

PROMOTING THE MUSIC, HISTORY & STUDY OF THE BAGPIPES

# PIPING TODAY

## JAMIE TROY

*The future is golden*



### The Northern Ireland piping phenomenon

*Standing on the shoulders of giants*

### The World Pipe Band Championships

*The two-day trial*

### An American in Glasgow

*First visit creates lifelong memories*

### The xeremies in Mallorca

*An introduction*

### Grey's Notes by Michael Grey

*Pipers. Must. Compete.*

## Youngstars

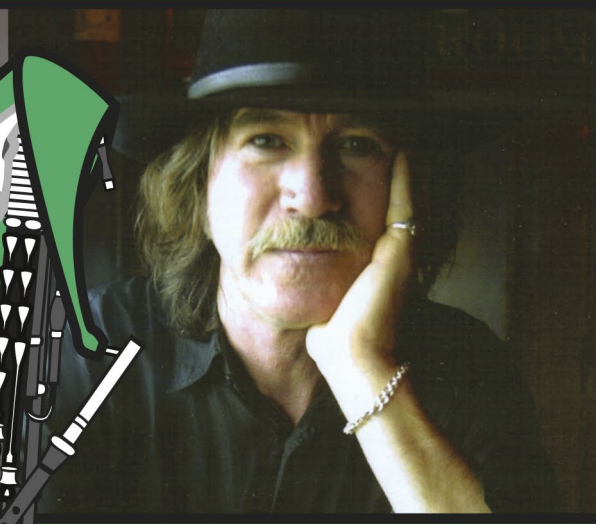
NYPBoS newsletter No. 63



ISSUE NUMBER 66 • 2013

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





# 20th WKPF

Armagh  
14<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> November 2013

## William Kennedy PIPING FESTIVAL

CONCERTS, SESSIONS,  
WORKSHOPS, TUTORIALS,  
LECTURES & RECITALS

Lúnasa, Paddy Keenan, Liam O'Flynn, José Manuel Tejedor, Angus MacDonald, John McSherry, Mick O'Brien, Brian McNamara, Duo Lagrange Rutkowski, Nasc feat. Maeve Mackinnon & Gráinne Holland, Niall & Caoimhín Vallely, Brian Finnegan, Barry Kerr, Gearoid Mac Lochlainn, Mikie Smyth, Jarlath Henderson, Tiarnán Ó Duinnchinn, Balázs Istvánfi Duo, Reel It In, Loïc Bléjean & Louisa Bennion, Alana & Laura Henderson, Éamonn Curran, Armagh Rhymers, Wynndebagge, Síoda, Fintan Vallely, Paddy Callaghan, Cúig, Canntaireachd, Macha, Conor Lavelle, Fintan Mulholland

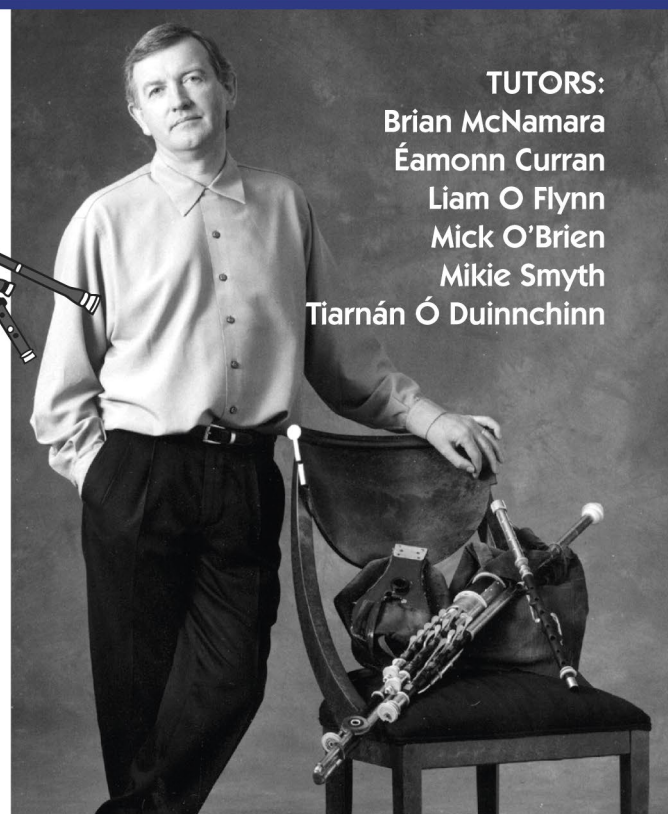


## Academy of Piping

ARMAGH  
15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>  
November  
2013

Tuition, lectures, recitals, sessions,  
pipe maintenance workshops,  
admission to all concerts,  
two nights B&B accommodation,  
evening meals on Friday and Saturday.

Places are £150 and are limited  
so early application is essential! For  
more information and to request an  
application form contact  
[grainne@armaghpipers.org](mailto:grainne@armaghpipers.org)



TUTORS:  
Brian McNamara  
Éamonn Curran  
Liam O'Flynn  
Mick O'Brien  
Mikie Smyth  
Tiarnán Ó Duinnchinn

# contents



FRONT COVER PICTURE:  
James P. Troy  
See feature on pages 8-13.  
Photo: Ryan MacDonald

## Editorial

Roddy MacLeod

## News

### James P. Troy

Taking silver with a well trusted reed

### Piping Live! 2013

The Glasgow International Piping Festival

### The World Pipe Band Championships

The two-day trial

### CD reviews

New products

### Youngstars Newsletter No.63

The Outer Hebrides Tour 2013

### Competition for Amateur Solo Pipers

Q & A with Michael McGowan

### Standing on the shoulders of giants

The Northern Ireland piping phenomenon

### Mounties field pipes, drums and dancers

Royal Canadian Mounted Police

### The xeremies in Mallorca

An introduction

### An American in Glasgow

First visit to *Piping Live!* and The Worlds  
creates lifelong memories

### Grey's Notes by Michael Grey

Pipers. Must. Compete.

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

5



6

8

14



20

25

26



29

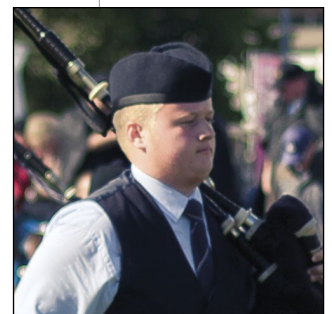
30



36

42

46



50

# The *Victorian* COLLECTION of reproduction bagpipes

McGillivray  
PIPING



The Breadalbane



The Breadalbane



The Perth



The Perth



The Edinburgh



The Edinburgh



"The Edinburgh"

J & R Glen reproduction  
by Thomas Doucet

"The Breadalbane"

D. MacDougall reproduction  
by Dunbar Bagpipe Maker

"The Perth"

J. MacDougall reproduction  
by David Naill & Co.

These three bagpipes are historically accurate and tonally brilliant reproductions of superb originals from the reign of Queen Victoria, each made by a leading pipe-making firm.

For more information, visit: [www.piping.on.ca](http://www.piping.on.ca)

## VINTAGE BAGPIPES

from McGillivray  
PIPING

McGillivray Piping Inc. has quickly become the world's leading purveyor of first-class vintage bagpipes from Henderson, Lawrie, MacDougall and more. All instruments are carefully inspected and refurbished by a leading restorer and tested by Jim McGillivray for steadiness and playability. Instrument descriptions disclose any and all restoration work done on each instrument. Satisfaction is guaranteed. Go to [www.piping.on.ca](http://www.piping.on.ca) and select "Vintage/Remarkable Pipes."



Henderson, circa 1920. Silver and ivory.

## PIPE TUNES *On Demand!*

Download individual pieces of bagpipe sheet music! On [pipetunes.ca](http://pipetunes.ca) you'll find superb settings of more than 1,500 traditional tunes and authorized, copyright material from leading composers. Browse the catalogue by listening to demonstration recordings of each tune made by Jim McGillivray or the composer.

[pipetunes.ca](http://pipetunes.ca)



MacDougall, circa 1890. Full ivory mounts.

[www.pipetunes.ca](http://www.pipetunes.ca) • [www.piping.on.ca](http://www.piping.on.ca)



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  
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 2013**

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.

## Congratulations, farewell and thanks!

**WITH the solo and band piping season all but over, with the notable exception of the Glenfiddich Piping Championships and the Scottish Piping Society of London Championships, it seems this is the appropriate moment to reflect on some of the highlights.**

Looking back at the major solo events, I would like to start by congratulating the staff and students of The National Piping Centre who had an amazing season. First of all Callum Beaumont, who this year won the Silver Chanter, the *Piping Live!* Masters Piobaireachd, the Gold Medal at Inverness and came runner-up in the Clasp at Inverness. Clearly this has been a stellar year for Callum.

Congratulations also to Glenn Brown who was placed in the Clasp at Inverness and to John Mulhearn who was placed in the Gold Medal there too. Both are consistently high-level performers in these events.

Also, well done to all those students past and present of the BA (Scottish Music — Piping) degree, who took many prizes at the top events. Alisdair Henderson nearly did the double with a Silver Medal win at Inverness and a second place in the Silver at Oban. All four of the top prizes in the B Grade MSR at Inverness went to students past and present, with Graham Drummond coming out on top, and several top prizes including a victory in the A Grade Strathspey and Reel were bagged by Cameron Drummond, who also managed to qualify for this year's Glenfiddich.

The British Columbia contingent were kings at the Argyllshire Gathering Piobaireachd events, completing a sweep of the Senior Piobairachd by Jack Lee, the Gold Medal by Alan Bevan and the Silver Medal by Jamie Troy. A fine achievement. Jack Lee is also worthy of additional praise for his fine overall win in the *Piping Live!* Masters earlier in August.

The pipe band season was, as always, interesting to observe. The appointment of Ryan Canning as pipe major of Shotts and Dykehead and the return of the Shotts drum corps under Jim Kilpatrick to the competition field was eagerly awaited. It was evident that Ryan had done a tremendous amount and by anyone's standards, this was an excellent first year in charge for him. Sadly, the gods did not shine upon them at the Worlds as the band were caught in a rain storm. One only hopes they have better luck next time.

The big story of the year was whether Field Marshal Montgomery could continue to dominate and attain a clean sweep of the Championships. This they did in style, with pipe major Richard Parkes leading the band to their third consecutive title and third grand slam of major championships in a single year. An incredible achievement and deserving reward for the talent and diligence of the players in the band.

Two of the greats of the pipe band world retired this year — Terry Tully of St Laurence O'Toole Pipe Band and Terry Lee of the Simon Fraser University Pipe Band. Both were World Championship-winning pipe majors and so both will be extremely hard acts to follow and the landscape of the pipe band scene changes again for next year. We congratulate them on their achievements, thank them for their great music and look forward with interest to watching the future developments of these bands.

A quick word about the Glenfiddich Championships. It is worth drawing attention to the fact that this is the 40th anniversary of the event. Without doubt, it is the highlight of any piper's career to take part in the Championship which features the top 10 solo pipers of the year. The ambience of Blair Castle provides the perfect setting for an enthusiastic audience to enjoy the great music.

It is rare to have such an enduring and committed sponsor and the piping world has benefited greatly from the generous philanthropy of this family-owned Scottish company. They are certainly deserving of a rousing round of applause at the Castle to celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Proving that the Championships are moving with the times, there was again a livestream of the event on October 26 on The National Piping Centre's E-Learning web portal — elearning.thepipingcentre.co.uk — for those who could not make it to Blair Castle.

On a separate note altogether, we wish a fond farewell with a great big thank you to Tracey Williams. Tracey has now left her position at The National Piping Centre as Administrator as she has decided to return home to New Zealand. Tracey did invaluable work here for us at The National Piping Centre and I am sure that sentiment would be shared by the other organisations she willingly gave her time to, including The Competing Pipers' Association, The Eagle Pipers' Society and The Captain John MacLellan MBE Memorial Competition to mention a few. I am sure as much as we will miss Tracey, the New Zealand piping community will welcome her back with open arms. No doubt a few drams will have been raised at the Glenfiddich to wish her the best of luck — what better send-off could you have!

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



# Beatrix enter new era after festival highlight

**THE Beatrix Pipe Band from the Netherlands made their mark at Piping Live! this year, as the first act on parade at the festival.**

The Grade 4B outfit had the honour of being the first band to play on Buchanan Street and St Enoch Square on the Monday morning.

In fact, the band rated the experience as their absolute highlight of recent years.

During their trip to Scotland, organised to celebrate their 50th anniversary, they also performed at Stirling Castle.

And they gave a good account of themselves at the North Berwick competition, where they finished in sixth.

A spokesman said: "it was a very good achievement considering the strong field in Scotland with a few very good Grade 4A bands participating."

They also rounded off the season with an impressive haul of prizes from the Scottish Weekend in Alden Biesen, Belgium.

The band secured a first place in both piping and drumming in Grade 4 at the event which is famous



for hosting the 2003 European Championships. They won the the Marching & Discipline trophy.

Beatrix's latest victory on the competition field follows a streak of wins that started the previous season when they made a remarkable comeback.

With the number of players declining in previous years, the band's leadership of pipe major Jeroen Roskam, pipe sergeant Gerald van Dongen and leading drummer Tom van Wingerden started to rebuild the corps.

They developed a new strategy, held workshops and welcomed new players and their efforts paid off.

The spokesman added: "The band soon emerged as one of the main contenders for top placings on mainland Europe."

The band won their first prize at the 2012 competition in Alden Biesen, a big achievement considering the short period of restructure.

Unfortunately, the pipe major had to leave the band following a move to the United Kingdom at the end of that season, prompting the appointment of new leader Gillian Hettinga.

The 2013 season offered new challenges which Beatrix overcame through the dedicated members' hard work.

They managed to retain their reputation and placed at every competition they attended. They took a second at the Peine Highland Gathering in Germany, a first at the Continental Pipe Band Championships in Kerdril, the Netherlands and another first at the Scottish Festival in Xanten, Germany.

The band hope to enter the Grade 3 arena next season but their spokesman said: "We have no illusions of taking any top prizes in this very tough grade which is dominated by strong bands, such as the Belgian Blend Pipe Band (Belgium), the Concord Pipe Band (the Netherlands), Heather Pipes and Drums (Denmark) and The Clan Pipers (Germany).

"All in all, the band will enter a new and exciting era."

Preparations for next season are already under way with Grade 1 World Champion piper Kyle Warren from Field Marshal Montgomery Pipe Band hosting a workshop for Beatrix in November.

They will also host a concert on November 9 in the small Dutch town of Laren.

Anyone interested in finding out more about the band can follow them on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/BeatrixPipeBand](http://www.facebook.com/BeatrixPipeBand)

## Bagpipe conference

**THE Second International Bagpipe Conference will be held in London on Saturday, March 8.**

It will be launched by an opening concert on Friday, March 7 featuring an all-female band from Galicia, Habelas Hainas, as well as Goran Farkas from Croatia and the Andy May Quartet from England.

