italian Spring piping competitions.

The MSR event was won by Francesco Toiati, with Gino Schioppa in second place and Lorenzo Forconi, third. Gino Schioppa won a slow air and dance tune competition with Lorenzo Forconi, second, and Alex Brown, third. A competition for a four-part march was won by Duilio Vigliotti, with Daniela Ballardini second, and Lino Peluso third.

The overall winner, Gino Schioppa, was awarded a £250 voucher from Wallace Bagpipes.

Said Finlay MacDonald: "It was a fantastic week.

"The Italian piping community is in good health and definitely improving all the time. API president Duilio Vigliotti is the driving force behind the event and it amazes me how much energy and time he has given all of us. He's an inspiration to us and I would like to

put on record a massive 'thank you' for his hard work and dedication."

On Monday, April 11, the RSAMD student tutors, Stuart Liddell, Jamie Troy and two of the Italian students who had stayed on in Isernia, paid a visit to the picturesque hilltop village of Scapoli: an important centre for the conservation of the region's zampogna tradition and home to an annual international piping festival that is held on the last weekend of July each year.

There, the group visited the village's bagpipes museum, took part in a workshop led by Duilio and Piero Ricci, and, after a glass of wine with the Mayor, Vito Izzi, enjoyed a hearty lunch where delicious local dishes were presented. It was then time to say farewell — until next year.

"I can't thank everyone enough for a such a great week," said Stuart Liddell. "The hospitality, the people, the laughs and, of course, the music... Magic." ●



## INSTRUCTION AND ADVICE FROM WORLD CLASS STAFF

*Providing a full range of tuition options*



**Finlay MacDonald**  
Head of Piping Studies  
BA (Scottish Music - Piping)



**Alisdair McLaren**  
Director of The National Youth Pipe Band



**Glenn Brown**  
Gold Medallist



**Stuart Samson MBE**  
Ex-director of Army Bagpipe music



**Callum Beaumont**  
Silver Medallist



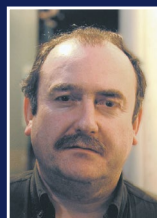
**Margaret Dunn**  
Silver Medallist



**John Mulhearn**  
Piping tutor



**Roddy MacLeod MBE**  
Gold Medallist



**Allan MacDonald**  
Gold Medallist



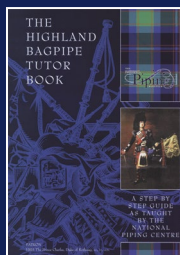
**Chris Armstrong**  
Gold Medallist



**Ryan Canning**  
Four time World Pipe Band Champion

### BA (Scottish Music - Piping)

Full Time Ordinary Degree (3 Years) and 4th (Honours) Year. A collaborative programme with the RSAMD. For particulars and RSAMD prospectus including information on how to apply contact Finlay MacDonald at The National Piping Centre.



### Highland Bagpipe Tutor Book

Step-by-step guide as taught by The National Piping Centre

Subscribe to our bi-monthly magazine

**Piping Today**



**Shop, Mail Order & Museum**  
Shop online at [www.thepipingcentre.co.uk](http://www.thepipingcentre.co.uk)

**The National Piping Centre, 30-34 McPhater Street, Cowcaddens, Glasgow G4 0HW.**  
Tel. +44 (0)141 353 0220 • Fax: +44 (0)141 353 1570 • [www.thepipingcentre.co.uk](http://www.thepipingcentre.co.uk)

## Competition League for Amateur Solo Pipers

FRANCESCO TOIATI

**I**TALIAN piper Francesco Toiati has been playing the pipes for seven years and joined CLASP to improve his playing. His persistence paid off when he was named overall winner of the Grade 3 at the Scottish Piping Society of London CLASP in November 2010.

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

I'm from Rome, Italy, and I'm 48.

**Q. What age did you start to learn the pipes and what are the main challenges you have found with the instrument?**

I started playing when I was 41. I've been playing the flute since I was 16 and this has helped me. The main challenge with the pipes was being able to get good breath control, fingering and think about the music at the same time.

**Q. Who is your tutor and do you play with a band?**

My tutor is Alberto Massi, a very good teacher from Siena, Italy, and I've been studying with him since 2005. I play with the City of Rome Pipe Band, the only band in my home town.

**Q. How many hours a week do you spend on practice?**

With the pipes, I practise an hour a day, every day, and with the practice chanter whenever I can — every day, most times of the day.

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

I think I play slow airs and jigs pretty well, but I have to practise my taorluaths and birls every day.

**Q. What do you want to achieve in piping?**

I'd like to get to a level where I feel more comfortable with the instrument and can express more accurately the emotions that I feel playing.

**Q. What is your favourite tune and why?**

My favourite tune is *The Eastern Townships* by Michael Grey because it's a complete and very musical slow air.

**Q. What make of pipes do you play, and are they set up with sheepskin and cane, or synthetic?**

My pipes are made of Thuja wood and were manufactured by Franco Calanca, a pipemaker from near Bologna. I use a Boyle sheepskin bag which I bought almost a year ago and it is fine.

**Q. You have been a member of CLASP for a few years now, so what is it you enjoy most about competitive piping?**

What I like most is getting to know the other competitors. There is a serious atmosphere but at the same time it is warm and friendly.

I like to study with the purpose of the competition in mind because it helps me and I always try to find a good balance with the pipes.

**Q. The bagpipes are not your typical Italian instrument, what attracted you to learning them?**

When I was 16 I took a trip to Scotland with my brother. We arrived in Inverness in August during the competition, I think it was the piobaireachd. I was struck very much by it but it wasn't until many years later that I met Tony Randell, one of the founders of the City of Rome Pipe Band, and I was able to start learning the bagpipes. My great-grandparents still have Breton roots from my mother so I don't know if this influenced my choice.

**Q. What is the solo/pipe band scene like in Italy?**

In Italy, the number of pipers is slowly growing, thanks to people like Alberto Massi and then Duilio Vigliotti and Associazione Pipers Italiani. This instrument and its music is beginning to break well-defined boundaries with many musicians in Italy.

**Q. Do you have any superstitions or any pre-performance rituals?**

This year in London my wife Francesca gave me a gift of a small cartoon character. I think it brought me luck because the competition was good. The only ritual I have is a kiss from my wife when she travels with me to competitions.

**Q. What are your interests outside of piping?**

I have a job that is also my passion — I am a professional photographer for a newspaper in Rome. I am always taking pictures that could be useful for an exhibition.

**Q. What are your piping goals for the future?**

My dream is to participate in all competitions throughout the year and I also hope to get to Grade 2. This is one of the great problems of living in Italy — to go to all the competitions you need a lot of money or a sponsor. But I'm very happy with the results achieved so far. I never thought when I made that trip with my brother to Scotland that one day I would be able to play such a difficult but beautiful instrument that gives so much joy every day (apart from to our neighbours). ●



Francesco (left) with his tutor Alberto Massi after his success at the London CLASP in 2010

### CLASP at Piping Live!

IT is fast approaching that time of year again when the majority of the world's amateur pipers will descend on Glasgow. Understandably for pipers involved in pipe bands the main focus that week is of course the World Pipe Band Championships, but if you are looking for a small break from bands, *Piping Live!* yet again will host the 'World Solo Amateur Piping Competition'

This will be held in the Millennium Hotel at George Square. Grades are open to Amateur Pipers Graded 3 (Wednesday 10th), Grade 2 (11th August) & Grade 1 (12th August).

The Grade 1 Overall Winner will win an all expenses paid trip to New York to compete at the Amateur section of the Metro Cup next February. This trip is kindly donated by Eric and Maureen Stein.