The conference will be hosted by the Institute of Musical Research and the School of Oriental and African Studies in central London, supported by the IMR, SOAS music department and the Bagpipe Society.

The venue is Chancellor's Hall, Senate House, Malet Street, London.

For more information on the events, log on to [internationalbagpipeorganisation.wordpress.com](http://internationalbagpipeorganisation.wordpress.com)

# Gold medal is a great catch for Kenny

**WINNING Gold Medals seems to come naturally to staff at The National Piping Centre.**

After all, tutor Callum Beaumont picked up the prestigious accolade at the Northern Meeting, see opposite page.

Not to be outdone by the prize-winning pipers, Kenny Sichi, The Centre's "maintenance man" for the last eight years, also got in on the act.

He recently won a Gold Medal for fly fishing by competing in the Scotland team who won the Autumn Home International against England, Ireland and Wales.

The competition was held on the Lake of Menteith and Scotland amassed a winning total of 135 fish with Ireland coming second with 107 fish.

It is a one-day competition and the competitors fish from a boat, sharing it with anglers of the other nationalities.

Rainbow trout and brown trout are the game fish which were caught and for the fishing aficionados, Kenny was happy to share some insider knowledge: "The most popular fly was an attracting fly called The Biscuit, followed by a Welsh fly called a Diawl Bach (Little Devil) and a third fly called a Buzzer."



# SUBSCRIBE

PIPING TODAY magazine is published every two months. Subscribing is the best way to make sure that you get a regular copy of this magazine with the advantage of getting it "hot off the press".

**UK 1 Year - £20**

**Europe - £23**

**Rest of the World - £26**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Surname: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Post Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel No: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Is this a: New Subscription   
 Re-Subscription  Gift Subscription   
 To give a subscription to a friend as a gift, fill the recipients name and address above and enter the givers name here.

Gift From \_\_\_\_\_

I enclose a cheque for \_\_\_\_\_  
 or please debit my Visa/Mastercard/Maestro.

**Credit Card**  
 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

**Maestro**  
 | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Start Date | | | | | Expiry Date | | | | |

Maestro Issue Number | | |

CVV No. (last 3 digits on back of card) | | | |

Name on card \_\_\_\_\_

We can accept Switch, Visa, Mastercard.  
 Also sterling cheques, postal orders,  
 or IMOs payable to  
 The National Piping Centre  
 Send your application to:

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

The National Piping Centre is collecting your personal data to administer your subscription to Piping Today. This data will be held securely and will not be transferred to any third party except where required by law. The NPC may wish to contact you by email with information about its activities. If you wish to receive this information, please tick here.

## World solo amateur champ gets a bite at the Big Apple



**SUCCESSFUL** piper Ben Mulhearn won an all-expenses paid trip to compete in the Metro Cup in New York next year by clinching top place in the World Solo Amateur Piping Competition at *Piping Live!*

The prize for the Grade 1 CLASP winner was generously sponsored by Eric and Maureen Stein.

Eric is chairman of the Metro Cup committee and the couple are regular supporters of the *Piping Live!* festival. Amateur pipers also competed in Grades 2 and 3. The judges were Alex Gandy, Ronnie MacShannon and Simon McKerrill.

The results were: **GRADE 1**  
 Piobaireachd — 1. Ben Mulhearn; 2. Susy Klinger; 3. David McLaughlan. MSR — 1. Ben Mulhearn; 2. Sean Maloney; 3. David McLaughlan. Hornpipe and Jig — 1. David McLaughlan; 2. Ben Mulhearn; 3. Bob Low.

**GRADE 2**

Piobaireachd — 1. Douglas Maxwell; 2. Fraser Bolton; 3. Sandie Greenwood. March — 1. Fraser Bolton; 2. Jack Lockhart; 3. Karen MacLean. Strathspey and Reel — 1. Fraser Bolton; 2. Karen MacLean; 3. Jack Lockhart. Jig — 1. Jack Lockhart; 2. Karen MacLean; 3. John Campbell.

**GRADE 3**

Piobaireachd Ground — 1. Tom Broderick; 2. Helen Thomson; 3. Robert Thomson. Full Piobaireachd — 1. Robert Thomson; 2. Tom Broderick; 3. George Gordon. 2/4 March — 1. Ross Martin; 2. George Gordon; 3. Joris Panis. Strathspey and Reel — 1. Ross Martin; 2. George Gordon; 3. Tom Broderick. Jig — 1. George Gordon; 2. Joris Panis; 3. Robert Thomson.

For more results from the Clasp, turn to Page 26

## Triple winner toasts a successful season

**NATIONAL** Piping Centre tutor Callum Beaumont raises a dram to mark what has been a tremendous solo season.

He won the 47th annual Silver Chanter MacCrimmon Memorial Piobaireachd Competition, held at Dunvegan Castle, Skye, in August.

He went on to win the *Piping Live!* Masters Piobaireachd the following week.

And at the Northern Meeting in Inverness in September, he won the Gold Medal — his second after winning in Oban in 2011 — and was runner-up in the Clasp at Inverness.



Photo: Derek Maxwell

# Taking silver with a well-trusted reed

JAMES P. TROY

by Mike Paterson

**R**EEDMAKER Jamie P. Troy arrived in Scotland on August 18, three days before the Argyllshire Gathering, having flown from Victoria, British Columbia, half the world away on Canada's Pacific west coast.

Aware that the only way to stave off jetlag is to immediately plunge into the local time zone, he stayed up as late as he could that first night. The next day, he relaxed in Oban, where he was about to make his fourth Silver Medal bid at the Argyllshire Gathering.

"I took walks, thought about the tunes, sang them to myself and did my best to keep calm," he said. "The weather was really nice and Oban's a pleasant place to be. I'd been working pretty hard at the tunes and I'd had a lot of pointers from my dad."

Jamie's dad is James W. Troy, a highly respected piping teacher and adjudicator on Canada's west coast whose first tuition was with Pipe Major Ian Duncan of





Jamie at nine months old with his dad



Playing with the Grade 1 City of Victoria Pipe Band, Portland Games at age 11 in 1989

Victoria and in whose youth band he had been pipe major until he turned 16, the band's upper age limit. Subsequent teachers and mentors included Archie MacEndewar, Jimmie Watt, Archie Cairns and Donald MacLeod. He credits Andrew Wright with nurturing his love for piobaireachd. In 1961, James Troy played with the Royal Canadian Air Force Pipe Band at the World's Fair in Seattle. In 1972, he helped launch and led the highly successful City of Victoria Pipe Band, a band who in the 1980s included in their ranks the likes of Bruce Gandy, Jack and Terry Lee, Peter Aumonier and John Fisher. Then, in 1998, James W. Troy, with local police officer Dave McMillan established the Greater Victoria Police Pipe Band, who absorbed the then-weakened city band.

"So I was born into piping and drumming," said Jamie. "I had no choice. It was always around. My dad piped me into the house when I was born.

"And my uncle Colin Magee was lead drummer of the City of Victoria band so I was around both piping and drumming from infancy. Growing up, I was apparently fascinated by the sound of the pipes and, when dad was practising, I'd be in the room, reaching for the chanter and things like that. My fondest childhood memories are of lying in bed at night listening to dad practising his piobaireachd... it was a comforting thing to go to sleep to. And, at that time, the City of Victoria band were very strong and there'd be all these great players coming to the house and taking lessons from dad. I'd always be hanging around and trying to hear what they were talking about.

"It was Andrew Wright and the schools in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, that really started to



Trying the drum aged 8 in 1986



Jamie with Andrew Wright in 1992

open up for me what piobaireachd could be. Dad and I both still go down to a seminar Andrew runs every year in Washington State. My dad had been going to Coeur d'Alene for years, then took about 10 years off. Then my younger sister (Jacqueline Troy Carter, now an open side drummer with the Edmonton and District Pipe Band) and I went for almost 10 years in a row. And that's where we really got exposed to Andrew Wright and John Fisher.

"I had my dad as a mentor. But he was playing so much that I think I learned mostly just by being around, by assimilation. We tried some sit-down lessons but it didn't really work out that well; I think, me being his son, he was extra hard on me."

These days, it is a little different.

"Dad and I worked pretty hard on my Silver Medal tunes at home," said Jamie, "and then I had some extra tuition from Jimmy McIntosh who gave me his take on the phrasing and what to bring out of the music.

"The four tunes I had in — *The Parading of the Macdonalds*, *Melbank's Salute*, *Fair Honey* and *Grain in Hides and Corn in Sacks* — were a little different from tunes I'd played before. Jimmy showed me what could be done musically with these tunes, tunes that are really fairly basic. He did quite a bit with them for me.

"It's great to have somebody like that, a very knowledgeable person you can bounce ideas off and who'll help you to see more in a tune."

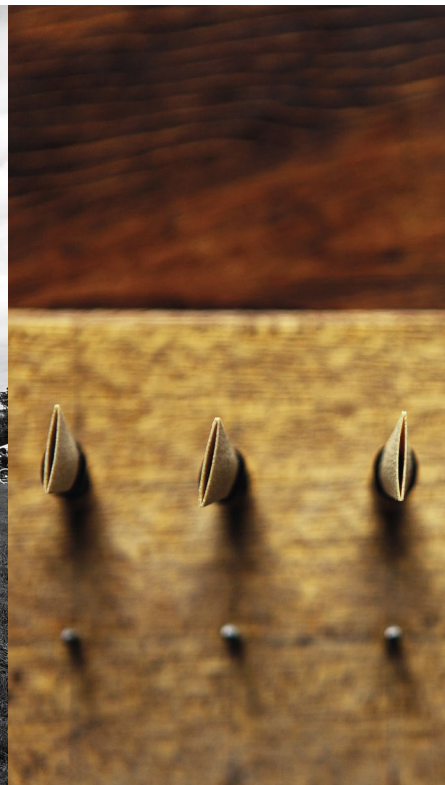


Photo: Ryan MacDonald



Photo: Ryan MacDonald

Jamie played drums with the Spirit of Scotland Pipe Band at The World Pipe Band Championships in 2008



Troy McAllister Reeds

And, in his pipe case, Jamie had another source of reassurance: a chanter reed he had made himself three years previously. “It’s one of the original McAllister designs that we make,” he said. “I made it in 2010. I’ve re-tied it a few times and cleaned it with whisky to bring it back to life and it’s the reed I’m using today.”

“It gives me peace of mind to know a reed’s personality and know exactly what it’s going to do. Maybe I’m really ill-prepared... but I only have the one chanter reed going. I trust that reed. I’m really, really confident of it, though I always feel some trepidation whenever I’m taking it out or putting it in. That’s the most nerve-wracking part of practice for me.”

“That first day I arrived in Scotland, I had a quick check over the pipes just to be sure and my reed acted the same way in Oban that it does in the practice room here in Victoria. So that gave me a little confidence boost. I was happy.”

When, on the day, the steward gave him the judges’ pick — *Melbank’s Salute* — Jamie was further encouraged. “It’s one of my favourite tunes,” he said, “one I thought I had a really good handle on and understood. It’s a fairly straightforward 4/4-type tune phrased in fours. I was quite pleased.”

And so were the judges.

Winning the Silver Medal puts Jamie into contention for the Gold Medals.

“Now the real work begins,” he said. “I’m

*‘The thing that’s a little different with the McAllister reed is that you can manipulate it quite a bit without the knife and make it work for you’*

more motivated than ever to get the tunes going and it’s nice because I’m already familiar with some of the tunes on the list. It’s a case of going over them with my dad and fine-tuning some points with Jimmy McIntosh who has indicated that he’d still be willing to work with me.”

FOR now, after three weeks in Scotland and with winter on the way, Jamie is focused on reed-making and teaching.

In 1998, the Troys took over the McAllister reed-making business and went to Scotland to study the famous McAllister brothers’ methods. That chanter reed-making training with John K., William and Tom McAllister Jr, and the McAllisters’ encouragement, allowed the McAllisters to retire and enabled the Troys to continue production of the highly-regarded reeds in the same way.

“When we were apprenticing with the McAllisters, everyone I knew played their reeds,”

said Jamie. “After we took the business over, though, I think people began to look for other options, just because it was a really big change for the McAllisters themselves to not be making reeds any more.”

“It’s taken quite a long time to convince people it’s still the same reed. In my view, it’s more consistent than ever thanks to some of the tooling innovations we’ve come up with.”

“Overall, chanter reed production today is the best it’s ever been. When I was coming up, you had to go through the box of four dozen to find half a dozen that would work for you. And people would routinely take to their reeds with knives. I always get a little nervous when I see the knife coming out.”

“Quality control is now better than ever and it’s a very competitive business to be in. Every maker makes a fantastic reed, one that you can basically put in your chanter and play. That’s good — it’s keeping us on our toes for sure.”



Judging at Victoria Highland Games, British Columbia

“The thing that’s a little different with the McAllister reed is that you can manipulate it quite a bit without the knife and make it work for you.

“You don’t want a reed that’s going to hurt you to play but you definitely want a reed that’s a little bit above your comfort level, just to begin with. With our reeds, you can squeeze them down to your comfort level. A well-made reed will always push back at you so, during the blowing-in period, you have to keep squeezing the blades together a little to ‘train’ the reed. People use elastic bands on their reeds to slightly close the opening so they can get on top of it... that’s basically the same thing as squeezing except that it applies a constant pressure.”

As well making reeds by day, Jamie teaches most evenings through the week and instructs players in his father’s Greater Victoria Police Pipe Band.

“I have a few private students coming to the house. But my teaching is split about half and half between online and in-person lessons,” said Jamie. “I’ve been surprised by how well Skype does work.

“I’m teaching at a variety of levels but mostly adults. The demand is here. I have a few younger students for the coming season and I hope they’ll be ‘up and coming’ soloists.”

ACROSS Canada, standards, he feels, are secure.

“As an adjudicator, I’m lucky to get to travel across the country and get a taste of what’s going on in various regions.

“In Prince Edward Island, James and Kylie McHattie are doing some great things at the College of Piping. And, under Bruce and Alex Gandy, the 78th Highlanders (Halifax Citadel) are coming up, and the Maritimes’ scene is fairly healthy. Ontario is the biggest association. I haven’t been there for a few years but they still support three Grade 1 bands, and my friend Andrew Hayes’ band, the Grade 2 Ottawa Police, are very strong.

“For the past five years, my girlfriend, Ryan MacDonald and I have both taught at Iain MacDonald’s school in Saskatchewan and, also in the prairies, you have the City of Regina, the St Andrew’s band in Winnipeg, and Alberta Caledonia and Edmonton and District in Alberta... it’s a smaller scene but it’s healthy.

“Here in British Columbia, things are stronger than ever with Triumph Street, and Simon Fraser University. I’ve always admired SFU and that organisation. It’s what’s kept piping so strong in British Columbia. And Triumph Street are enjoying a new lease of life. They are pushing SFU hard and that is great for the whole scene.”

“The open solo class here would stack up

against the A-level scene in Scotland as far as I’m concerned.”

The Greater Victoria Police Pipe Band — on Vancouver Island, a ferry-ride away from Vancouver — is essentially a parade band.

“We also have the Canadian Scottish Regiment (C Scot R) Pipes and Drums based on the island and they’re quite busy with gigs and travelling. There are some Royal Canadian Legion bands but I don’t think we have any competing bands here at the moment.

“The Greater Victoria Police band are mostly made up of retired police officers learning to play and a number of old stalwarts,” said Jamie. “We have some veterans of the City of Victoria band who are still playing regularly.

“The band went to China a few years ago and we’re hoping to get into more tattoos and so on,” said Jamie. “I’m usually teaching on their practice nights but I play with the band when they need numbers to fill the ranks.

“The plan is to augment the band with a junior programme and see what comes of that. I think we could, in the near future, be able to field a competitive mid-level band, maybe Grade 3, with a mix of older and younger players that are around the island.”

“I’d like to see us become a competing band,” he said. “And I’d be keen to be involved, absolutely”. Along with polishing those tunes for the 2014 Gold Medal competitions. ●

by Chris MacKenzie

# *Piping Live!* thrives on change

THE GLASGOW INTERNATIONAL PIPING FESTIVAL, 2013



Glasgow Skye Pipe Band at the top of Buchanan Street

**T**HERE were four of them, three boys and a girl, all well under the height of nonsense. Indeed the drones of their pipes added almost half again to their height. One lad had a hunched over stance that gave the impression that the pipes were going to swallow him whole any moment. Small they may have been, but they were bursting with pride as they played, smack bang in the centre of Glasgow, to a large and appreciative crowd.

The Glasgow Royal Concert Hall has hosted many magnificent performances within its walls, but here were the West Lothian Schools Pipe Band, playing at the foot of the steps leading into the building. The space they were in became a concert hall of its own for the week of *Piping Live!*, as the citizens of Glasgow sat on the steps and pipe bands performed under the watchful eye of Donald Dewar, the statue of Scotland's former First Minister. The bands played, people listened, some shed a quiet tear, many took video and pictures and some just sat and enjoyed half-an-hour of good music.

As George Square is being refurbished, the main band performance space in this year's festival was at

St Enoch Square but in a stroke of genius, it was decided the bands would play at a couple of stops on Buchanan Street before reaching St Enoch. This simple thing brought the music of the Great Highland Bagpipe right to the heart of the city and to many people who otherwise wouldn't have got to hear it. Glasgow was alive to the sound of pipe music! It was good quality stuff too, with bands such as New Zealand's Manawatu Scottish and Canterbury Caledonia, Canada's Toronto Police (G1 and G3 bands) and of course Scottish bands such as George Watson's, Lomond and Clyde, and Denny and Dunipace to name but a few entertaining the crowds. The abundance of talent and the tight scheduling did mean there were hard choices to be made on whether to follow the band down Buchanan Street, stay and catch the next one lining up or walk up to the spiritual home of the festival, The National Piping Centre, to enjoy the events on there.

Buchanan Street may have been busy but The National Piping Centre was manic.



Chris Stout and  
MacDonald

Konogan An Habask



PIPING LIVE!



Angus MacColl



Gordon McCready



Hamish Moore



Robyn Ada MacKay



Callum Beaumont



Le Pivenelsacco

The Festival Café was buzzing with music and chat throughout the day, while there were recitals, lectures, book launches, Gaelic taster sessions and possibly even learn the Peruvian nose flute-in-a-day sessions all happening in The Centre. As if that wasn't enough, there were also piobaireachd and pipe band recitals at the College of Piping. You'd need a Tardis and the constitution of a Bering Sea fisherman to see it all, so the best tack was to relax and enjoy what you saw and not worry about what you didn't.

Enjoying what you saw was easy with fabulous performances at almost every turn. Although only a year old as a group, The Scott Wood Trio put in a storming session at the café with a performance that had Scott Wood's playing, on pipes and whistles, in absolute synchronisation with Mhairi MacKinnon's fiddle and Ron Jappy providing excellent guitar support. They have an EP with four of their

sets on it that is well worth seeking out. Lorne MacDougall and Ross Kennedy also rocked the café with a set that had waltzes, including a version of the *Jig of Slurs* as a waltz, slow reels, a seldom heard combination of strathspey and jig, the ground of *The Earl of Seaforth* and one tune (*Dunkeld Announcement*) that had so many accidentals you wondered whether it was indeed being played on the pipes. Throughout them all, Lorne's musicality shone through whether softly slow, or Ferrari fast, and Lorne does naught to 120 beats a minute in two seconds flat. He brings the tune to life and with Ross Kennedy giving as good as he got, this was a cracking hour of music.

Running throughout the week was the now traditional Pipe Idol competition. This sees young pipers under the age of 21 compete in a heat with the winner each day going through to the final on the Friday. The quality of the

performances throughout the week was very impressive with one or two of the days being very close competitions indeed. The finalists were Scott Barrie, McGregor Vandeven, Ailis Sutherland and Angus J MacColl with Angus, son of Angus MacColl, taking the victory with a very assured and polished performance in the final. Those four made the final but Ross Millar, Harry Richards, Ben Murray, Jack Williamson, Andrew Clark, Iain Crawford, Alexander Levack, Alex Jeanrenaud, Andrew Donlan, Scott Mackay, Robyn Ada Mackay and John Dew are also due huge credit for providing highly enjoyable entertainment throughout the week. They all have bright piping futures ahead of them.

Another tradition of the week is the lunchtime recital. At The National Piping Centre, these were solo recitals while the College of Piping were running band performances. Fresh from a win in the piobaireachd at the Masters

A trio from St Laurence O'Toole Pipe Band presented by Wallace Bagpipes



Angus J MacColl



All photos: John Slavin@Designfolk Ltd

The Armagh Pipers Club



Solo piping competition on the Monday and wins in the Silver Chanter and PM Donald Macleod competition this year, Callum Beaumont played a very entertaining mix of music including a big MSR set and a cracking set of jigs on a beautifully set up pipe. He finished with a delightful rendition of the PM Donald Macleod piobaireachd *Queen Elizabeth II*. Callum had overrun his allotted half-hour but Alex Gandy made the most of the remaining time with a polished and varied set that was very well received by the audience. If Callum and Alex represent the newer faces on the scene then Gordon Walker and Angus MacColl are certainly well-kent ones. Their performance was an object lesson in the art of the recital and one all budding pipers should pay attention to. This was demonstrated by a Gordon's set of simple two-parted 6/8s that was a joy to listen to from the tips of the *Queen Elizabeth March*

to the end of the *Midlothian Pipe Band*. Both he and Angus could play pages from actuarial tables and make them musical and the capacity audience loved every note of this recital.

The Tuesday night of *Piping Live!* is quartet night and this year's competition had moved venue to the New Athenaeum Theatre in the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. The theatre was packed as the nine bands fought for the bragging rights a win confers. The MSR section was first and featured some strong performances with St Laurence O'Toole, Manawatu Scottish and ScottishPower being particularly enjoyable. The Medley section saw the quartets explore the harmonic possibilities of four pipes for the most part to the benefit of the performance. Greater Glasgow Police Scotland, Dowco Triumph Street, SLOT and ScottishPower all shone in a very tight competition. Chris Armstrong's ScottishPower quartet took the prize.

The New Athenaeum Theatre was also the venue for a superb night's entertainment from festival regulars The Armagh Pipers Club, Breabach piper James Duncan MacKenzie with his own band and the fabulous Gaelic singer Julie Fowlis. Only three of the 12-strong group from Armagh Pipers Club are pipers and their mix of instrumentals and songs was a delight and testament to the wonderful job the club do in fostering young talent. James Duncan MacKenzie is best known as one of the pipers in Breabach but has just released a cracking new CD under his own name and his band's performance at the concert echoed the CD's mix of good tunes played with an easy west coast style that swings along beautifully. By the time of the big jig ending he had many new fans in the audience. Gaelic superstar Julie Fowlis followed and captivated the audience with her stunning voice and sensitive performance of songs includ-

## PIPING LIVE! Gig Reviews by Kirstin Stewart



ScottishPower quartet

### RT Shepherd International Quartet Competition

The New Athenaeum Theatre • 13/08/13

AS is traditional every year at *Piping Live!*, the quartet competition is the chance for nine Grade I bands to have four of their pipers showcase their competing sets ahead of the World Pipe Band Championships at the end of the week. This year's competitors ranged from the Canterbury Caledonian Society Pipe Band from New Zealand to our very own ScottishPower Pipe Band — offering a very varied palette.

In this event, the competitors not only have to battle it out with each other but also impress the 10 judges who determine the winners. To make it all just a little bit more nerve-wracking, no one knows who or where the judges are. As a sold-out concert, the audience was an excitable one, and the high expectations could be felt all over the theatre. It was clear that most people took this competition as seriously as the pipers.

The first half saw each quartet take to the stage to perform their March Strathspey and Reel. A lot of the quartets had opted to play some of the same tunes, but even though we heard the same tune about five times overall, they all played their own version. Some, such as the Dowco Triumph St Pipe Band quartet, opted to play at a slightly slower tempo than one would expect and others, such as the 78th Highlanders (Halifax Citadel) quartet, played their set at a more rapid tempo — but it didn't matter because it worked for them.

Next came the turn of the medleys. This time round it was all about the musicality and it allowed the bands to show off their strengths and how they can blend melody and countermelody to harmonise with each other. Playing a mixture of hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys, slow airs and reels, this half of the concert really highlighted how exciting bagpipe music can be. The audience were fascinated because every medley painted its own musical picture.

The winning quartet were ScottishPower Pipe Band who really triumphed over the rest with their

very structured MSR and a medley which was unique beyond all reason. The competition was once again a very excitable experience and got everyone even more hyped up for the World Pipe Band Championships at the end of the week. ● KIRSTIN STEWART

### Pipes and Strings Concert

The New Athenaeum Theatre • 14/08/13

WITH acts gracing the stage from Galicia to Canada, the pipes were combined with fiddles, piano and accordion creating a very diverse overall performance.

The first act was the Spanish group Bellon Maceiras from Galicia. Comprising their form of bagpipes and an accordion — which harmonised very well — they brought a rather folksy sound to their performance which was very melodic. The variations in rhythms and style were very interesting to listen to although each set of songs/tunes was rather short so just as you were getting into it, it was over. Their music was very original and could make you imagine sitting listening to it in their home town.

Next was the turn of Finlay MacDonald and Chris Stout on smallpipes and fiddle. They gave off such a sense of 'bromance' that you couldn't help but smile along with them as they bantered back and forth. Their mixture of soft melodic tunes allowed you to get lost in a sea of nostalgia, going from slow to quick and vice versa, and making excellent use of the offbeat in one particular set. They launched their new album earlier in the week and it's safe to say copies would have been flying off the shelf.

Last but certainly not least, was a group from Nova Scotia made up of Andrea Beaton, Matt MacIsaac and Troy MacGillivray. The trio combined pipes, fiddle and piano to showcase the best of their hometown music. They played a rather celtic, soulful set. However the fiddle sound did overpower the pipes and piano at points.

The concert was an enjoyable experience overall and it really did give people the chance to see how pipes and strings can blend well together in all parts of the world. ● KIRSTIN STEWART



Fred Morrison performs at the Piping Live! Wrap Party

### Piping Live! Wrap Party

The National Piping Centre • 18/08/13

IN previous years of *Piping Live!*, there was the After-Words Shindig on the Saturday and the Masters Solo Competition and the Sunday Survivor Session on the Sunday for all those recovering from the World Pipe Band Championships. This year, with The Worlds set over two days, it was decided instead to have a wrap party on the Sunday to allow everyone to end the festival on a high with some good music and a great atmosphere.

It started off with some beautiful Gaelic singing from former BBC Scotland Young Musician of the Year winner and Mod Gold Medallist Catriona Watt. Accompanied by Matheu Watson on guitar, her soulful voice floated through the auditorium, relaxing everyone in the audience. Even if you didn't speak Gaelic she was so immersed in what she was singing that you lost yourself in her music. Such was the enjoyment that Catriona got called back by the audience for an encore.

Then Fred Morrison came on, also accompanied by Matheu, for his set and the audience got a little wilder. Having launched a book of tunes from his last album *Outlands*, he had us all in awe as his fingers flew up and down the chanter, playing tunes to promote his latest release. This included lots of up-tempo music which had the crowd's feet tapping and cheering the good old ceilidh calls. And who can forget Fred's famous flipping of the hair, a move so signature that it would be weird if he didn't do it. However he didn't keep us dancing in our seats all the time. He did manage to slow it down for at least one set to rest and emphasise how good a tune writer he is. It was a good thing there was no act due on after him because it was just too good to follow.

This concert was a great alternative to the usual shindig and an excellent way for everyone to end a fantastic week of piping and traditional music from around the world. ● KIRSTIN STEWART



Cillian and Niall Vallely



Lorne MacDougall and Ross Kennedy



The Vale of Atholl Pipe Band practice at the Street Cafe



St Johns College Pipes and Drums



St Johns College Pipes and Drums



Le Pivenelsacco

All photos: John Slavin@Designfolk Ltd



Duo LaGrange Rutkowski



Barluth



Glasgow Skye Pipe Band in Buchanan Street

ing a Gaelic version of *Blackbird*. Surrounded by talent like Duncan Chisholm on fiddle and husband Eamon Doorley on bouzouki and fiddle and Tony Byrne on guitar, Julie and the guys went from achingly poignant to full throttle and back again in a set packed with variety and panache. All in all a very good night.

The Great Highland Bagpipe may be the dominant sound throughout the week but there were nuggets of less commonly heard pipes (well in these shores anyway) with performances from Mallorcan band Xeremiers De Sollor and their mix of Mallocan pipes (xeremiers) teamed with those playing a flabiol and tambor combination (a three hole pipe with one hand and a small

drum with the other). The group's performance of traditional Mallorcan dances (with dancing for good measure) was very warmly received by the Glaswegian audience. The French Duo LaGrange Rutkowski proved that even in a piping festival there is space for an accordion as their mix of traditional and newer French tunes on pipes and box was a delight from start to finish. Add cracking sets from Irish pair Cillian and Niall Vallely and the Nova Scotia trio of Andrea Beaton, Troy MacGillivray and Matt MacIsaac and for the week at least Glasgow had no borders.

The festival is also a good commercial launch pad and as well as bagpipe maker sponsored

recitals, there was a launch of Finlay MacDonald and Chris Stout's cracking new CD, a pipe chanter launch from Roddy MacLeod — and three book launches, Fergus Muirhead's *A Piper's Tale*, *Blueprint* by the Treacherous Orchestra and Fred Morrison's *Outlands* tune book.