Principal of The National Piping Centre, Roddy MacLeod added: "This year we have really great prizes for CLASP, donated by David Nail Bagpipes, Pipetech, Scott's Highland Services Ltd, Eric & Maureen Stein & Wallace Bagpipes.

Their support is very much appreciated and will no doubt attract pipers to take part." ●

[www.theclasp.co.uk](http://www.theclasp.co.uk)



# Playing the Highland pipes with other instruments

Part Two — Exploring the theory

*This feature was only made possible thanks to Calum MacCrimmon, Finlay MacDonald, Dougie Pincock, Mike Katz and Angus MacKenzie, by the generous sharing of their extensive musical knowledge and experience of piping in folk bands.*

**T**HE first part of this feature in issue 50 focused on the basics of setting up your pipe chanter to allow you to tune to concert pitch when playing with other musicians, and to recap the main points: you must have a concert pitch B-flat pipe chanter rather than a modern pipe band chanter, and when you play a low A you are actually sounding a B-flat note which tunes to 466 Hertz (Hz).

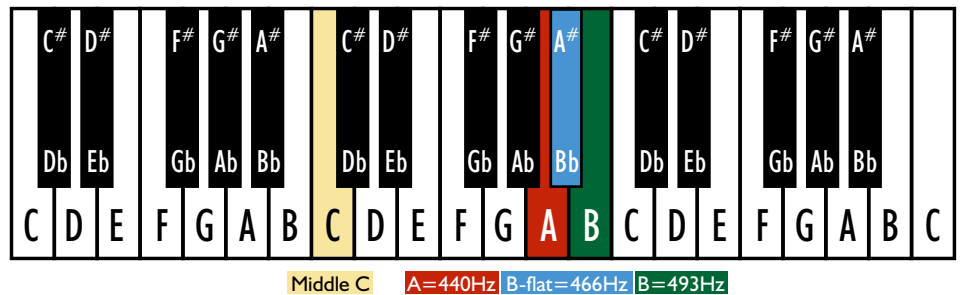
The information in that first feature did not delve into the music theory, but gave instructions which can be followed to achieve a concert pitch B-flat chanter without understanding the music theory at work.

In this second feature we will start to explore the music theory and break it down. You may not immediately grasp all of the music theory involved, but hopefully you will take in parts which should help you build a picture — kind of like doing a jigsaw — get the corners and straight edges first and the rest will eventually fall into place. It is not an easy subject, as Dougie Pincock said: “It’s a bit like trying to explain particle physics in layman’s terms. Each time you explain something, it just leads to another question.”

## THE B-FLAT CHANTER

LET’S start with the theory behind the points we recapped in the first paragraph.

1. In the majority of western music (classical, rock, pop, folk, jazz, country, etc), instruments tune to an A note which vibrates at 440Hz.
2. The closest note a pipe chanter has to an A at 440Hz is our low A, which actually sounds a B-flat note at 466Hz: see example one for more explanation.

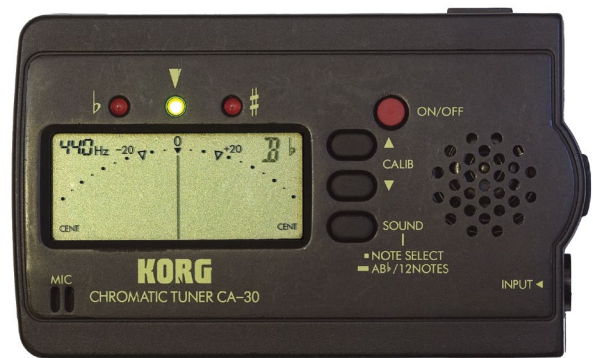


**Example 1.** A keyboard showing the A note (above middle C) which vibrates at 440Hz and is used by most instruments in western music to set concert pitch. The B-flat note immediately to the right of A is equivalent to a low A note on a B-flat concert pitch chanter. The B note next along tunes to 493Hz and the pitch of most pipe bands fall some where between B-flat and B, but usually nearer B. That is why it is important to use a concert pitch chanter rather than a standard pipe band chanter.

For a pipe chanter to be in tune *relative* to a concert pitch A note, our low A needs to tune to 466Hz which is the standard setting for a concert pitch B-flat note. In most pipe bands the low A will be tuning some where between 475Hz to 485Hz or even higher, and is very sharp when compared to a concert pitch B-flat at 466Hz.

Dougie explained: “The modern pipe band chanter is too high pitched to be played with other instruments without a great deal of hassle. The pitch has risen inexorably over the last 50 to 60 years, with pipe bands striving to get a brighter sound, so have left behind the 440Hz which most other instruments tune to.”

When you are checking the tuning of your concert pitch B-flat chanter against a chromatic tuner, a Korg C-30 for example, set the pitch on the tuner to 440Hz. If your low A is at concert pitch the needle will be in the centre, and the tuner is telling you that B-flat is in tune *relative* to a concert pitch A note: see example two.



**Example 2.** Chromatic tuner set to 440 Hertz showing the B-flat note ‘in tune’ when a low A is played into it.

Do not make the mistake of thinking that the tuner is telling you that your B-flat note is vibrating at 440Hz — it is an easy mistake to make!

By setting the pitch on the tuner to 440Hz we are asking the tuner to listen for notes at concert pitch, and the tuner is telling you where your B-flat note is *relative* to concert pitch.

# Give your pipes a rest

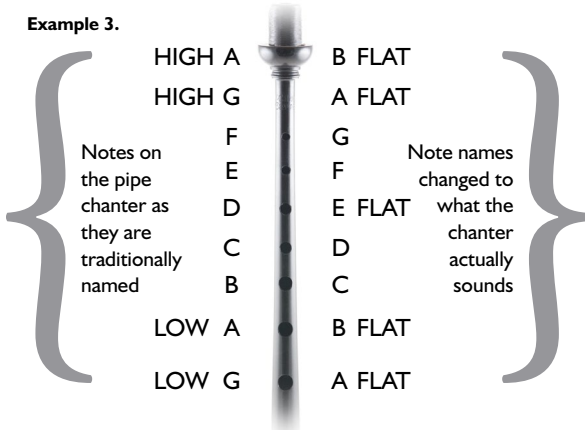
with Dougie Pincock

## WRONG NOTE NAMES

THE complexity of this whole topic is compounded because the names that we pipers give our notes are incorrect when you compare it to the actual note which is sounded by the chanter: see example three.

Over the page, under the **B-flat Major and Mixolydian** section I talk about the keys that the pipes actually *sound*, but when I refer to the scales and the notes on the chanter I use the names as they are *written* by pipers, like low A and high G. These are the wrong names for the notes from a music theory perspective, so if you have a strong grasp of music theory and are thinking “wait a minute, a B-flat major scale does not start with an A note”, you are right obviously, it starts with a B-flat note. I am trying to make this theory accessible to as many pipers as possible so am naming the notes as they are written (*as written*) by pipers rather than as they *sound* (*as sounded*) on the pipes.

Example 3.



As an example to show how the pipe chanter notes have the wrong names, if you were to ask a fiddler to play an A note and you were to play a low A on the pipes they would be out of tune, or as Finlay MacDonald puts it, “they would be comically out of tune”. That is because the chanter is sounding a B-flat note, and if your chanter is at concert pitch as described above it will be a B-flat at 466Hz, whereas the fiddler’s A will be at 440Hz.

So in theory, if you were playing with a fiddler and you wanted to check you were in tune with each other, the fiddler would play a B-flat and you would play a low A note and compare them. This would work fine, though in practice as we will see in the next feature, fiddlers have another method of being in tune with the pipes.

## KEYS AND SCALES

“WHAT key is it in?” is not a phrase that you often hear asked by pipers, as it does not matter when we are all playing the same instrument and melody. Once you start to play along with other instruments, you undoubtedly will be asked what key you are playing in to give the other musicians a clue of which note the melody may start on, or which chords to use if they are playing an accompanying instrument.

*As part of the interviews conducted for this feature I focused on certain topics which are crucial, or closely related, to the whole subject. These discussions are not all about the theory but more about sharing the experience of the guys who do it for a living.*

*Dougie Pincock, ex-piper and multi-instrumentalist of Battlefield Band (and many more bands), and currently Director at The National Centre of Excellence in Traditional Music at Plockton High School, talks about the importance of preparing your pipes for a concert and not playing too much on stage.*

**T**HIS topic emerged in a few of the interviews though it wasn’t an area I had planned to discuss. It was an offshoot discussion from the question I asked the guys about choosing and arranging sets of tunes for pipes and other instruments.

I had assumed that the pipers put their pipes down on stage in certain sets because tunes were being played which did not fit on the pipes, which may well be the case, but it seems that there is another reason for giving the pipes a rest. “When you are playing pipes constantly, and the pipes warm up, the pitch does rise, so programming your set to give the pipes a rest becomes very important,” explained Dougie. “It became one of my jobs when I was in Battlefield Band to make up the concert sets for this very reason. We would usually start with a set of pipe tunes, then give the pipes a rest for two numbers, then they would play the fourth set, then have a rest again, and be played again in the sixth set, and then two off, and finally played again in the last set of tunes. It was important to give them just the right amount of playing without allowing the pitch to rise.

“Before each gig I would always find a bit of time to play the pipes and let them settle. So an hour before the gig I would play them for 10 minutes then leave them down for 10; play for another 10 and then rest them for 10, and repeat the process until 10 minutes before the gig when I would see how they were reading on the tuner. My aim was always to get the pipes right on concert pitch B-flat, but that wasn’t always easily achievable, so I would just find where my low A was tuning on a calibratable tuner and let the other guys know. So I might have said to Alan Reid, the keyboard player, that the tuning was plus five (cents) and he would adjust the keyboard and then the other guys would come on and tune the fiddles and bouzoukis to the same reading as the pipes. So we were not always bang on concert pitch, but we were in tune with each other. These are miniscule adjustments and the average listener would not be able to hear that we were not exactly in concert pitch, but we could hear the difference and other musicians would notice it.”

It was only the advent of the calibratable electronic tuner that saved Dougie from doing what a previous Battlefield Band piper, Duncan MacGillivray, had to do in making sure that his pipes were exactly in B-flat. “Duncan had a hard job, particularly on tours of America, where he could be nice and warm in California and having to lift the reed and put tape on, only to find himself in Alaska the following gig and having to sink the reed right into the chanter and take all the tape back off, spending an hour before the gig just trying to get his chanter in tune. Ease of tuning has come a long way from then, thank goodness, even over the short period of time between Duncan and myself playing with Battlefield Band, but if you go back to the 1970s with guys like Alan MacLeod playing with Alba, or Jimmy Anderson with The Clutha; they were having to manipulate their pipes all the time which must have been a nightmare.”

Dougie made another observation which again is an offshoot to the question I asked about arranging sets of tunes for Highland pipes in a folk band setting, and also relates to giving the pipes a rest. “When Battlefield Band were playing a tune that did not fit on the pipes I would play the whistle or flute, or maybe add a bit of percussion — or sometimes just did not play at all. Silence is a much underrated option, and it is something I work on with the students at The National Centre of Excellence in Traditional Music at Plockton, when we are arranging sets of tunes. It is a slight criticism I have of some of the younger bands on the folk scene: if some of them would just take a break from playing they would have much more variety and interest in their arrangements. If an instrument has not been playing for a wee while it makes so much more impact when it does come in, especially if it is a set of Highland pipes bursting in to life in the second or third tune in a set — so there is no harm in being quiet now and again.” ●

**Example 4.** The two tunes shown on pages 38 and 39 both use the B-flat mixolydian scale, but because there are no strong high G notes in *Morag of Dunvegan* the tune sounds like it is in the key of B-flat major, and so can be accompanied by the standard major chords. Whereas *The Battle of Waterloo* does have strong high G notes as part of the melody, making it sound modal and implying a key of B-flat mixolydian, so a different chordal approach brings out the modal feel of the tune.

As the first feature in issue 50: these pipe tunes have the C# and F# marked in the key signature and guitar chords added above the bars. This music can be used by any musician who tunes up, or transposes, their instrument, e.g. a fiddler who is tuned up one semitone or a guitarist who is tuned up or using a capo on the first fret.

## Morag of Dunvegan

Slow March

Traditional

Published by *pipetunes.ca* and McGillivray Piping © 2011. Copying Prohibited

In musical theory, the key generally indicates the *harmonic centre* or *tonic note* of a tune or a scale. Using the key of E-flat major for example: it means that the tune is based on a scale of notes which begins with an E-flat note and finishes on an E-flat note. So E-flat could be called the *key* or the *tonic note*.

To help understand keys, and the influence a key has on a tune, you could try singing a few scales. Start off by singing the scale: Doh, Ray, Me, Fah, So, Lah, Te, Doh — yes, the scale most people will know from the *Sound of Music* film — and repeat the scale a few times just to get familiar with it and feel what your voice is doing to sing the notes.

That scale of notes you sang will have a *key*, and the *tonic note* can be found from where you decided to pitch the first note of Doh. The key will be different for everyone depending on where they pitched Doh, but that is not important for the moment, as long as you understand that the note Doh is setting the *key* (or it could be called the *tonic note* of the scale, or *the tonic* for short) for the rest of the notes which follow. If you had a friend with a guitar sitting next to you they could find a chord to match your first Doh and tell you which key you were in.

(When Finlay started singing scales when he attended the BA (Scottish Music – Piping) degree course at the RSAMD he naturally flattened the seventh note, Te (our high G), because he was so used to hearing this note flattened on the pipes. Many pipers may naturally do this, but the actual Doh, Ray, Me scale that other musicians would sing or play would not have the flattened seventh note.)

The next step is to move Doh up a full tone which will have the effect of changing the key: so start singing the scale as you did previously but stop at the second note; Ray — but keep

singing Ray, just hold the note; then change the sound to Doh; and continue to sing the full scale Doh, Ray, Me, Fah, So, Lah, Te, Doh.

The scale you have just sung will be in a different key to your first scale, and you could change the key again by repeating the process of singing Doh, Ray, Me; holding Me and changing the sound to Doh, and continuing with the scale. Everyone's voice is different, but as you continue to sing the scales and change the key you will find the keys which are comfortable for your voice and the ones which are too high or low for you to sing.

You may now be wondering how singing Doh, Ray, Me scales relates to pipe tunes. Well, let's just say that the first scale you sang was in B-flat, meaning that a pipe tune written in B-flat would have used the eight notes that you first sang and the *key* or *tonic note* of that tune would be taken from the Doh. If you then continued with the exercise and repeated it four times, with your scale getting higher every time (and probably harder to sing), you would have got to the place where Doh was an E-flat note and provided the key. A pipe tune written in E-flat will have a very different feel to one written in B-flat, and these differences in the feel of the key is probably how most pipers, who don't play other instruments, have experienced different keys.