Ten years on *Piping Live!* is firmly established in the premier rank of piping festivals and well worth taking a trip to Scotland for, or if you live in Scotland, taking a week off work to enjoy. Piping in all its finery and glory is on display, front and centre and it is a remarkable music and there for all, from passing shopper to dedicated fan, to enjoy. Here's to the next 10 years. ●

by Chris MacKenzie



**T**HE new two day format for the World Pipe Band Championships began on Saturday, August 17. All 24 Grade 1 bands competed in the usual two heats. The top six bands from each heat went through to the final. This levelled the playing field, as each band had to perform twice to win, and there were no passes through to the final.

The following day, Sunday, August 18, saw SFU, FMM, Shotts, Inveraray, ScottishPower, Culleybackey, Manawatu Scottish, Canterbury

# The two-day trial

The World Pipe Band Championship Grade 1 Final 2013

Caledonia, Dowco Triumph Street, Boghall and Bathgate, The Greater Glasgow Police and SLOT all compete for the biggest prize in the pipe band world.

Regular attendees at the Worlds know to pack clothing for all weathers. This year every item from waterproofs to sunscreen was called for. Lack of sunscreen caught many out as,



despite the occasional torrential downpour and battleship grey skies, many went home with faces as red as the Glasgow Police's Royal Stewart kilts. With every chance that conditions in the ring would not be the same as those for tuning, bands were going to have to have a rock solid sound and unflappable players to carry the day.

As always, the MSR competition was first and Canada's Simon Fraser University got the event underway with *The Balmoral Highlanders*, a tune which was the march

of the day with Field Marshall Montgomery and Manawatu also playing it. SFU set the tone for the competition with a very strong performance which set the bar at a substantial height for those that followed. Without exception, the bands following SFU rose to that challenge and gave good accounts of themselves. Highlights included: Stuart Liddell leading his Inveraray and District band through a typically sprightly *Bob of Fettercairn* and *MacAllister's Dirk*; ScottishPower leading with the *Conundrum*; a lovely *Mrs*

*Macpherson of Inveran* from St Laurence O'Toole (on pipe major Terry Tully's last year as PM) and absolutely delightful performances from FMM and Boghall and Bathgate. All showed that faint heart would not take the day; to be in the mix, boldness and bravery were required. Special mention goes to pipe major Ryan Canning and Shotts and Dykehead Caledonia. They had no sooner started when they were hit with the worst downpour of the day yet no one flinched for the entire duration of the set despite rain that was so



Photos: John Slavin@Designfolk Ltd

heavy it felt almost like hailstones. If The Worlds was decided by the volume of the cheer at the end of a performance Shotts would have walked it. As we now know, the judges made it FMM, Boghall, ScottishPower, SFU, SLOT and Inveraray for the top six.

The order of play for the medley was the same as for the MSR so SFU again got the dreaded first spot. But Terry Lee and the band are not ones to shirk a challenge and they rose to this one with a cracking performance that even a heavy downpour halfway through didn't spoil. Inveraray were next up and from the classy *Helen Black of Inveran* introduction to the pedal-to-the-metal spirit of *Dunrovin Farm*, theirs was a class performance with one of the best pipe sounds of the day with all the panache

and flair associated with pipe major Stuart Liddell. Immediately following Inveraray were the reigning champions Field Marshal Montgomery and theirs was a typical FMM performance — rock-steady sound, impressive technique and good tune selection including a delightful *Sine Bhan* at the break and a full-on *PM George Allan* to finish. Pipe major Richard Parkes and the FMM team don't give many points away and the judges' sheets would have been pretty bare after the band's medley performance. SLOT strolled into the circle with their take on *The Garb of Old Gaul* and followed it with a solid selection that just wasn't as melodic as past SLOT medleys. Canterbury Caledonia and Shotts both had good steady performances that were very enjoyable to listen to. Boghall and Bathgate gave it everything they had and



THE WORLDS





Photos: John Slavin@Designfolk Ltd

perhaps a bit more with their *Campbell's Tartan Army* set and were a delight to listen to from start to finish with *Seonaidh's Tune* a particular treat. This was a set that was definitely in the mix. Two strong performances followed from Cullybackey and Manawatu before it was the turn of the Greater Glasgow Police Scotland band, under pipe major Duncan Nicolson. The Polis turned in the medley of the day which was cleverly crafted and well constructed. It was delightful from the start of *Oran Na Fiaclan*, to the finish with a rousing *Alick C MacGregor* and played throughout with style. This was the crowd's favourite medley of the day and had a

very loud response when it finished.

ScottishPower followed and pipe major Chris Armstrong's band produced a very strong performance to put them in with a shout. Dowco Triumph Street closed out the competition with a very enjoyable performance.

Enjoyable is the word to describe the medley competition with every performance a delight. Medleys were full of melody, there was technical proficiency in abundance although always carefully crafted into the set, and the tone throughout was astounding. Given the weather on the day, that is testimony to the skills of the pipe majors and bands in creating such a high

quality for the competition. In the end victory went to Field Marshal Montgomery Pipe Band followed by Boghall and Bathgate, ScottishPower, SFU, SLOT and Inveraray and District.

The history books will show this as FMM's third Worlds in a row and their fourth major championship of the season (they also won their fifth major at Cowal) and it will look like a stroll on The Green for pipe major Richard Parkes. It was anything but, as those bands striving to get that coveted top spot gave a very good account of themselves. It does appear the stronger the challenge gets the stronger FMM gets. What odds four in a row? ●

## CD Reviews

**XOSE MANUEL BUDIÑO***Sotaque*

FOLI 068

**THERE'S a handful of Galician pipers who have established a worldwide reputation. Xose Manuel Budiño is one of them and this is his sixth album.**

The first four albums are top quality, moving gradually away from pure piping towards a celebration of wider Galician culture and nationalism. Number five passed me by but *Sotaque* continues the trend to a more inclusive take on the music and spirit of the top left corner of Spain. With seven instrumentals and three songs, there's a great variety of material here: the lyrics mix Spanish and Galego, and the tunes are led by Budiño on gaitas and flautas in half a dozen different keys. All the music on this album is Budiño's own, except for one traditional track, and although it shows a range of influences from India to Inisher this recording has Iberia written right through it. Songs of spirituality and unrequited love, slow and beautiful tunes on pipes and whistles and those rip-roaring Galician jigs, all with a bit of a modern edge.

The combination of Celtic and South American music has been discussed elsewhere by Scots and Galicians among others. *Sotaque* certainly has some Amerindian touches, particularly on *Hoxe Canto en Libertá* and *Danza das Bateas*: exotic rhythms, deep percussion, rich woody flute. You can almost hear the caribou. These tracks remind me of Juan Alberto Arteche's music on the 1990 Finis Africae LP *Amazonia*. Other parts of *Sotaque* are pure Galicia, Spanish pipes and drums, fiesta percussion and vocals. The opening and closing pieces are very much in the Galician tradition, despite being written by Budiño. The title tune is another of his own, a great gaita showpiece with Galician ornamentation and variations which show Budiño's technical excellence. Probably my favourite track is *Riamonte*, another typical combination of piping and song, incorporating a classic Galician muñeira. *Sotaque* means accent, a mark of where you come from. Budiño has travelled the world musically but he's kept his local accent, that stamp of national pride and no underwear which characterises Scottish and Spanish Celts.

Xosemanuelbudino.com has some more information in English and sound samples which work in any language. **ALEX MONAGHAN**

**ROSS AINSLIE***Wide Open*

GWR001 CD

**PIPES and whistle ace Ross Ainslie has featured on a few CDs already, perhaps most notably with Irish piper Jarlath Henderson, but this is his first solo recording.**

Playing loosely in the Scottish idiom, on the Highland pipes as well as whistles, cittern and mandolin, Ross has put together 14 of his own tunes and a few of other people's to create nine great sets. Some of the melodies here are well known, particularly those taken from the prodigious piping output of Ross' teacher and inspiration Gordon Duncan, but young



Ainslie puts a new gloss on even the most mired tunes. Take *Jig of Beer* for example: setting it after the traditional *Tatter Jack Walsh* highlights the quirkiness of this classic modern pipe tune, and Ross tops this by turning the jig into a reel (should really be called *Bar Reel of Beer*, but hey) — playing it like a totally new tune, with a whole funky reggae treatment that would make the most eclectic Canadian pipe band proud. What comes next? Tommy O'Sullivan's *Jutland*, an eerie air which first came to my notice on McGoldrick and McSherry's album *At First Light* but on the Highland pipes it assumes a Breton character accentuated by the new-age arrangement here.

One of the issues I had in reviewing this album was that I kept wanting to hear each track over and over again. The music is captivating and intriguing, partly because of the inventive arrangements but mostly because of the stylish composition and playing of this man Ross Ainslie. His left thumb seems to have had a dynamo fitted, as he rattles the high A triplets on quick-fire reels. *Wedding Waltzes* shows a gentler, more subtle control, with slurred whistle tones and deft rolls. *Morning After* is back in McGoldrick/McSherry country, modern multi-ethnic miracle-working on low whistle, while *True* takes full advantage of tablas and bodhráns to drive a medley of oddly-named melodies. Finally we come to the *Woods* suite, another imaginative framing of a Gordon Duncan tune, hard to pigeonhole and impossible not to like.

*Wide Open* is a good title in several ways. First, while this is not solely a piping album, it does make the most of the blaring conical bore of Scotland's national instrument. Second, as a musician and composer, Ainslie is clearly open to a wide range of influences and he's expressed many of them here: Scots, Irish, Breton, Balkan, Caribbean and Club at least. Third, the sound here is big, expansive, filling those wide open acoustic spaces: to do this Ross has enlisted his pals from the Treacherous Orchestra and other musician friends, but his own music forms the solid core. I'll end my attempt to describe and explain this most impressive recording with a quick look at the first two tracks: *Rum* and *Problem*. The former is a rich, almost orchestral setting of the Ainslie reel *Road to Rum* — the drink, not the island — and the mystifyingly titled *Yer a Kent* by Gordon Duncan, played on superbly fluid whistle and deep resonant cittern. This

flows straight into the pipes and fiddle firestorm of *Problem Child* — with some of the cleanest chanter-work you're likely to hear: the emphasis is certainly not on the gracenotes, and the effect is electrifying. And then, of course, there's the rest of the album.

**ALEX MONAGHAN**

**Chris Stout and Finlay MacDonald**

## THE CAULD WIND

**IT is apparent from the first strains of *Loch MacLeod*, the opening tune on this CD, that Chris Stout and Finlay MacDonald are a musical union that just works. This is, of course, something those that have seen them play live over the course of their 15 years together already know.**

Unlike many partnerships, Chris and Finlay don't seek to meld into one amorphous sound, instead theirs is a partnership of contrasts, with Chris's deep resonant fiddle adding tension to the melodic line that Finlay is playing on whistle or pipes. This creates a complex sound that is often sparse and yet deeply satisfyingly sumptuous.

Switching leads across the sets, the pair display their impressive individual virtuosity providing variety and colour throughout the CD and creating a sound that is even greater than the sum of its parts through a musical synergy. They take time to explore and expand tunes and sets, with all but one set over five minutes long, although they are very careful to avoid the self indulgence trap some other musicians fall into when going down this road.

The tunes are a mix of self-penned and tunes by other well kent composers. In the others bracket are a brace of PM Donald MacLeod tunes, the aforementioned *Loch MacLeod* and *Borve Castle*, *The Thin Man* by Gordon Duncan and *Border Crossing* by Jim Sutherland. Of the self-penned material *Fionn*, composed by Finlay for his second son is one of the highlights of the CD (more a highlight among highlights). Although written for a happy event, this tune has an almost melancholy feel to it with Finlay's vibrato style on the pipes and Chris's plaintive supporting fiddle adding to the pathos. This is a deeply moving and poignant piece that only those with hearts of stone will not be moved by.

Finlay and Chris are in the premier league when it comes to the quicker material and they will face claims for industrial injury to toes injured while tapping along to tracks such as Chris's *Dull and Boring*, that is anything but, and *The Thin Man*. Throughout, they get understated but perfectly balanced support from Ross Martin on guitar.

The CD ends with a wonderfully evocative version of PM Stuart Samson's piobaireachd *Land of Bens and Glens and Heroes*. Fiddle, pipes and whistle are all used to create a powerful piece that is emotional, stirring and beautifully melodic. Piobaireachd is a notoriously difficult thing to carry off on anything other than a solo bagpipe (and it's hard then). Chris and Finlay demonstrate, with great panache, exactly how to bring out the music, and indeed add layers to it, without losing the purity of the original.

This is a very classy CD with playing of the highest order and clever arrangements that always keep the melody in sight and delight and surprise throughout. It comes highly recommended. **CHRIS MACKENZIE**



Youngstars

# Outer Hebrides Tour 2013



All photos: Alister Sinclair

**THE Outer Hebrides Outreach with The National Youth Pipe Band of Scotland was a great success this year with lots of locals from both Stornoway and South Uist showing a great amount of potential at workshops.**

About 26 members of the NYPBoS travelled from Ullapool to Stornoway on September 19 to host a workshop and a concert for the local pipers and drummers. The concert was on Friday, September 20, and the workshop the following day. The one-hour concert ran smoothly in Stornoway Primary School and then it was back to the Caladh Inn for a briefing before going to bed.

Most of the pupils were at the concert and they all said that they had a great time. The pupils here were

considerably younger than in South Uist.

This proved a challenge when it came to teaching but nothing that we couldn't handle as Alisdair was in his element at the colouring-in table.

After the workshop, the band headed south on a ferry from Leverburgh on Harris, to Bernay on North Uist. We then drove through Benbecula, over the causeway and down to Lochboisdale at the bottom of South Uist. Here, we checked into the Lochboisdale Hotel and went to bed after a long day of teaching and travelling.

The workshop was held in the Southend Community Hall and again there was a great turnout of pupils. With the most advanced group getting on to the signature suite of the NYPBoS, *The Dragon's Lair*, a

great day was had by all. One player even managed to successfully audition for The National Youth Development Band. The layout of the concert was very much the same and there was an even bigger audience than in Stornoway. The rest of the night was spent back at the hotel chatting and having a good time.

Breakfast was at 6am on Monday, for all who could be bothered getting out their beds. We boarded the ferry to Oban at 7am and arrived in Glasgow at 5pm.