### FEELING THE MUSIC

MOST pipers will have musical feel for keys without actually having the terminology to explain them, and to some extent, musicians with a good ear will know which key you are in the second you start playing. Finlay explained: "When I started piping I didn't know any of the theory, but I did un-

derstand that there were groups of tunes with a particular feel to them. Take tunes in the key of C minor for example, *Farewell to Nigg* or *Paddy's Leather Breeches*; I didn't know they were in C minor but I knew the feel of these tunes. Most pipers can feel these things, and could put a set of tunes together which flow well, which if you analysed you could say for example; you went from an A-flat tune, to an B-flat tune, then to an E-flat tune which is a nice key change, then you went to a C minor tune, and finished back on a B-flat tune. Pipers may not know the names of the keys but they instinctively know what sounds good."

### B-FLAT MAJOR AND B-FLAT MIXOLYDIAN

THERE are seven keys, in varying levels of playing difficulty, *as sounded* by the pipes: A-flat major; B-flat major & B-flat minor; C minor; E-flat major & E-flat minor; and F minor. Each of these keys has its own scale, and the most commonly used keys would be B-flat major, E-flat major and C minor.

On the chanter the scale of notes for the key of B-flat starts at low A (*as written*) and progresses right up the chanter to high A. This is 'the scale' that we all learned to play when we first picked up a practice chanter.

When we play this scale on the chanter, the seventh note; our high G (*as written*), is a flattened note and it moves the scale from B-flat major to B-flat mixolydian (*as sounded*).

The term mixolydian is the name of a mode and we will talk about modes in another feature — so let's stick with B-flat for the moment.

The usual B-flat major scale does not have a flattened seventh note — B-flat major has a natural seventh note rather than the flattened high G (*as written*), which the pipes play.



# A mentor to many...

LEWIS ARTHUR TURRELL, MBE (1936-2011)

**F**OR more than half a century, Lewis Turrell MBE, was a powerfully nurturing presence in New Zealand's Highland piping scene, a mentor to many, who lit up with delight and responded generously wherever he encountered a genuine love of the instrument and its music.

He unselfconsciously made history when, in 1958, he became the first non-Scot to win the Highland Society of London Gold Medal at the Northern Meeting. He remembered feeling very happy but also a little surprised by the judges' decision.

He had gone to Scotland the year before, inspired by the music of some outstanding Scottish players who had immigrated to New Zealand following the First and Second World Wars but in particular by the experience of learning his first piobaireachd, *Catherine's Lament*, from Neville Mackay, a New Zealander who had recently returned from Scotland where he had studied with Pipe Majors Donald MacLeod of Inverness, Robert U. Brown at Balmoral and John MacDonald in Aberdeen.

Lewis had his first tuition as an eight-year-old. His family told him that, as an infant, he'd get very excited at the sound of pipes and jump up and down in his pram. "My sister was interested in getting me started on the pipes," Lewis said. "She worked in the Government Audit Office and her boss had been the adjutant of the New Zealand Scottish Regiment during the Second World War. He introduced me to his Pipe Major, Bill Kennedy, from Greenock. So all of the Scottish blood that was in the family — my mother's grandfather immigrated from the Glamis area in Perthshire — came out in me."

Lewis spent the next three years on the practice chanter because a full set of pipes would have shattered the peace of the Auckland boarding house that was managed by Bill's wife and in which they both lived.



He later talked about his prolonged initiation into piping as an asset. He said: "Although I was on the practice chanter far too long really, I had a very good teacher and there wasn't the sense of urgency that you have to get a couple of wee tunes going to keep the interest up and get on to the pipes in a hurry... then spend the next several years sorting out technical imperfections."

It was only after his father, a New Zealand Railways employee, was transferred to Wel-

lington that Lewis progressed to a half-set of Henderson pipes loaned to him by his next teacher, George MacLennan from Inverness. Not long afterwards, Lewis's parents bought him a full set of Henderson pipes from Scotland.

"Dad was transferred back to Auckland so I went back to Bill Kennedy who was not a great player but was a beautiful teacher... and you're eternally grateful to your teachers, aren't you?" he recalled.

Lewis played for several seasons with the then Grade 2 City of Auckland Pipe Band and began making his mark on the solo boards in the novice and under-16 grades at the annual Waipu Highland Games and other North Island events.

"In my generation, we all wanted to go overseas," he told me in 2008. "Many of us wanted to go to Scotland because so many of us had parents and grandparents from Scotland who always talked about Scotland and wanting to go back. That older generation couldn't do it, but we could, and we went.

At 21, Lewis was on his way. He first called in on his sister in Brisbane, Australia, where he met up with Donald MacKinnon, who had been Pipe Major of the King's Own Scottish Borderers, and Lewis played for a short time with the Brisbane Caledonian Pipe Band.

He arrived in Aberdeen, just in time for a piping recital at the Aberdeen Pipers' Club by Pipe Major "Wee Donald" Macleod. At the end of the recital, Lewis Turrell approached Donald Macleod and handed over the letters of introduction that Neville McKay in New Zealand and Donald MacKinnon in Australia had provided him with. "Donald made me feel so welcome," Lewis recalled. "I had my first lesson the following Monday.

"I suppose in a way he was the perfect teacher for me because he wasn't full-on. Donald would give you a free rein but would teach you so clearly the boundaries that you mustn't step over and torture your musical line. So you knew which tunes you should be playing and the tunes you shouldn't be wasting your time with and that's so important."

That year, 1957, Lewis won the piobaireachd at the Royal Braemar Highland Gathering playing *The Earl of Seaforth* to a judges' bench that consisted of Bob Brown, Bob Nicol and Alex MacDonald.

The following season, playing *The Rout of the MacPhees*, he won the Highland Society of London Gold Medal at the Northern Meeting. For good measure, he also won the strathspey and reel and the jig events, and was runner-up to Alan Dodd in the march contest.

In all, he spent about three years in Scotland and decided to return to New Zealand in 1960 where he continued with his solo and pipe band playng and did some teaching.

The following year, Lewis took a job with Woolworths, a national retail chain. As he was groomed for management, he found himself

frequently transferred and kept very busy but, when he could, he would fit in some teaching and some judging.

Transferred to Whangarei for four years, Lewis joined the pipe band there where Angus MacAulay, a greatly admired piper in New Zealand, was the pipe major.

Then, transferred back to Auckland in 1969, he joined the Innes Tartan band then led by Pipe Major Bill Robertson, formerly of the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards.

Lewis's next move was to Invercargill, at the south of the South Island.

"They had a band there that was languishing at the bottom of Grade 1," he recalled. "I got the opportunity to take over that band and I thoroughly enjoyed it. I taught them and we managed to have some success."

In Invercargill, Lewis also joined the Territorial Army, the 4th Regiment, which was affiliated with the Cameronians and the Seaforth Highlanders.

In 1976, he got a letter from the New Zealand Department of Internal Affairs asking for a copy of his piping credentials. "I thought they must be sending this form out to one and all," he recalled. "But it was all to do with the Royal Silver Jubilee Tour to New Zealand the following year. My CO rang me up one day and told me he'd been advised that I was to be the Queen's Piper for the tour. So I went around New Zealand playing for Her Majesty every morning."

He was engaged in the same capacity for Royal visits in 1982 and 1985.

And in 1982, he was made a Member of the British Empire for his services to piping.

Then he was moved to Wellington and became pipe major of the City of Wellington Pipe Band.

He said: "I had quite a few years with Wellington and I enjoyed my band work. I enjoyed the group involvement and there was a little bit of ego too. You want the band to play exactly the way you play."

Lewis led the City of Wellington band to six New Zealand Championship wins in a row.

"One of the highlights of my time with the band was playing at the Edinburgh Tattoo in 1987," he said. That was the year too that Lewis left Woolworths and returned to Auckland to open his own business, House of Scotland.

It became much more than New Zealand's principal supplier of piping, dancing and Scottish interest merchandise. It became a

*'There was a little bit of ego too. You want the band to play exactly the way you play'*

sponsor of piping and dancing, a conversation place and a hub of information, advice and relationships.

As well as running the business with wife Kaye, Lewis continued to teach, to adjudicate, to be available for recitals and other engagements, to advise and to give his time to the administrative tasks that came his way; he was always in demand and he always showed a generous spirit.

He also published a book of 75 tunes he had compiled: *Lewis Turrell's Collection of Bagpipe Music*. Composers included historical figures such as Major R. W. Haddow, first president of the New Zealand Academy of Highland and National Dance, Pipe Major Donald MacKinnon of the King's Own Scottish Borderers and his own contributions included 15 marches, a dozen jigs, five reels, five strathspeys, four hornpipes, a slow air and a piobaireachd, *Lament for Benjamin Lewis Turrell*.

His wife Kaye has long been a leading teacher in the New Zealand Highland Dance scene and, for many years, Lewis played for dancers and dance competitions.

"Every piper should play for the dancers," Lewis told me in 2008. "That's why you play pipes: you play to give enjoyment to people who can't play and they say, 'Give us a tune, Lewis' — and, of course, you do."

At the time of his death at 76 from cancer, on April 21, Lewis was the Auckland Region president of the Piping and Dancing Association of New Zealand.

At his funeral on April 30, at the All Saints' Chapel, Purewa Cemetery, Auckland, five of his close friends, all of them leading New Zealand pipers — Stuart Finlayson, Brian Switalla, Greg Wilson, Brendan Eade and Bain McGregor — together played the piobaireachd *Cumha na Cloinne (Lament to the Children)*. Elizabeth Bennett also played harp.

As Lewis liked to say: "You've got to spread the music." ●



# 10 out of 10 for Swiss School

THE SWISS PIPING AND DRUMMING SCHOOL 2011

**S**TUDENTS at the piping and drumming schools organised around the world by The National Piping Centre enjoy a fantastic tuition experience.

But there's more to their week or weekend than just learning and practising.

For some travelling to a new destination, it's a great chance to experience the local culture and attractions and for others, the social side is also a key part with new friendships being formed.

The second annual National Piping Centre Swiss School was held in May and to give a flavour of what's involved, here are two personal experiences of the week – one from 15-year-old Canadian student Justin Steele and the other from piping tutor John Mulhearn.

## Student's story

I WOULD rate my experience 10 out of 10. The instructors were top-notch and patient, the accommodation was brilliant, the Swiss food was fantastic (fondues, cheeses and especially Swiss chocolate), the attractions close by were an unforgettable experience and I also met new people from many different countries.

The location of the school was awesome. We stayed in a chalet right on the water, and had a breathtaking view of nearby mountains.

Focusing on the learning experience, I was very impressed with the structure that the teachers put together. The class schedule provided students with sufficient practice and class time, they did a fantastic job in choosing the people that they put in each group.

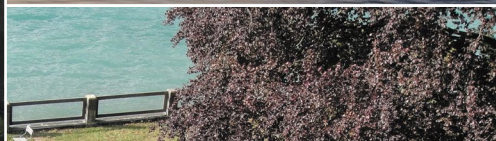
In the evenings, all of the students gathered to play in a massed band in the backyard of the chalet by the lake. We were lucky enough to have had perfect weather and to play our pipes outside and the teachers and students would play a few tunes for everyone's enjoyment.

The brief morning meetings we had before classes kept everyone organised and the workshops in the afternoon were very interesting and I learned a lot about bagpiping from them.

It was also amazing to see how much other students were progressing as well. For example, a student who had never played the pipes or practice chanter before got to grips with most of the basic techniques and was even starting to play tunes.



The tutors pictured with the prize winners. From left: David Henderson; Glenn Brown; most improved student Simone Naef; most dedicated student Ruedi Attinger who won a £250 gift certificate for Wallace Bagpipes; John Mulhearn and Stuart Samson.



This has been the fourth National Piping Centre School that I have attended and all have been memorable but this year is my favourite for several reasons: because of the high level of instructors and the location of the school in the beautiful little village of Leissigen, right in the Alps.

It was 10 minutes from the city of Interlaken which has shops, restaurants, hotels and also a company called Sky Wings, offering sky diving, paragliding, canyon jumping, bungee jumping, and rafting — perfect for daredevils like me.

We could see the paragliders every day from the chalet so instructor Glenn Brown and I signed up for it.

We ran off a 4000ft mountain and had the thrill of a lifetime. The Sky Wings instructors even want us to return next year to play our bagpipes while paragliding.

Approximately 10 minutes from the school on the other side of the lake, we went on an unforgettable guided tour through caves and walked 1km into the mountain.

In summary, I would highly recommend it to anyone of any skill level who wants to progress their skills in piping and I plan on attending the Swiss School in 2012. Come to the Swiss Piping School or any of The National Piping Centre Schools and have the time of your life.

**JUSTIN STEELE, CHATHAM, ONTARIO**

### Tutor's story

THE National Piping Centre's second annual Swiss Piping & Drumming School took place amid the stunning scenery of the Swiss Alps, in the village of Leissegen situated next to Lake Thun, in the Leissegen Youth Hostel. Piping instructors Stuart Samson, Glenn Brown and myself, together with drumming instructor David Henderson, led the group of 28 students through a course of tuition tailored for their needs.

With a rotational timetable, extensive music pack and graded classes, the students were given clear guidance on the ways in which they could improve on both the technical and musical

sides of their playing. They also had their pipes put into good working order, allowing for the lessons learned to be put into practice over the coming months.

The balmy late spring weather, complete with clear blue sky and gently lapping water, provided the perfect environment for outdoor lessons — an experience that these instructors are far too unfamiliar with. Between lessons, students could be heard throughout the valley, practising new tunes, and at the end of the teaching day coming together for a mass bands session.

Following on from the success of last year's school, it was good to see familiar faces, and in many instances playing that had improved dramatically over the last year. Notable here was Ruedi Attinger, pipe major of the Zurich Caledonian Pipe Band, who was named most dedicated student — an accolade that earned a £250 gift certificate for Wallace Bagpipes, a great supporter of The National Piping Centre schools. ● **JOHN MULHEARN**

# The Northwest Collection

A COLLECTION OF MUSIC, PHOTOGRAPHS AND ESSAYS

**A**N important collection of pipe music has recently been published that I think should be brought to your attention. This is a 139-tune collection, compiled and arranged by John Dally of Vashon Island near Seattle, USA — including 43 composed by John himself.

Not only is this a collection of music however. The 21-page introduction gives us a very interesting account of John's legacy as a piper and in addition provides a rare insight, with supporting illustrations, of the earlier settlers who, as pipers, settled in the state of Montana and elsewhere in America in the early 20th century.