This trip was part of the outreach programme that the NYPBoS coordinate to promote piping and drumming in remote areas such as the Outer Hebrides. I certainly enjoyed myself and I believe that all the other band members did too. We hope that there will be a return trip in the future. ●

THE NATIONAL PIPING CENTRE *presents*

# THE NATIONAL YOUTH PIPE BAND OF SCOTLAND

Saturday 30 November, 3PM  
SECC Clyde Auditorium  
Glasgow



## *St Andrew's Day Concert*

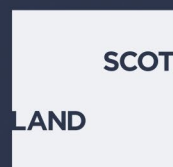
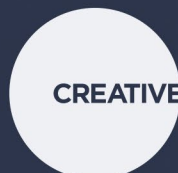
Tickets £15 adults\* / £10 concession\* \*booking fees apply

For bookings call: 0844 395 4000

or online at: [www.ticketsoup.com](http://www.ticketsoup.com)



NATIONAL YOUTH  
PIPE BAND  
OF SCOTLAND



ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL

**RJM**

**THE  
RJM  
CHANTERS**

**RENOWNED  
FOR SOUND!**

AVAILABLE FROM  
[www.rodymacleodbagpipes.com](http://www.rodymacleodbagpipes.com)  
[www.rodymacleodpiobaireachd.com](http://www.rodymacleodpiobaireachd.com)

**THE  
RJM  
BAND  
CHANTER**

Stability, Clarity  
and Projection

**THE  
RJM  
SOLO  
CHANTER**

Balanced, Refined  
and Resonant

# New E-Learning Lessons







- High quality, flexible teaching.
- Professional video seminars and lectures.
- High quality tutors, carefully chosen by The National Piping Centre.
- Anywhere, anytime learning.
- Constant support and guidance through online interaction with staff.
- Variety of lesson plans for beginners to professional.

Sign up to the newsletter at:

## elearning.thepipingcentre.co.uk








## Competition League for Amateur Solo Pipers

### MICHAEL MCGOWAN



**Q. Where are you from and how old were you when you started piping?**

I currently live in Largs, North Ayrshire. I first started piping in 2003 when I was 41 years old.

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

I have always been interested in music and playing an instrument but never had the time due to other commitments. I did teach myself to play alto saxophone and played in a small jazz quartet until an illness meant that I had to give it up. It was suggested that with my interest in music that the bagpipes would help in building strength and capacity in my lungs. So I gave it a go. It has.

**Q. Do you have a regular tutor or practice routine?**

I first started learning by using the College of Piping and The National Piping Centre Tutor books but soon realised that to play properly I would need lessons. I started lessons with Joe Wilson at the College of Piping. I have had lessons from a number of great players and teachers. They all have something different to offer. I currently have lessons with Chris Armstrong, Willie Morrison and Margaret Dunn whenever our diaries match up. This has certainly made a very big improvement in my understanding of piping and, most importantly, my playing.

**Q. What make of pipes and set up do you use?**

I have two sets of pipes. The first set that I got was from McCallum Bagpipes which are great. I had been on the lookout for an older set and managed to get a set of MacRae's. I play the MacRae pipes with a sheepskin bag and a Peter Henderson chanter.

**Q. You have competed in CLASP for a few seasons now. Have you noticed a difference in your piping since joining CLASP?**

Around 2008 I wanted more from my piping. No-one told me it was so addictive when I started. No longer was just playing a tune enough, I knew it could be better. I needed a challenge and something to practice for as I do not play in a band. I joined the CLASP around 2008-2009 and my goal was to be able to play in front of

someone and play well — which is more difficult than it sounds.

Since playing in the CLASP, my piping has improved dramatically. It has really provided a focus for me in my lessons and personal practice. If I had not joined the CLASP, I would probably have stopped playing by now.

**Q. What do you see as your piping strengths and weaknesses?**

I would not say that I have any particular strengths in my piping at present as I still have so much to learn and improve on. I do, however, enjoy playing piobaireachd and feel more comfortable and in control with it than with the MSRs. My weakness is, without doubt, nerves. I need to find a way to switch off or at least reduce the over-critical thoughts while performing.

**Q. What CD/track are you listening to at the moment?**

In the CD player in the car just now is Boghall & Bathgate's *Forte* and the Manawatu Scottish Society's *The Calling*. Both are fantastic.

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

I have set myself a goal to play in Grade 1 of the CLASP but not just to play but play well enough that I can pick up a prize or two. I have also got a longer term goal to build a repertoire suitable to take out around the competing pipers' circuit.

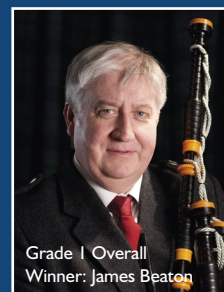
**Q. What is the best bit of piping advice you have been given?**

Never give up! There have been many times when I felt that I was finished.

**Q. Anything of interest that your fellow CLASP competitors do not know about you?**

When I was younger, sport was my thing. I was either training, teaching or competing seven days per week. I was a 4th DAN Black Belt in karate, running three different clubs, I played hockey and got an Ulster trial, when I lived in Ireland. I also played squash in the Scottish leagues. Unfortunately illness stopped all these activities. However I would never have started piping if it didn't so it proves that every cloud does indeed have a silver lining. ●

THIS year's CLASP at the Northern Meeting saw a strong turnout from the amateur competitors. The judge for the day was Sam Young and the results are as follows:



Grade 1 Overall Winner: James Beaton

THE overall winners for each grade:

- GRADE 1 — James Beaton
- GRADE 2 — Liza MacFarquhar
- GRADE 3 — Robert Thomson

- GRADE 3 Piobaireachd Ground
- 1ST Stephen Whitton
- 2ND Robert Thomson
- 3RD Robert Ross

- GRADE 3 Full Piobaireachd
- 1ST Robert Thomson

- GRADE 2 Piobaireachd
- 1ST Douglas Maxwell
- 2ND Liza MacFarquhar

- GRADE 1 Piobaireachd
- 1ST James Beaton
- 2ND Andrew Park
- 3RD Michael Graham

- GRADE 1 MSR
- 1ST James Beaton
- 2ND Stephen Whitton
- 3RD Susy Klinger

- GRADE 2 2/4 March
- 1ST Liza MacFarquhar
- 2ND Neil Mitchell

- GRADE 2 Strathspey and Reel
- 1ST Liza MacFarquhar
- 2ND Neil Mitchell

- GRADE 3 2/4 March
- 1ST Douglas Maxwell
- 2ND Robert Thomson
- 3RD Kitt MacKenzie

- GRADE 3 Strathspey and Reel
- 1ST Douglas Maxwell
- 2ND Robert Thomson
- 3RD Kitt MacKenzie

by Stuart Curnow

# Standing on the shoulders of giants:

The Northern Ireland  
piping phenomenon



Photo: Stuart Curnow

**T**HE inexorable rise of one enclave of piping has defied the odds of population and size, gaining momentum, taking prizes (and some prize scalps), across all the grades of pipe band competition; and then taking those prizes home on the Stranraer ferry.

Although Field Marshal Montgomery Pipe Band, have for the past decade, led this charge across the water, and are accepted as a musical colossus; the strength and depth of piping and drumming all through Northern Ireland is also a constant in the competition-piping world – and the history of Northern Ireland piping holds many of the secrets to the success of FMM.

2013 will go down as the season that

Field Marshal Montgomery Pipe Band put a crease in the page of the history books. Three RSPBA Grade 1 World Championships in a row, the Grand Slam, Champion of Champions. The powerhouse of piping this area has become, however, goes further back than just the last 10 years; Northern Ireland has been a piping juggernaut, across so many of the grades, for so long that its reputation cannot be ascribed to one band, or even one area – and thinking otherwise risks doing a disservice to those who laid the foundations of this achievement.

What makes Northern Ireland pipe bands so successful, though? How does such a small geographic area manage to turn out great bands and soloists alike?





Photo: Stuart Currow

What makes its pipers and drummers so successful over such a long time?

I looked at three generations of pipers — each of them separated by 10 years, across three decades. They share a common piping lineage, they are all successful and they are all from Northern Ireland — and from them hoped to find some answers.

Nat Russell GC OAM, foundation member and pipe major of the Royal Ulster Constabulary Pipe Band, 1998 World Pipe Band Championship pipe major of Victoria Police Pipe Band — the first overseas band to make the top six and highly regarded member of the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association (RSPBA) Adjudication Panel is as steeped in the history of Northern Ireland piping as anyone alive.

Richard Parkes was awarded an MBE in 2004 for services to piping and pipe bands in Northern Ireland. His influence on piping in Northern Ireland cannot be underestimated. Having been at the helm of one of the most successful pipe bands in history since 1981, Richard is nothing short of a legend in the pipe band world. The success of FMM is a phenomenon. Since 1990 and their first Grade 1 prize, the band have never been out of the top six, while finishing in the prizes in over 115 championship competitions consecutively. 2013 saw Richard take FMM to their third RSPBA Grade 1 World Championships in a row and secure the ‘Grand Slam’ (Scottish, British, European, World, Cowal, and RSPBA

*‘Jimmy Banks had a huge influence on Northern Ireland piping. A lot of how our pipe bands express MSR’s comes directly from the early years that I spent with Jimmy in Belfast while he was here with the Scots Guards’*

Champion of Champions in a single season) becoming the first pipe band in history to do so a record three times.

Ian Lyons is currently a member of FMM, a 1998 Grade 1 World Champion, current senior musician with Victoria Police Pipe Band and pipe major of current Australasian and New Zealand Grade 2 Pipe Band Champions, City of Moorabbin Pipe Band. A successful soloist and developer of piping products, his Australian band has recently been upgraded to Grade 1 by the Australian Pipe Band Association. His father William Lyons MBE was Pipe Major of the Irish Guards and Ian, although he now lives in Australia, is firmly a product of Northern Ireland piping.

These three men, representing three generations of pipers from Northern Ireland, their direct lineage of teaching, spoke of its history, its challenges and why such a small place brings such strength to the world of piping.

Despite the close proximity to the Scotland and the centre of the piping world, Northern Ireland has developed its own style, virtually putting its signature across the bottom of every medley and MSR’s that comes from the region. Although Northern Ireland has its own style of playing, the teaching that has developed its musical style owes a significant amount to key individuals, a number of them from the British Army and the Army School of Piping.

Richard is certain of the lineage of his musical pedigree. “I received a lot of early tuition from Alexander (Sandy) Cumming, Billy Maxwell and John Garrett. Sandy, Billy and John would have been pupils of William (Willy) Wood and I owe a lot to their early tuition, but it was Jimmy Banks who gave me that final finesse in the MSR playing. Through this, Jimmy Banks had a huge influence on my playing and in turn that of FMM. A lot of how we express MSR’s comes directly from the early

years that I spent with Jimmy in Belfast while he was here with the Scots Guards. A lot of the teaching in Northern Ireland at that time can be put down to a number of players such as Sandy Cumming, William Maxwell (who were well known to me) plus W.E Lyons BEM with the Irish Guards, and a number of other teachers in different areas of the province.”

The teaching aspect is important to Richard, but no more important than the culture that supported it. He added: “Much of the early teaching, and insistence on proper technique, came from a few local tutors who had the knowledge of correct technique, plus players visiting Scotland and the army-based players bringing the correct technique back. These guys knew that without the correct technique, you wouldn’t be listened to seriously in competition.

“From what I’ve heard it just sort of happened in the early days of this era, the formalisation came later. Willy Woods, Sandy Cumming, Billy Maxwell and their pupils, plus those who later went over to Edinburgh with the Army came back with a great insight into the control, skill and methodology that would become their teaching approach for pupils.

“Further on from that in the early 80s, the Northern Ireland Branch of the RSPBA formed a school under Sam Baillie which created a fast track for intermediate and advanced RSPBA certificates. Many of the FMM at that stage were involved in those classes, along with other notable pupils, such as Tommy Robinson, and they all went on to become instructors in the newly formed NI Branch school.

“This school would have a major impact on the piping scene in Northern Ireland. As well as that, there were other notable teachers like Freddie Russell starting to teach in this period. Freddie came through the early FMM set-up under Billy Maxwell and subsequently the Robert Armstrong Memorial under Tommy Geddis, another giant on the pipe band scene in Northern Ireland.”

Nat agreed: “The strength of playing and the insistence on good technique flowed easily into the local solo competition and was one that was proven early. There was a local competition where a contingent of boys gave the judges a true dilemma. ‘We’ve got a problem, Nat,’ the contest convenor confided. ‘The judge can’t separate these boys.’ A small huddle formed and a certain amount of discussion ensued. There had to be a winner. ‘Which one can’t be separated?’ was the response. ‘Any of them’, was

the answer.” It was indicative of how strong the Northern Ireland scene was. Not only could they not separate the top three boys in the MSR, the three of them were all from the same town and played the same MSR.

This was an indication to Nat of the success of the Northern Ireland programme. “I’ve lived away from Northern Ireland for 27 years and it’s always interesting when I return to see the continuing strength in the playing, but the principles stay the same. Solid basics. No progression to the next part of the tune or the next lesson until the previous one was mastered.”

The competition aspect of Northern Ireland piping in the modern era is well known. While the strength of the performance follows the same line as the teaching; the importance of community support of music may be somewhat lesser known. A staple of life for most youngsters in the 50s and 60s, organised music touched reached in to most homes.

Richard is a product of and a believer in this principle. “I started piping in 1969 at the age of nine. That era of street parades, marching bands and community affiliation is one of the reasons there are so many Northern Irish bands today. In that time there were over 50 competition bands and 150 marching bands. This figure doesn’t include the flute bands or the brass bands — music was everywhere then, in every town and every village. The pipe bands, many of them parade bands, developed into the competition pipe bands we see today. Northern Ireland had, and probably still has, per capita more pipe bands than any other country.”

Ian agreed: “Every boy played in a band of some sort. If it wasn’t a brass band, it was a flute band or a pipe band. There wasn’t really much to do when I was a boy other than music or sport and it kept a lot of the boys out of trouble. It was important then and can have a great effect today as well.”

Pipe major Nat Russell and Ian Lyons both currently play in Victoria Police Pipe Band in Australia. Undertaking over 300 performances a year, many of them in country towns and industrial areas, they realise the importance of music in inspiring and offering an outlet for youth. Nat said: “Boys’ Brigade bands were a great start for many of the pipers of that era. I started with the Boys’ Brigade; they brought a great sense of community and pride to their home towns. It was important that you didn’t just play — you had to play well. In those early

days, William Wood tutored all the bands in our area, and it was his insistence on proper technique that gave the young players the grounding to become what they became — good solid players. What we did then, teaching and promoting quality musicianship, is a little different from what we do today with Victoria Police, but we are still working at getting the message out about the value of music, played well, to help youngsters; whether it is with self-esteem issues, presenting a positive policing message, a sense of purpose or a creative outlet, often in depressed communities.”

Nat’s father was initially ambivalent about him learning the pipes, it was only after seeing the camaraderie and fellowship on display at a competition that he became a convert. Said Nat: “My father became a convert to piping and bands. A somewhat unknown fact from this period was the lack of sectarian issues within the pipe band community, and as a result, the pipe band scene was an oasis for many in Northern Ireland. If you brought 20,000 people of all political and religious persuasions in a park together, you would expect a certain amount of trouble, but there was none. People were there for the music, and the music alone.”