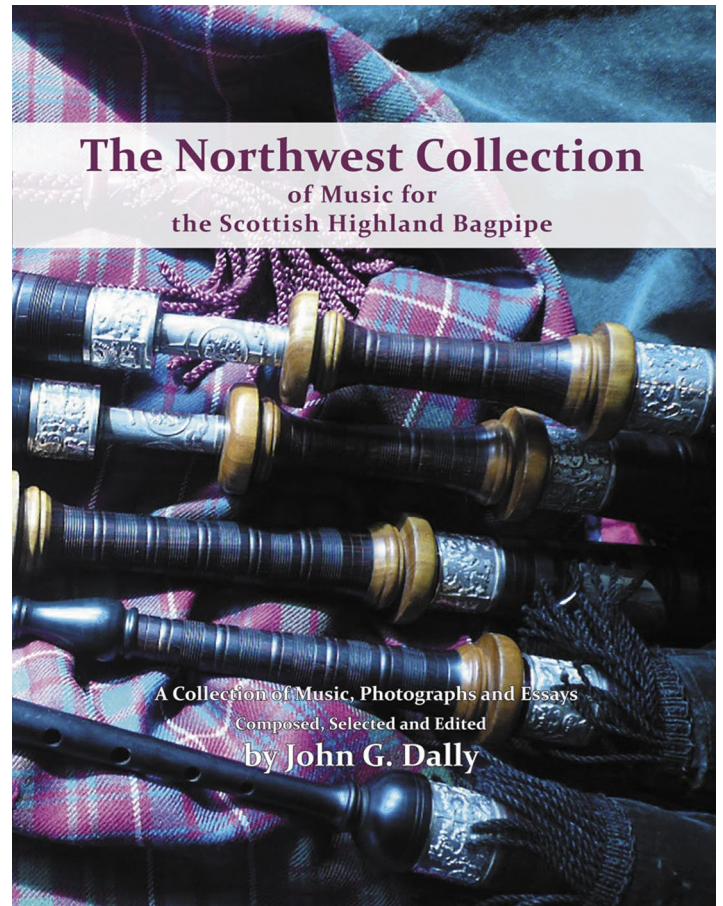
It was John's discovery of a manuscript collection of tunes and published scores previously owned by the late Donald Sutherland (1888-1963) that set him off on this venture that we are fortunate to have before us. The full range of familiar genres includes four *ceòl mòr* compositions and John has good arrangements of traditional pieces.

He traces Donald Sutherland's travels as a shepherd from *Coire Chaorachaidh* near Rogart to Peru in 1910 then to Argentina, Australia, Montana and Oregon. He highlights the piping connections between Sutherland and A.K. Cameron, Montana; Simon Fraser, Australia; Farquhar Finlayson, New Zealand (whom I think was from Kyle of Lochalsh); Kintail MacRae, Renwicks and MacDonalds. DC Mather was also part of the piping scene in rural Montana in the first half of the 20th century. It gives us a rare view of the connections that existed between the many pipers and Gaels who were part of the great diaspora to the New World.

As John shows in his introduction, a person like Colin MacRae of Seattle is once removed from Alex MacMillan, Colonsay, who was proof-reader of Thomason's *Ceòl Mòr* and an obvious authority on the older styles. MacMillan, in turn, was taught principally by John MacColl but with knowledge of Ronald Meldrum and John MacDougall Gillies's playing. These styles were possibly well down the road to the rigid standardisation that eventually prevailed, however they could provide interesting insights on styles no longer heard.

There are many good tunes here. I opened it up to find a tune I had been humming over the last week or so and had wondered what its name was: *The Highland Maid* as a 2/4 answered my question. A number of not-so-commonly heard Gaelic airs have been nicely arranged for pipes by John as well such as *Uibhist nam Beann Àrda* (Uist of the High Bens), as well as the more commonly-heard song *O mo Dhiùthaich 's tu th'air m'aire* (O my home you are in my thoughts) and *Clachan Ghlinn Dà Ruathail* (unfortunately given as *Gleann Dariùathil*, but clearly taken in that format from the Angus Fraser text).

There is a good version and arrangement of Angus MacKay's take on the Port-a-Beul *Leis a Bhrioguis Uallach*. Good to see different versions of the same melody being encouraged and hopefully people will start applying it across the whole repertoire, just as Barry Shears' version of *Tulloch Gorm* appears here.



D. C. Mather at his mine site near Anaconda, Montana

# Altimout

March

John W. Sutherland

Altimout is one of the Sutherland family crofts near Rogart.

# The Flight Attendant

Reel

John Dally



I especially like some of John's jig compositions such as the 9/8 *Parker's Hounds* that moves into 14/8 and finally 4/4 rhythm, although I would have liked to hear it on a CD. We need more compositions with rhythmic changes within.

There are also a number of good, well-arranged two part Strathspeys such as the *Braes of Mar* — well known in Ireland (*Johnny will you marry me?*) as well as in Scotland. Unfortunately a great many of our best Strathspeys have been

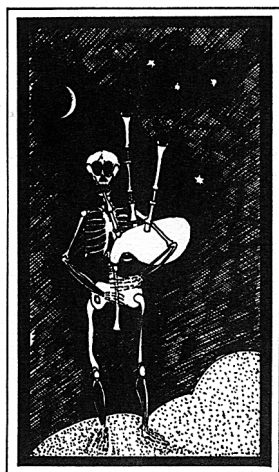
ignored by the mainstream because they only have two parts and therefore do not fit into the competition scenario where two, often inferior or re-hashed, added parts promote it to the higher echelons of a 'battered' repertoire.

The same applies to the two-part reel — but at least there are a lot more of these to be heard on the competitive circuit. There are one or two traditional tunes I recognise from the Irish tradition that maybe should be left as

'arrangements' rather than 'compositions' but then this is something that I would challenge the best composers on; where do you draw the line between a new tune and a variant or a new composition? I am guilty of the same and it is the nature of a healthy oral tradition.

This book is a very fine collection with good information and notes at the back on the tunes and can be obtained from [dirdum@gmail.com](mailto:dirdum@gmail.com) ●

[WWW.BAGPIPECOVERS.COM](http://WWW.BAGPIPECOVERS.COM)



**ALASDAIR MACDONALD**

FINE BAGPIPE COVERS

E-MAIL: [INFORMATION@BAGPIPECOVERS.COM](mailto:INFORMATION@BAGPIPECOVERS.COM)

24 VICTORIA ROAD  
WHITEHAVEN  
CUMBRIA CA28 6JA

+44 (0)1946 592502

**Tru-Tone Ltd**  
Practice Chanter reeds and chanters



Unit 3, Manor Business Park  
Manor Farm, Stirling, FK9 5QA

Tel/fax: + 44 (0)1786 464864  
email: [trutone@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:trutone@tiscali.co.uk)

[www.tru-tone.co.uk](http://www.tru-tone.co.uk)

**R T SHEPHERD & SON**  
**BAGPIPE & BAGPIPE REED MANUFACTURERS**

INTRODUCING  
THE

***“Highland Musette”***

*3 Sets of Scottish Smallpipes in One*

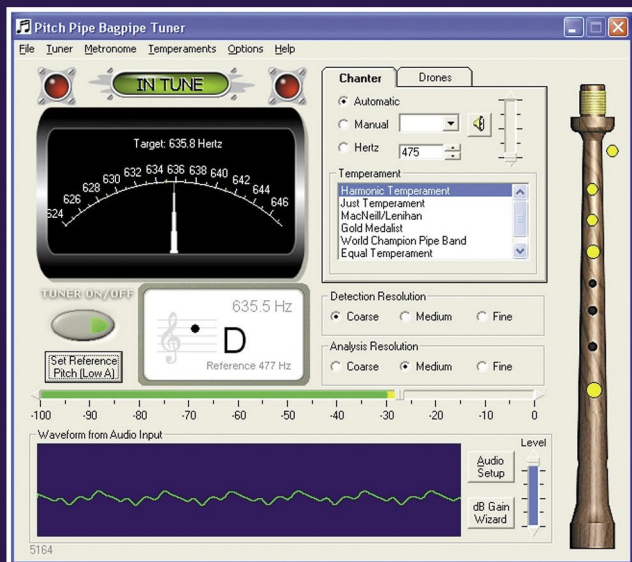


[www.shepherd-bagpipes.com](http://www.shepherd-bagpipes.com)

**R T SHEPHERD & SON (SCOTLAND) Ltd**  
**164 JAMPHLARS ROAD, CARDENDEN, FIFE, KY5 0ND.**  
**TEL: 01592 720130 FAX: 01592 721857**  
**Email; [info@shepherd-bagpipes.com](mailto:info@shepherd-bagpipes.com)**  
**[www.shepherd-bagpipes.com](http://www.shepherd-bagpipes.com)**

# Pitch Pipe

## PC-Based Digital Bagpipe Tuner



For more information and a free trial download visit  
[www.pitchpipetuner.com](http://www.pitchpipetuner.com)

### Features Include:

- \* Sophisticated Pitch Detection
- \* Built-in & Configurable Temperaments
- \* Automatic Pitch Calibration
- \* Histogram Charts
- \* Easy to Use Interface

PDA Version Available



## Live review

### Boghall and Bathgate Pipe Band in concert

Howden Park Centre Livingston

MAY 1, 2011

IT started simply with pipe major Ross Walker playing solo in front of the main curtain. Then the volume rose as the still hidden pipe core joined Ross in *The Call to the Gathering* suite, before the curtain opened and the band were revealed. With this simple but effective start, the May concert of the Boghall and Bathgate Pipe Band began. The band followed this with a very impressive MSR set comprising Tom McAlister, Susan MacLeod, John Morrison of Assynt House which demonstrated that the band will be there or thereabouts in the competitions again this year.

Now it would be fair to expect that the band would follow this up with the usual variety of sets and that is exactly what the band did except, that it wasn't just one band, but three bands. Boghall and Bathgate have such well developed youth



Pipe major Alvis Kerr of the Novice Juvenile band

programme that they have both a Novice Juvenile and a Juvenile band and both got to share the limelight with the big guns of the Grade 1 band.

The Grade 1 and Juvenile drum cores combined for the obligatory fanfare and then both bands combined for a sweet set of 6/8s including the classic *MacLeod of Mull*. The Juveniles then took centre stage to show the assembled audience that they are a band to be reckoned with. If you are not familiar with the music produced by the bands in the Juvenile category then get yourself along to the Juvenile section at the next major competition you will be very well rewarded. These boys and girls can play at a very high standard. Under the stewardship of Ian Bowden the Juvenile band closed the first half with half a dozen sets including an MSR (*Hugh Kennedy, Susan MacLeod, Brown Haired Maid*) that would be the envy of many Grade 2 bands. A classy smallpipe set from Ross Miller and Marie Conner gave the young band a break before they were back on stage to close their set with first, a selection that included *Crossing the Minch* as a Waltz, and then a set of reels (*Devil in the Kitchen and Shovel Tongue*).

The second half opened with the Novice Juvenile band front and centre. Now the Novice Juvenile grade may be the bottom of the grading pile but looks like somebody forgot to tell those in the Boghall and Bathgate Novice Juvenile band. Under pipe major Alvis Kerr the band, including one or two pipers barely big enough to hold a set of pipes, produced a sound that would wipe the floor with many adult Grade 4 bands. After a couple of standards (*Cockney Jocks and Highland Laddie*) the band showed they have no fear and some considerable skill by first of all playing a MAP MSR set and followed that with a medley that contained such tunes as *The Kitchen Maid, Aspen Bank and The High Level*. This was terrific stuff and absolutely fabulous to see (and hear). The Boghall ethos of providing first class tuition is clearly paying big dividends.

The Grade 1 band got to return to the stage to close out the concert and they did this with aplomb. The highlight was the first outing of the new 2012 medley with its twist on *The Glasgow Police Pipers* as a final tune.

This was a delightful afternoon's entertainment with all three bands on song. Good as the Grade 1 and Juvenile bands were, the afternoon belonged to Alvis Kerr's band of young boys and girls and their spirited performance. The future of the Boghall and Bathgate band looks to be secured for years to come.

CHRIS MACKENZIE



Contact our staff for helpful and knowledgeable advice

[www.BagpipeSpecialists.com](http://www.BagpipeSpecialists.com)



Balance tone reeds, chanter and drone moisture systems  
 – All designed to make the life of the piper easier.

Also available online • Bagpipes • Chanters • Pipebags • Chanter reeds  
 Bag covers • Cords/ribbons • Accessories • Smallpipes • Tutor books • CDs  
 Pipe carriers hands free • **If we don't stock it we will get you a price**

info@BagpipeSpecialists.com • Tel: 0044 (0)1854622385

[www.BagpipeSpecialists.com](http://www.BagpipeSpecialists.com)

## CD reviews

**Kenneth & Angus MacKenzie***Piob is Fidheall*

MABOU MINES RECORDS MMRCD001

**IF, to paraphrase the late and sadly missed Ishbel MacAskill, Gaels are only truly happy when deeply miserable, then their ancestors that took the long boat trip to Cape Breton must have decided, on once again putting foot on terra firma, that enough was enough. They would be miserable no more, and would from that moment on, put as much enthusiasm and 'joie de vivre' as they could humanly muster into everything they did — especially their music.**

Sure enough, they were true to their word and they went on to produce music packed with enough bounce to win the world trampoline championship 10 times over. What's more, they have exported this music back to the 'old country', which has taken to it like a Leodhsach (a native of the Isle of Lewis) to stewed tea\*.

On the eastern seaboard of the Atlantic, Angus is definitely the better known of the brothers behind this CD. He is ubiquitous at Celtic events, as he displays his considerable musical virtuosity, mainly with the groups Daimh and Na Tri Seudan, although frequently as a guest with other bands and ad hoc combos. His equally-talented sibling, Kenneth, is still based in Cape Breton and very active in the traditional music scene there. This CD, their first, simply entitled *Piob is Fidheall* (pipes and fiddle), is an infectious and joyous demonstration of the traditional Cape Breton musician's art. At full throttle, the brothers produce a sound that has so much energy it could power Scotland on the coldest winter's night and will lift the spirits of all but the dourest of souls.

**Lucid Druid***Cernunnos*

**'CERNUNNOS is an ancient dead deity. Representing the darker aspects of nature, he is the guardian of the gateway to the Underworld and the Lord of the Hunt. In Lore he is said to rule over the calendar of the Celts from November until May representing the end of summer and the harvest and the transition into the dark half of the calendar. This piece is essentially a tone-poem in five parts depicting various parts of his existence'.**

So begin the sleeve notes to the latest CD by American self-proclaimed eclectic Celtic fusion group Lucid Druid. Normally anything tagged Celtic fusion is accompanied by a 100ft high Belisha beacon proclaiming danger of extreme pretentiousness. Throw in the word eclectic and the beacon is firing out flares into the sky as additional warning.

While it would be disingenuous to state that with *Cernunnos* Lucid Druid have completely bucked that trend, it is fair to say that there is a lot of good music to be heard.

Fronted by ex-Simon Fraser piper Adam Quinn, and playing mainly his compositions, the band also feature Joe Porter (double/electric bass), Sebastian



Taking their inspiration wherever they can find it (PM Willie Lawrie, Jerry Holland, Jamie McInnes and PM Donald MacLeod are a few of the composers whose tunes feature on the CD), Angus and Kenneth infuse the tunes with drive and purpose and a barrel load of talent to produce sets that sparkle from start to finish.

The brothers don't do it all themselves but have smartly enlisted a talented ensemble to further enhance the mix. Of those, special mention must go to Mac Morin and Calum Mackenzie (another sibling and the soloist on the delightful Calum's *Gillie Combo* set)

for their exuberant piano playing that gives the CD that characteristic Cape Breton bounce.

Highlights abound throughout this CD including the brothers' take on *The Skylark's Ascension*, slowing reels down to walking pace (such as Liz Carroll's *The Air Tune*), freeing tunes from their competitive straitjackets (*Highland Harry*, *Pretty Marion*), evocative piano solos and ripping through jigs, strathspeys and reels. There are no fillers on this CD and every track is a delight.