As the scene developed, and the bands became more focused on getting together, the competitions of the 1930s and 40s in Northern Ireland were played inside. The Irish thought the Scots mad. Why would you play outside? In the days before synthetic bags and moisture control systems and stable synthetic reeds, instrument control must have been somewhat easier indoors; especially with the local predisposition to modest amounts of precipitation. This tradition in later years rolled over to off-season competitions, particularly mini-bands, especially in the late 70s and 80s.

Ian Lyons remembers: “The mini-band scene in NI, even when I was a boy. It had a life of its own, really, separate from the band scene in some ways. It gave you the opportunity to experience what others were doing and to really get the chance to listen to a variety of styles and musical interpretation.”

Nat continued: “There was no ‘pipes under the bed’ time for us. Prior to and after the pipe band season, there were quartet, solo, mini-band competitions and, as this was the off-season for Scotland as well, they came on board. It was good competition for them.”

Richard remembers the time vividly, “The Vale of Atholl were one of the first bands

to come over; and it was the excellence in Northern Ireland during this time, the fierce competition, that attracted these bands from Scotland. Easter weekends in long smoke-filled halls; really top bands providing their best. McNeilstown, RUC and Cullybackey – the strength of these bands brought over some of the best mini-bands from Scotland. It gave them a real competition and gave everyone a chance to try out new music in a truly competitive environment.”

The period leading up to the 1980s was not without challenges, though, as Nat explained: “Getting across to Scotland after the difficult period of the 70s and 80s was really when Northern Ireland pipe bands took off. Until then, the home competition was really the focus because our competition was strong — really strong. Financially, the trips were difficult, there was never a lot of money around, even to get across that short a stretch of water. The competition at home was one thing, getting to Scotland was another.”

Richard is proud of all the bands from Northern Ireland because of the closeness they develop in competition and when out of the circle. “We’re all proud of being Northern Ireland bands, and while the competition is fierce at home, when we’re away, we’re all supporting each other. It’s a real community, we always pull together for a band from home.”

Ian looks at the period in the late 90s, when he had moved to Australia and joined Victoria Police, as the start of the dominance. “Northern Ireland bands were taking sometimes 70% of the prizes. That period can be drawn directly from the excellence of the 60s. While the travel was difficult in those days, and life was generally pretty tough, the bands prepared for it, sometimes for years before. It was the focus and the natural progression of competition for the bands.”

Richard looks at the changes to competition in the 70s and sees a natural progression in how the new generation of pipers are taking a different path to success. “Developing as a soloist and undertaking piobaireachd seriously is becoming a staple for pipers now, especially now that Alastair Dunn, originally a pupil of Fred Russell [Nat Russell’s brother] has won the two Gold medals. This is an obvious path for many in Northern Ireland now. Piobaireachd was quite strong in NI, but the Gold Medal competitions in Scotland certainly show the mettle of the piper, especially on the big stage.



Pipe major Richard Parkes, right, is congratulated by Robert Crozier and Ian Lyons on the announcement of their Grade I World Pipe Band Championship win in 2013.

Photo: John Slavin@Designfolk Ltd

I think this has really helped a lot of the pipers in their own progression and that development and control of the instrument has flowed on to how they play in a band. There is a change happening right now, where solo players move across the water to Glasgow; in part to chase the Gold Medals, but also to develop their careers as well as their piping. That is the difference these days. It hasn’t hurt Field Marshal at all, I think, as we now have the Glasgow chapter of the band. Time will tell whether this has any effect on the development of the up-and-coming bands.”

The exposure and the experience of being based in Glasgow might help to develop aspects of a piping career, but the need to be consistently in front of the solo judges is almost becoming a necessity. As you progress throughout the Competing Pipers’ Association (CPA) rankings, to the Silver medal and hope-

fully, the Gold Medal competitions; the judges get a chance to hear and experience your style more, to see you develop and mature over the seasons. That exposure helps enormously, as must be the feeling of being in the centre of the piping universe.

Technique is one thing, music is another. Northern Ireland piping is also renowned for its music. The formation of a medley; whether it is FMM’s command of *The Fiddlers’ Rally* or the interpretation of *Oran Mhor Mhicleod*, the handling of key changes and tension and release is almost a Northern Ireland speciality. MSR’s from this region, especially in the higher grades, are expressed a certain way.

Said Richard: “From a Field Marshal perspective, how we play our MSR’s today, comes directly from the instruction I got from Jimmy Banks — *Abercairney Highlanders*, *Susan MacLeod* and *The Sheepwife* was the first MSR

that he taught me and as a result, FMM was one of the first bands to compete with *Susan MacLeod*.”

Ian agrees: “The Northern Irish pipe bands are great borrowers of music. A lot of what these bands do in a medley has a real Irish flavour to it, but that flavour also comes from all parts of the musical idiom. With the MSR in particular, the development of what can be achieved is limited, but the subtleties, by their definition become more pronounced, especially when under such scrutiny. The bands of the 90s onwards were so close to what the top Scottish bands were doing, not much had to change. A lot of what Northern Ireland bands do so well is the taking of those subtleties and refining them to make them their own.”

A large part of what sets Northern Ireland bands like FMM apart is leadership. The question of leadership — good, bad and indifferent, can fill countless interviews. Books are written on it and beer tent discussions thrive on it. Often, though, the key questions asked are the same: What makes a great leader? Is leadership innate or can it be learned? How do you develop it if you need to?

One aspect of successful leadership is this — you lead people but you manage issues. Richard, through the strength of his personality, the excellence in his musicianship and his desire to bring out the best in his people, inspires those people to do what they do — for him.

In several interviews with current FMM players one statement is repeated often: “We do it for Richard”, and Ian Lyons is no different. “What I’ve found with Field Marshal is that it is a bit of an anomaly. The identity of this band, even with all the strength in its roster, is that its identity is intrinsically tied to its leader, Richard. That strength, though, inspires and flows to other bands. They learn from and try to emulate different parts of what he does.

“Leadership is a big part of the progression of a piper in Northern Ireland. The support you get, moving through band grades, when you became good enough to move up to a higher graded band, is often led by the pipe major. The band is usually happy for you to go. The pipe major almost pushes you out the door, rather than trying to hold you back. I think it was because he knew that you would come back to the band, to pass on that experience. When your time came, and you stepped out of Grade 1 or 2, you’d come home and pass on what you’d learned.”

In developing the skills and the style to become the pipe major of a top band, Nat and Richard are on the same page.

Richard is pretty blunt about it: “I didn’t really get lessons in being a pipe major — in being a leader of a band. I hope there are people watching me, the same way I was watching pipe majors like Nat, Tommy Geddis and Frank Andrews at home and Ian MacLellan, Tom MacAllister and Bob Shepherd etc in Scotland. Seeing what those people do, but not looking for the key to how they get their success. Emulating the things you love that they do and striving for your own style, that’s the goal. There is no magic answer.”

On his view of taking the helm of a band, Richard is clear: “Leadership, the inspiration and drive required to be a leader comes from within. I believe it’s something that you have innately. With pipers, especially, moving to Glasgow to develop their playing, there is a risk to us losing these future leaders to Scotland and the early experience they have. Although, the gaps that creates encourages others to rise to the top.”

Nat is almost exactly the same, “I get asked by people ‘How do you become a pipe major?’ I never had a lesson from Ian MacLellan in my life but I learnt a huge amount from him. Watching him, listening to his band. Seeing what he did and figuring out how he did it. We all remember superb performances, superb bands. It might be the individual aspects of the best of the best that influence you. How you give that to your band, how you get the best out of them, making all those small things that are special in a particular band come out in your band, and from that, defining your style. That’s important.”

One of the big questions with any successful leader, especially one who has been in pole position for so long, is that of succession — if the aura surrounding the leader is so great, how do you pass on the torch to the next generation? How do they find their own light to shine on the band?

Richard is quite candid on the subject of retirement. “It has never really been a thought of mine as to when it will occur, and to be honest, I haven’t planned for it. At Field Marshal, we don’t have a true succession plan for when I retire but it is something we’ll look at. We just keep doing what we do, and we do it as a band.”

Which brings us to The Future... The youth of today is much maligned in the media as being

feckless and lacking in concentration — it has always been the lament of any older generation about the younger. However, the attractions and distractions available for today’s youth do present challenges and Richard sees this as a risk for the next generation of pipers.

“There are less young pipers, these days, coming through the ranks who are completely focused; even though the style of teaching is still there. Smartphones and iPads are so prevalent now, they can be a constant distraction for today’s kids. We used to more than look forward to piping — it was the best part of our week, something to hold out for. Maybe we risk losing some of the talented younger ones to these distractions with the development of technology.”

Ian agrees about the prevalence of technology but takes a slightly different perspective on the adverse effects. “I remember when I was doing my Intermediate Certificate I couldn’t wait for the weekend to come to get to the next level, the next part of the course. It was definitely the highlight of my week. I remember my father giving me the key to the band hall when I was young, so I could practise whenever I wanted. That was all I had, really; and all I wanted, but there is a positive side to all this additional stimulation. The development of these younger minds; their capacity to remember things and to develop their manual dexterity — kids today seem to pick things up so much quicker than when I was a boy, whether it’s in Northern Ireland or Melbourne. The younger players we see coming through the ranks now are just frightening in their capacity to learn, to master new things. Flying in for the 2013 Worlds campaign, I was amazed at the composure and skill of the new crop of young players in FMM. These young players are brilliant — composed, self-assured, talented. When you look at the leadership provided by pipe majors like Richard and the youth coming through, the future for Northern Ireland piping is bright.”

Northern Ireland has been blessed in having a formidable school-style of teaching and a remarkable history to rely on, but also, considerable strength throughout all of its grades, feeding into the higher ranks. None of this would have been possible, though, without the drive, vision and leadership of those who cut the path the future generations walk upon. Sir Isaac Newton may have summed it up best: “If I have seen further it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants.” ●

by Mike Paterson

# Mounties field pipes,

RCMP PIPES, DRUMS &amp; DANCERS NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

**T**HE scarlet tunics, brown Stetsons, Sam Browne belts, white lanyards, riding breeches and boots identify an internationally familiar Canadian icon: the “Mountie” — the polite, intrepid, Arctic-faring lawman who, braving every adversity, “always gets his man”.

Canadians also know the Mounties as Highway cops: men and women in less splendid uniforms who pull you over for traffic infractions (outwith Quebec or Ontario, where provincial police forces do that job).

And the Mounties are loved for their stirring Musical Ride, a unique cavalry display with a national touring schedule that generously takes in smaller centres, boosting gate receipts for local and charitable events.

Now, kilts, pipes and Highland dancers are adding a new dimension to the Mountie image.

The Mounties’ traditions are rooted in the frontier peace-keeping role of the North West Mounted Police (raised in 1873) but the RCMP of today is a unique, modern, 29,000-strong national organisation that polices Canada’s Arctic territories, eight of Canada’s 10 provinces, hundreds of municipalities and aboriginal communities, and three international airports. Its roles include aspects of national security, combatting organised and commercial crime, forensic science and identification services, bodyguard duties and small-town community policing.

The RCMP also has international relations roles.

Assistant Commissioner Graham Muir, for example, served in 1993 with the United Nations Protection Force in the former Yugoslavia. In 2005, named a Member of the Order of Merit of the Police Forces for “exceptional

service”, he undertook a one-year posting as Police Commissioner for the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti.

He served in a hostage-freeing mission to Mali, and later became the first Canadian Police Commander of the Civilian Police Mission in Afghanistan. Following this posting he retired in 2011 after 36 years of service.

In 2012, he received an Outstanding Alumni Award for Public Service from Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, where he had completed an MA in criminology in 1982.

Today, he is the band officer, a drum major and piper with the RCMP Pipes, Drums



# drums and dancers

and Dancers of the National Capital Region, a show, ceremonial and street band who play for community events in the greater Ottawa area, municipalities in Ontario and Quebec that are policed by the RCMP, and for various national and RCMP special occasions.

Similar bands are now based in Edmonton, Alberta; Moncton, New Brunswick; Regina, Saskatchewan; Montreal, Quebec; Halifax, Nova Scotia; and Vancouver, British Columbia.

The earliest, in Alberta, was founded in 1992 after a group of civilian and RCMP enthusiasts won the support of the Alberta's Divisional Commanding Officer, Assistant Commissioner Les Holmes, who approved the wearing of RCMP uniform with a kilt. They chose the McLeod of Harris sett for their kilts to commemorate the Skye-born second Commissioner of the RCMP, Colonel James Farquharson Macleod.



Graham Muir, in his role as drum major for a Garrison Change of Command Parade, Ottawa, 2008

nearby Riverview. Canada's second RCMP pipe band popped into existence when 25 pipers and drummers from the Moncton Police switched uniforms to launch the Codiac Regional, RCMP, Pipes and Drums.

Then, in Ottawa, Graham Muir seeded a third RCMP band in the willing nursery provided by Inspector Pat Hayes, pipe major of the Ottawa Police Service Pipe Band. (The 'Ottawa Police' band, founded in 1969, have long been a vigorous organisation. They won the Grade

On the east coast, the Moncton City Police had a healthy pipe band until 1998 when the municipal police forces of Moncton and Dieppe were merged with the RCMP detachment in



2 North American Championship in 2012 and 2013.)

Said Graeme Ogilvie, pipe major of the RCMP Pipes, Drums & Dancers Capital Region: “Graham Muir and Inspector Pat Hayes of the Ottawa Police worked together to establish this band.

“Pat helped Graham start the RCMP band expecting, when he retired, to carry on with the RCMP band. But Pat got promoted to Superintendent, so he gave Graham his regrets and told him he’d be taking up his new job and staying on as pipe major of the Ottawa Police.”

Pat suggested Graham Muir talk to Graeme Ogilvie about leading the RCMP band. Graeme Ogilvie was a highly experienced and respected piper. President of the Ottawa branch of the Pipers and Pipe Band Society of Ontario, he was piping with both the Ottawa Police Services and the RCMP bands. He had risen to the rank of Major in the Royal Canadian Air Force and played with the Air Command band.

“I said no,” said Graeme Ogilvie. “But Graham Muir is persistent and, as an RCMP Assistant Commissioner, wasn’t used to taking no for an answer... I acquiesced.”

Said Graham Muir, who also chairs the National Executive Council of RCMP Pipe Bands: “The bands in their current form go back to the RCMP’s 125th Anniversary in 1997 and decisions by the then Commissioner of the RCMP, Phillip Murray, based on meetings with senior colleagues, to approve a tartan and band uniform.

“The design was developed from a submission by Les Holmes’ wife, Violet, in response to a call for design ideas recognising the RCMP’s Canada-wide associations.” HRH Princess Anne presented the Certificate of Registration of the RCMP tartan to the Force during a Royal Visit to Fredericton, New Brunswick, in 1998.

A band of RCMP pipers and drummers from across Canada, under the direction of Graham Muir, debuted the new tartan and kilted uniform at that year’s Nova Scotia International Tattoo in Halifax.

The “A” Division Pipes and Drums in Ottawa (National Capital Region) — now the ‘RCMP Pipes, Drums and Dancers of the National Capital Region’ — were officially established in 2000.

Said Graham Muir: “A spate of band formations followed. But, by 2004, these bands were struggling to find their way. We began



Pipe major Graeme Ogilvie

getting together annually and conferring as a working group.

“I was based in Ottawa and if we could find support there, at National Headquarters, we could be more than a constellation of seven bands. We would have a national programme.

“And this is what we achieved. We now have a National Executive Council of community bands of pipes, drums and dancers of the RCMP. We have a national policy and procedures document that connects back to the RCMP, informing policy around uniform and dress. And we have annual general meetings, involving pipe majors, drum majors, band managers and others who can speak for their bands, that let us get things done to our mutual advantage.

“Each band is formed with the expressed support of the regional commanding officer and may receive public funding at the discretion of that commanding officer to support band operations. By and large, the bands now each receive an annual stipend of around \$10,000. And, in recent years, our national headquarters has been making annual contributions to each band of around \$5,000.”

These funds support basic needs like instrument and uniform maintenance. Travel assistance is sometimes available but band members are volunteers and cover their own costs, conducting fundraising events, earning performance fees and reaching into their own pockets for personal costs.

The bands comprise mostly civilian pipers and drummers and — in Ottawa and Nova Scotia — dancers: people who enjoy the ethos of the bands and choose public performance instead of competition. Many have considerable experience.

One of the National Executive Council’s undertakings is to choose one or two premier events for which ‘composite’ bands are drawn from all seven bands.

“In 2009,” said pipe major Graeme Ogilvie, “we took a composite band to the Windsor Castle Royal Tattoo, in association with the presentation of a horse by the RCMP to her Majesty, the Queen.

“We were invited to stay in Windsor Castle for the 10 days we were there — the trip of a lifetime.



Pipe major Graeme Ogilvie and retired Assistant Commissioner Graham Muir, meeting HRH Queen Elizabeth, Windsor Castle 2009



Pipe Sergeant Gilbert Young

*‘On the table is the prospect of going to the Edinburgh Military Tattoo in 2014 or 2015, but it’s a five-week commitment, and it can be difficult for our people to get away for events like this’*

“We’ve done a stage show in Las Vegas and we’ve been to the Royal Nova Scotia International Tattoo in Halifax. This summer, for the second year in a row, we had a composite band at the Quebec City Tattoo and we’ve been to the Longs Peak Scottish Festival at Estes Park in Colorado.

“On the table is the prospect of going to the Edinburgh Military Tattoo in 2014 or 2015, but it’s a five-week commitment, and it can be difficult for our people to get away for events like this.

We’re all volunteers and pay our own way. It’s unrealistic to expect people to take a lot of time off work, be away from their families for extended periods and take on some of these albeit very attractive tours at their own expense.

“We try to find happy compromises. This year, we were in New York for the St Patrick’s Day Parade and, in September, were in New Hampshire for an international Drum Majors Gathering.”

Pipe Sergeant Gilbert Young represents another thread in the Ottawa-based band’s story. He is widely known as the bands’ director at Maxville — the Glengarry Highland Games — host to the North American Pipe Band Championships.

In 1960, he began playing with the Royal Canadian Air Force Station Rockcliffe band in Ottawa, one of whose members was Pat Hayes of the Ottawa Police. “Pat asked me to join them as a guest player and around 1983 made me pipe sergeant,” said Gilbert Young.

“We brought in a lot of players, one of whom was Graham Muir. And, when the RCMP brass band was disbanded for want of funds, Graham thought it’d be good to have a pipe band. They developed the RCMP uniform and the Ottawa Police constituted the band.”

Over time, the two bands amicably teased out from each other: the competing Ottawa Police Services band and the RCMP performance band.

“Funding was kept separate,” he said, “but, when we were wearing an RCMP uniform, we were the RCMP band and, in Ottawa Police uniforms, we were the Ottawa Police.”

Gilbert had his first piping lessons from Black Watch pipers he saw in parades as a child in Quebec. “I was about five years old,” he said.

“I started taking lessons with Pipe Major John Thompson MacKenzie in 1959. He’d been Pipe Major of the 2 Battalion Scots Guards and of the RCAF Pipe Band in No.1 Fighter Wing, North Luffenham, in England, then transferred to Ottawa.

“In 1960, I began to play with the RCAF band because they were short of pipers. I was with them for 41 years and was greatly influenced by the teaching of Major Archie M. Cairns, who became Pipe Major of the RCAF Station Rockcliffe band in 1964. When he retired in 1981, he left Ottawa a tremendous piping heritage.

“I was with the RCAF band for 41 years and, during that time, started playing with the Ottawa Police, then with the RCMP as well. I was kept kind of busy.

“At the North Lanark Highland Games in Almonte one year, I played with the Air Force duty band, with Ottawa Police in the competition, then with the RCMP in the parade. I changed uniforms three times. Now, it’s only the RCMP band and, when I retired from my



job as a school principal, I took over as pipe sergeant.

“But Glengarry’s not far from where I live and, when you retire, you discover this demand for volunteers, so I’ve worked for 15 years on the committee for the Highland Games, looking after the competing bands and the Tattoo on the Friday night. Matt Goral, another RCMP piper, now heads up the bands for the Tattoo.”

The RCMP band have held fundraisers for the games, said Gilbert Young. “We did a big one about eight years ago that helped extend the grandstand at Maxville. And other band members help at the games — stewarding, emceeing, looking after the bands and so on.”

The Glengarry Highland Games’ current president, Jack Yourt, a former executive member of the Ottawa branch of the PPBSO, has also been a member of the RCMP Pipes, Drums & Dancers Capital Region since 2002.

“I was playing with Graham Muir in the Ottawa Police,” he said. “Now, as well as having helped to form the RCMP band, the Ottawa Police have two bands, a colour party, dancers... they probably have 80-90 people involved.

“And we have about 25 pipers with the RCMP band, 11 sides, six tenors and two bass drummers, and our dancers... a great cross-section of people and a good sound.

“And we have a lot of volunteers from the band at the Glengarry games.

“It is a big event. Maxville’s a community of 800 people and, on the Glengarry Highland Games weekend, 25,000 people turn up. It’s turned into a homecoming for local people’s families and you can tell who’s having family home, with parties and tents in their backyards.

“I’m proud to wear the red serge, although, as I tell serving officers, I never got to wear it until I was 60, when they’re hanging theirs up. I wear it 50-60 times a year. I do a lot of

private funerals; I’m piper designate for the Canadian Club of Ottawa... I’ve piped for a lot of important people.”

PIPING, drumming and Highland dance are strong in the Ottawa region, but it does not follow that recruitment is easy, said pipe major Graeme Ogilvie. “When I was president of the Ottawa branch of the PPBSO, I did a survey and found there were 17 pipe bands within a two-hour drive of Ottawa. And everyone draws from the same pool of pipers and drummers.

“We have some very good competition bands in the city, as well as military and police bands doing similar work to what we do.

“But we don’t actively recruit. We let our shows and uniform speak for themselves. People see the red serge, the shows, and they’re impressed. They like being able to represent Canada and represent the Mounties the way we do, and people come to us.

“We don’t compete — a band can practise for nine months of the year, then play for four people who don’t like them; or practise for nine months of the year to do performances for audiences who do.”

“Our parade and ceremonial music is mostly traditional, or from Scots Guards 1 and 2 books: musical tunes that people have enjoyed playing forever. I play Scottish and Cape Breton fiddle, so our show medleys are mostly fiddle tunes common to bagpipes and fiddle, or that I’ve transposed from the fiddle.

“The emphasis is on ensuring audiences appreciate what we play.

“Our practices are fairly typical of what any band would do, except that we tend to be very focused,” he said. “When we have a two-hour band practice, we actually play for two hours.

“Because we’re not a competition band, playing technique is not what you’d find in a Grade 1 or 2 pipe band, so we play simpler

music that a crowd will appreciate, and try to play it very well.

“We take the same approach with our drums. Simple scores played well.”

Dancers, said Graeme Ogilvie, are an essential component of the band. “They’re incredibly important. We’re a show band. And dancers give us movement.

“We integrate dancers into every show we do and they attend our practices.

“With dancers to interpret and express the music, you go from one level of presentation to another. It can result in a very compelling show. We were the first RCMP band to include dancers, and Halifax have also incorporated dancers.

“Dancing with a live band is something different for competitive Highland dancers. A lot of dance schools discourage their students from dancing outside of the competition scene.

“One of the most difficult issues is providing a safe surface. In Quebec City, for example, we discovered that the intended performance area was all cobblestones. We managed to get the location changed. Dance gives audiences a full package.”

Said the band’s dance director, Alyssa Nuttall: “Highland dancers began performing with the band in 2002 with the direction and support of Terrie Kember, founder of the Loch Murray Dancers (an Ottawa dance school). Heather Moxley, a dancer I’d grown up competing against, soon took on the leadership role. She asked me to help with a tattoo in Hamilton and I joined the RCMP dancers then, just over six years ago. It was a small group that had relied on its four or five members’ availability for shows.

“The goal was to bring in more experienced dancers, to make travel easier and raise the group’s professionalism. Over the past few years, under the direction of Karen Walsh, my aunt and former dance instructor, the team’s become



a high quality group of show dancers.” Karen passed leadership to Alyssa earlier this year.

“Most of our dancers are former or current competitors in and around Ottawa,” added Alyssa. “This is our chance to dance at a high standard but without the same stresses on the body. The intricate steps we compose — traditional flair with an added modern touch — make participation fun and challenging.

“We love contributing alongside the other members of the band in shows for local communities and abroad. Performing with the RCMP band is an honour and we have a wonderful relationship. I’m fortunate to be working with such a stellar group of musicians and dancers.”

THE only currently serving RCMP officer in the band is Sergeant Rod Macleod, a 23-year veteran who is the Force’s national training co-ordinator for its emergency response teams — a job that can take him away from Ottawa for 15 to 20 weeks of the year.

Rod said “I can forecast most of my commitments and plan around that. Most of my travel is in the fall and winter, the quieter time for the band, so it works quite well. Graham Muir and I share the role of drum major and stand in for each other.”

Rod said he had always wanted to learn the pipes. He explained: “When I transferred to Ottawa

I saw this band at the Almonte Highland Games and approached Graeme Ogilvie. He took me into the band as its quartermaster and I started learning the pipes.

“But Graham Muir was sent overseas and wanted a regular member of the Force to step into the drum major role, where I’ve been ever since.”

Rod is working on a project to strengthen and standardise drum majoring across the RCMP bands. “In that, we have a good relationship with the Department of National Defence,” he said. “Captain David Rennie from the Ceremonial Guard led a course in Ottawa and has provided some mentorship.

“The role also includes things like the dress, drill and deportment of the band, and passing on traditions of the RCMP to the citizen volunteers. The RCMP’s

proud to have them represent us. And, as a serving member, I’m immensely proud to wear the same uniform and parade with them as a team. They’re an amazing, dedicated group of people.

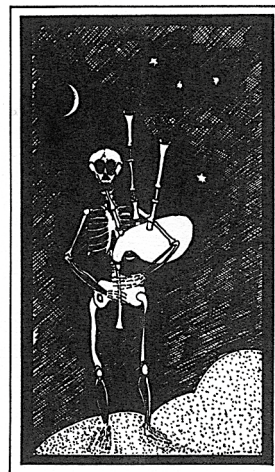
“And they’re proud to be in those uniforms and take on the identity and traditions of the Force.”

“One of my most vivid memories is of my first time out as drum major: being out in front of these very good pipers... that amazing sound suddenly hits you in the back of the head. You don’t hear that in the ranks.

“Stepping off with that sound behind me is always uplifting.” ●



[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



Photo: John Slavin@Designfolk Ltd

# The xeremies in Mall

**T**HE latest bagpipe classification, established by Dr Jean Pierre Van Hees in 2010, describes the xeremies as a western European bagpipe: the melodic pipe has a conical bore and uses a double reed.

The xeremies were traditionally made out of a one year-old goat skin. The rear end was tied and the neck and the two front legs were used for the pipes. The mouthpiece (bufador) was attached to the left fore-leg, the melodic pipe (grall) to the right fore-leg and the drones (bordons) were attached to the neck. The xeremies boast three drones which are attached to a common stock (braguer), but until the 1970s only

by **Cassandre Balosso-Bardin**

*PhD student in Ethnomusicology at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*

the larger drone was bored. In the 1970s bagpipe maker Joan Morey from San Joan opened the two smaller drones. Josep Rotger, one of the most established pipers of the island and leaders of the revival in the 1970s and 1980s, thought that these two smaller drones would have been in use in earlier times. Indeed, the two muted drones were of unequal lengths so why keep this

feature if they were purely decorative? Rotger thought that initially the drones may have been bored but that this practice could have been abandoned over the years due to a loss of craftsmanship. The design, however, seemed to have been passed down over the years. Today the xeremies are played with three drones and a melodic pipe.



Xeremiers de Sóller at Piping Live! 2013

# orca: an introduction

The xeremies are played in C#. This pitch was decided on in the late 1970s by Joan Morey after having measured many melodic pipes from different pipers. Two of the drones are in C# (one and two octaves below the tonic of the melodic pipe). The third drone is at the fifth, G#.

The xeremies are traditionally played in a colla. The colla is the inseparable unit of a bagpipe player (a xeremier) with a flabiol and tambor player. The flabiol is similar to a short recorder played with the left hand, and the tambor is a short drum slung over the left hand and hit with a drumstick by the right hand. The colla is such a strong duo that the xeremies are

seldom heard alone. Even in the pipe bands that appeared in the 1990s and 2000s, the xeremies are always played alongside the flabiol and drums. The association of both instruments is so strong that when the word xeremiers (pipers) is mentioned, it can mean either the xeremies player or the flabiol and drum player, or both at the same time.

## Early history

THE colla is thought to be one of the oldest musical formations in Mallorca. The bagpipes and the flabiol and tambor are often in close vicinity, reinforcing the theory that they were

traditionally played together. The earliest bagpipe iconography on the island is located on the southern portal of Palma's cathedral (Portal del Mirador) as well as on the main altarpiece (retaula major). Both designs are attributed to the local stone mason Joan Morey (?-1394). Joan Morey was a local artisan so it is probable his inspiration came from instruments in use on the island at the time. Although the bagpipes are now viewed as a rural instrument, in the 14th century the bagpipes belonged to the musical environment of the royal court. King Pedro of Aragon, who ended the short life of the Kingdom of Mallorca in 1343, used the

**Glasgow:**  
Scotland with style™

Xeremiers de Sóller at Piping Live! 2013



Angel xeremier, Portal del Mirador, Palma Cathedral

services of Joan de Mascum, bagpipe player of the fallen King James III of Mallorca. Despite the probable early existence of the colla, the medieval bagpipes seem to have no connection to the modern day xeremies. Iconography found locally in the 14th and 15th century shows an instrument with no drones and a smaller bag, a common medieval design.

### 18th and 19th century

VERY little information is to be found about the bagpipes in Mallorca between the 15th and the 18th century. The first sign of an instrument approaching modern day aesthetics appeared in the 18th century through earthen miniatures of shepherds used in nativities (Betlems). Many of these came from a local workshop called taller del mestre de les Verges Rosses in Manacor, a town in the north east of the island. As you can see in the illustration, the shepherd's xeremies have the same shape and design as modern day instruments although one drone seems to have been lost over time.

In the 19th century, the xeremies slowly emerged from their anonymity and became more visible in historical documents. They began to be mentioned in written testimonies, often by travellers passing through the island such as Grasset de Saint Sauveur and the Catalan writer Joan Cortada. The instrument was not always pictured in a good light. Cortada, who travelled to Majorca in the summer of 1845, described the sound of the bagpipes and drums during a village festivity in Alaró as "music that truly drills the ears. (...) Two chirimías and two tamboriles were playing, but in differ-

ent tones and with different beats, in a way that this noise was unbearable." Not long after, local chronicles also started describing celebrations where the bagpipes were played. More positive comments can be read in these archives, such as this excerpt from 1 August 1860:

Maybe it seems strange, but it is obvious that the sound of the chirimías, pifano and tamboril, that for many will be unpleasant y monotonous, is to us preferable to many concerts that are carried out elsewhere for they inspire a purer and more tranquil pleasure ... than other corridas, other dances and other amusements and divertissements which are usual in other places.

The first detailed description of the xeremies is in the Encyclopedia compiled by the Archduke Ludwig Salvatore between 1870 and 1891. The xeremies are described as a rural instrument well-loved by peasants and accompanied by drums and castanets.

### A shepherd's instrument

TESTIMONIES from rural musicians go back to the early 20th century. Most xeremies and flabiol players were shepherds who started learning as children. They would generally follow their father's and grandfather's footsteps and would go to work for a senyor (a landowner) in his possessió (his domain). Once accepted as an apprentice, the child would be given a flabiol, a whistle or a bagpipe. At night, he would then be sent into the fields to keep the herd. In the daytime the flock would be kept in a shed to protect the animals from the heat. The shepherds were expected stay awake all night, playing their instrument.

Xeremiers de Sa Calatrava leading the people in the annual Cossies celebrations in Montuàri, Mallorca. 24 August 2012



Photos: Cassandre Balasso-Bardín

Joan Pubil, a xeremier from Ses Salines born in 1912, confirmed that this was the norm: "I was a shepherd and I went with the sheep and I would take the xeremies and play all night long". The shepherds did not have to be master players, but they had to play so the landowner would know if they were awake or sleeping. If the instrument could not be heard from the house the senyor would go on a round to check if everything was in order. Often the instruments did not belong to the shepherd and would be kept at the possessió, the landowner's house.

Alongside this functional use of the xeremies and the flabiol, the xeremies were called upon to animate dances and accompany festivities.

Xeremier, Betlem figurine from the taller del mestre de les Verges Rosses, 18th century. Museu del Santuari de Lluç, Mallorca



The colla was central to any village celebration, providing musical accompaniment to different activities: the religious processions, the ritual dancing in the village or the accompaniment of local officials. They also set the pace for the village races, led the collection of the prizes from the shops the previous day and, of course, accompanied the dancing that would go on for hours. Xeremiers were often required to stay overnight as festivities would go on for several days. Transport, even owning a bicycle, was a luxury not many could afford.

When tourism became Mallorca's main industry in the 1950s and 1960s, several collas expanded their business and started playing in hotels and restaurants. Some xeremiers such as the Llargos from Sencelles and the Camps from Son Roca started playing full time, leaving their land and flocks to be tended by the rest of the family. Tomeu Camps, son and nephew of the Camps colla, told me that they would play every day, three times a day at different hotels and restaurants all over the island, generating more income with their music than with their flock.

## Revival

IN the 1970s, about eight collas were active all around the island. Most were old men who had no successors. The shepherding business was disappearing fast, giving way to tourism and urban jobs. Young people turned to a new way of life and were not interested in old-fashioned rural customs. Nor were they particularly encouraged to take up the instrument as Tomeu Camps witnessed:

“There was no interest for me to play this

instrument as my father and my uncle were already a colla. I took up the llaüt and the bandurria. When I was in my teens, my father gave me a set of xeremies but in D [the common key is C#] so I could not play with them. Another xeremier was undesirable competition. I only took it up in 1978 when my father died and my uncle needed someone to play with and drive him around the island to play at the different venues and festivities.”

In the early 1970s, Antoni Artigues, a university student in Palma, decided to act on his desire to learn the xeremies. The future professor in Catalan studies marked the beginning of a new era. A few years later two young friends from Palma and Calvià became interested in the instrument and started visiting elderly xeremiers to buy instruments, listen to stories and learn tunes. They became a colla and called themselves the xeremiers de Sa Calatrava, a poor district of Palma which became a hub of frenetic creativity in the aftermath of Franco's regime. Little by little, Pep Toni Rubio and Pep Rotger took over the gig market and started living from the art of the xeremies.

These young xeremiers along with another new colla, the xeremiers d'es Pla, became the official musicians of the Escola de Música i Danses de Palma, a prominent folkloric dancing school in Mallorca. They soon decided to emancipate themselves from the school and created a new band using original arrangements. They modernised the repertoire in a way that had never been heard before, using drum-kits and electric instruments. Two of the groups founded in the 1980s were Música Nostra and Ximbomba Atomica. They became extremely popular and greatly influenced the renewal of interest in Mallorcan traditional music. Their biggest achievement, however, was to encourage people to dance to their music in public, disregarding the carefully planned choreographed performances which had become the norm during the regime years.

## A bagpipe boom

THE 1990s were a real boom time for the xeremies. Villages opened xeremies classes and more and more people decided to learn the instrument. The sharp increase of interest all around Mallorca led to regular bagpipe events and to the creation of “bandas” such as the Xeremiers de Sóller in 2000, a regular guest at Piping Live. This could not have existed 30 years ago due to the impossibility of finding

two instruments with the same tuning. Progress and research in instrument making enabled the manufacture of xeremies with a tempered scale and stable tuning.

Since the boom, a new generation of young xeremies players has emerged. These are musicians who learned not from the old xeremies but from the actors of the revival. Many have profited from accessible tuition at the Escola de Música i de Danses de Palma and at the Conservatori Superior de Palma. Some of these younger musicians started playing in collas. In recent years, however, there has been a sharp decline of the traditional duet. They are now hardly demanded in village festivities and are often replaced by the local bagpipe group. The new generation has therefore invested its energy in the creation of new bands, mixing the traditional instruments with modern sounds and influences from around the world.

There are now a few hundred xeremies in Mallorca. Thanks to the unrelenting work of a handful of individuals, the rural instrument has become popular. Some even say that it will be the victim of its own success. Only time can tell...

For musical examples of the xeremies, listen to episode 7 of Bagpipes Galore, a radio podcast dedicated to bagpipes around the world: [www.soasradio.org/bagpipes-galore](http://www.soasradio.org/bagpipes-galore) ●

## Bibliography

Alonso, Joan Ignasi and Josep Rotger 2007. *De joglars e ministrils*. Palma de Mallorca: Edició del Consell de Mallorca.

Artigues, Antoni and Joan Morey 1989. *Repertori i Construcció dels Instruments de la Colla de Xeremiers Catalans a Mallorca*. Palma: Universitat de les Illes Balears a la Ciutat de Mallorca.

Artigues, Antoni 2000. *Xeremies, El sac de gemecs catala de Mallorca*. Palma: Edicions Cort.

Bennasar, Aina Pascuale and Jaume Llabrés Mulet 1996. *Els Betlems de les Caputxines: Monestir de la Puríssima Concepció*. Palma: Sa Nostra

Carbonell, Xavier 2012. “Les primers imatges musicals de la Seu (dels seus orígens fins el 1500)”, coord. Mercè Cambús, Pere Fullana: 165-184. *Jaume II i la Seu de Mallorca*. Palma: Grasset de Saint Sauveur, André 1807. *Voyage dans les Îles Baléares et Pithiuses*, Paris: Haussman “[http://books.google.co.uk/books/about/Voyage\\_dans\\_les\\_iles\\_Baléares\\_et\\_Pithi.html?id=0jum\\_V-wQvoC&redir\\_esc=y](http://books.google.co.uk/books/about/Voyage_dans_les_iles_Baléares_et_Pithi.html?id=0jum_V-wQvoC&redir_esc=y)”, last consulted on 16 Sept 2013

Ludwig Salvatore, Archduke 1870-91. *Die Balearen*, In *Wort und Bild* geshildert. Leipzig: Brockhaus

Morey, Joan 1997. *Xeremies a Mallorca, tres passades de xeremies*. San Joan: unpublished

Rosselló i Vaquer, Ramon, Joan Parets i Serra 2003, 2004. *Notes per a la Història de la Música a Mallorca*. Vol 1-4. Campos, Mallorca: Centre de Recerca i Documentació Històrica-musical de Mallorca. Van Hees, Jean Pierre 2010. *Situering van de doedelzak en zijn specifieke traditionele speeltechnieken in de uitvoering van historische en actuele muziek*. Thesis available in KU Leuven.



# An American in Glasgow

**E**VER since the first time my son Jack and I rolled out of bed at 3am to watch the live stream of The World Pipe Band Championships, I've wanted to see the event for myself. This was my year.

Jack, 16, had spent the summer in Northern Ireland playing with a Grade 2 band, the reformed Bleary and District Pipe Band, competing for the first time since 2007. They would be at The Worlds and Jack was competing on the Tuesday at Pipe Idol at The National Piping Centre. All that seemed like the perfect excuse to make the trip, and it's one I won't soon forget.

*A first visit to Piping Live! and The Worlds creates lifelong memories*

I arrived on the Monday, and after a good sleep, Jack and I set out on Tuesday for a tour of the University of Glasgow. He is a third-year high school student and he's considering university in the UK. Universitatis Glasguensis is one of the most formidable institutions. Great minds have walked her halls. Naturally, I felt out of place.

We arrived early for Pipe Idol. If you've never been to The National Piping Centre's *Piping Live!* Festival during the build-up to The Worlds — go. Roddy MacLeod MBE and his staff assemble a line-up of musicians and bands who will keep you entertained from mid-morning until dark. It's also the perfect place to have a pint. I was happy to oblige.



Bleary and District Pipe Band, led by pipe major Nigel Davidson march off from the Grade 2 final at The World Pipe Band Championships 2013.

Photo: John Slavin@Designfolk, Ltd

## by Jim Williamson

Jack led off the Pipe Idol qualifier with a good performance. Unfortunately, he was not chosen for the Friday final. On the positive side, he and his fellow under-21 competitors have shown me the future of piping is in capable (and lightning-fast) hands.

We tried to get tickets to the Tuesday night quartet contest but it was sold out. So, after some more great music and a wonderful dinner at The Centre's Pipers' Tryst restaurant, we called it a day.

On Wednesday morning, Jack and I toured Glasgow Caledonian University, a fascinating contrast to the University of Glasgow. The

University of Glasgow was founded in 1451 and looks like Hogwarts. Glasgow Caledonian, founded in 1993, looks like a Silicon Valley office park. Everything is wired. No textbooks; everything is online. The difference was striking.

We stopped at The National Piping Centre after the tour to sample more music, and a pint may have found its way into my hand.

The much-anticipated Inveraray & District Pipe Band *Ascension* concert would be held at that night at the Royal Glasgow Concert Hall. Everyone was eager to see what pipe major Stuart Liddell had in store.

The capacity house was treated to an evening of playing that was not only outstanding, it was great fun. Bob Worrall was the MC, which is always a good start. The concert delivered standard fare as well as creative twists and new ideas. For example, the band performed a medley that had been selected via an internet poll. Then there was a wonderful vocal rendition of *The Water is Wide* from a barbershop quartet led by Stuart Liddell.

My highlight was a performance of *Catherine's Lament* led by Murray Henderson. Murray took the stage to lead the band and a string trio in a unique arrangement that he

said was 10 years in the making. The tune nearly moved me to tears. It was worth the wait.

Jack and I rounded out the evening with a tasty curry and a discussion of when the *Ascension* concert CD and DVD would be out. It was a memorable night.

We started the day at The National Piping Centre (where else?) for the launch of a new book, *Our Journey*. Authors James and Lisa Laughlin had assembled a delightful book of photos and stories of champion pipers and drummers. The launch was a great opportunity to collect autographs of many of the book's subjects who were there picking up their own copies.

Jack's band, Bleary and District, arrived from Northern Ireland that morning and a text message went out. Practice would be held that evening at the band hotel. This left Jack and I with time to venture to Kelvingrove Park to watch two-time (soon to be three-time) defending world champion Field Marshal Montgomery practise.

The predictably unpredictable Scottish weather made practice an on-again, off-again affair. Pipe major Richard Parkes MBE and his band managed to squeeze in a few medley runs in between sprinkles. Rain and cane drone reeds finally conspired to end the practice but all of us in the sizeable crowd that had gathered left happy.

A few hours later, Bleary and District Pipe Band crammed into a hotel meeting room for their own practice. Pipe major Nigel Davidson nitpicked only the smallest gaffes. This band, like all the bands converging on Glasgow that weekend, had played their selections a million times.

I'd met many of Jack's mates that day and dinner with the group that evening allowed me to meet the rest. I had a terrific time but my jet lag, a full day of walking and a big dinner convinced me that Jack and I should make an early night of it.

Thanks to the rainy weather on Friday, Bleary and District's practice on Glasgow Green was just like Field Marshal Montgomery's. While the band huddled under trees, I wandered off to see Glasgow Green — the People's Palace, the Winter Garden and Doulton Fountain. I stood in the middle of piping's Mecca, a long way from home, excited about the next day.

The World Pipe Band Championships was held over two days for the first time in nearly 50 years. However, the Grade 2 competition



Jim Williamson and his son Jack on Glasgow Green with The World's Grade 2 sixth place trophy

would be contested on the Saturday. Rain fell steadily all morning and if your band wasn't in the competition circle, you were huddled under a gazebo. Most bands adopted the same strategy — get the pipes going at the last minute, play and hope they didn't get soaked for the afternoon final.

Bleary and District Pipe Band's qualifying medley run was good but no one in the band made assumptions. Only the top six bands from each qualifying heat would make the final. The two-hour wait between the end of the qualifier and the announcement of the 12 finalists seemed interminable.

The weather began to clear up and the sun tried to show itself. When the long wait was finally over, Bleary & District were indeed among the Grade 2 finalists. In fact, the pipe corps took first in their heat. They would play at 4.12pm, the ninth of 12 finalists.

Jack and the band went off to prepare and I wandered over to the Grade 1 