Angus and Kenneth's playing on this CD is so tight it makes Aberdonian farmers look spend-thrift and clearly playing together from a very early age has fused their playing styles so that their pipe and fiddle merge into one glorious sound.

This is a very classy CD, and one that is steeped in the tradition

but is no prisoner to it, as the brothers make free with arrangements and put their own stamp firmly across the music. It's simple really — great musicians plus great arrangements equals great CD. Play it loud and enjoy, it comes highly recommended. **CHRIS MACKENZIE**

\*In Lewis, tea is made by boiling the kettle then putting the water and tea bags (at least one per person) into the tea pot and then stewing it on the stove, under strong heat, for five minutes until the colour of creosote — and with roughly the same taste (don't ask how I know what creosote tastes like.)



Deledda (guitars), Steve Turner (Djembe, talking drum) and Doug White (drums) and on three tracks Jeremy Lembo on didgeridoo.

The musicians certainly work hard to live up to the eclectic label with a wide variety of sounds thrown into the mix with rock, African and folk rhythms (all in various guises) to the fore at various points and special mention to Joe Porter for restoring calm with some delightful double bass playing on part III.

With Adrian's pipes taking the lead, the rest of the band weave a carefully-crafted blanket of sounds around them which, although front and centre on the mix, never overwhelms the sound of the pipes.

There are undoubtedly some passages and sounds that fall into the category of eclectic and those who think the *Hellbound Train* is stretching things should probably steer clear. Those of a broader disposition will find much to like, particularly if already fans of The Peatbog Faeries or old enough to remember the delights of the progressive rock scene in the early seventies.

Perhaps surprisingly, the highlight of the CD is the *Salute to the Cathedral Trees I & II* set which is written as a piobaireachd and played to the accompaniment of a didgeridoo (among other things). This is a sweet melody with the ground and first variation having a sparse but gentle accompaniment while the more rhythmic taorluath and crunluath variations see things get slightly (but only slightly) rockier.

This is a diverse and interesting CD that reveals its ample charms over repeated listens. Its occasional overindulgences are more than compensated for with some clever and unusual arrangements that are a pleasure to listen to. **CHRIS MACKENZIE**

# Grey's Notes

by Michael Grey



Photo: Ryan MacDonald Photography

## What Motown can teach pipers

**I**T seems like the more stuff there is on TV and the more channels there are available, the less there is to watch. This way of things has made me an impatient channel-clicker: two seconds on that show, nine on the other. I think I must use up what little attention span I have on the bagpipes. Sometimes rapid-fire channel-surfing gets results, sometimes you hit on a good show — one not devoted to Colin and Justin, naked cooking or guessing the value of old stuff.

A little while ago I clicked my way across a quirky little documentary about Motown great Martha Reeves (Martha and the Vandellas). She was working with a bunch of high school kids on a music programme they were putting together. The students were, in fact, all talented musicians — the school was dedicated to the performing arts — and the deal was they'd work with Martha and be her local support as band and back-up singers. A daunting task, I'd say. Martha Reeves is a legend and from what I could see, a pretty big force to be reckoned with. She made songs like *Dancing in the Street* pop music anthems.

Like a lot of pipe majors I know, she didn't seem to suffer fools gladly. Imagine. Pipe major Martha Reeves. Anyway, after almost 50 years in the business, Reeves has the chops and can still hit a groove and make good music at a finger snap.

Reeves did her best to help the students "get" the music. They thought they knew the music; they knew the score, they knew the chord progressions, they mostly knew the cues and their technique was pretty solid. What more was there? They'd learned the music from manuscripts and recordings. They thought they were good to go. Doesn't that sound familiar?

Like trying to learn piobaireachd from a recording alone and expecting to create greatness, Martha was all over the students and what they thought they knew. She pummelled into them what they missed: the feel, the vibe, the essence of the music — music she helped invent. They had Martha to deal with now — a sort of Motown John MacDonald of Inverness. She was the master, they were her pupils.

What really struck me was one of Martha's statements. To a student who was attempting a



*'Baby, ya gotta know the rules to break the rules'*

new take, a new riff, on one of her standards, she said, "Baby, ya gotta know the rules to break the rules". It got everyone's attention and helped the cocky student musician understand a core truth when it comes to creating art: in order to understand where the music can go you have to understand where it's been — though I like Martha Reeves' words better.

I can't think of a great artist (musician, painter, composer, writer, and so on) who ventured forward to create dazzling new artistic interpretations without first having expert knowledge of the form they worked in. Think of Pablo Picasso, the poster boy for modern art. Many may think of only cubism and abstraction but the guy is generally acknowledged to have been an impeccable craftsman, one who drew on his classical training to launch into new and innovative artistic directions.

Classical music composers Hector Berlioz, Igor Stravinsky and Franz Joseph Haydn, the

inventor of the string quartet, all stick out a mile as artistic trail-blazers, yet their great achievements could never have happened without expert knowledge of the music — and the instruments that made that music.

"Know the rules so you can break them effectively," said the Dalai Lama. I'm not sure if he and Martha Reeves hang out but they're clearly on the same page.

So we come to bagpipes. And I say this: the greater the depth of a player's traditional repertoire, the greater will be their understanding of where the music has been — and where it can go. The less chance, too, of rehashed "old" music, you know, tunes already lodged in the repertoire yet inadvertently — almost always innocently — passed off as "new".

If anyone aspires to be the piping world's next Picasso, Berlioz or Martha Reeves, make sure you've a library of our best collections of music — and know them well. ●



University  
of Glasgow

University of Glasgow and  
The National Piping Centre

# Study Abroad

Piping Programme

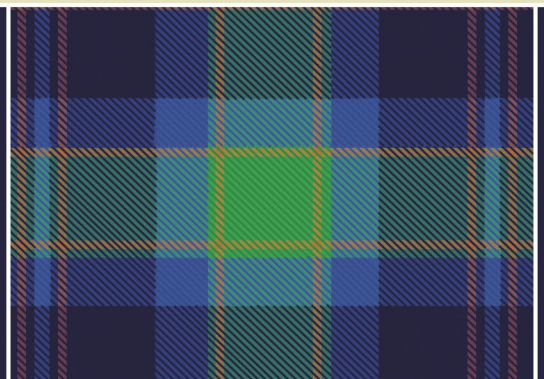
**Course Title: Bagpipes**

History, Repertoire and Performance

## For full details contact:

Finlay MacDonald,  
Semester Programme Leader,  
The National Piping Centre,  
30-34 McPhater Street,  
Cowcaddens, Glasgow,  
G4 0HW, UK.  
Tel: 0044 (0)141 353 0220.  
Email: [fmacdonald@thepipingcentre.co.uk](mailto:fmacdonald@thepipingcentre.co.uk)

Colette McGowan,  
The Fraser Building,  
65 Hillhead Street,  
Study Abroad Co-ordinator,  
University of Glasgow, Glasgow, G12 8QQ,  
Scotland, UK.  
Tel: 0044 (0)141 330 6516.  
email: [C.McGowan@admin.gla.ac.uk](mailto:C.McGowan@admin.gla.ac.uk)



  
**Piping  
Live!**



SCOTTISH  
EVENT  
AWARDS  
WINNER

2010

**8th – 14th AUGUST 2011**

Go to [www.pipinglive.co.uk](http://www.pipinglive.co.uk) for all the latest news and sign up for email updates!



New Arts Sponsorship  
Grants Supported by the  
Scottish Government in  
conjunction with

Arts  
& Business  
Scotland



ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL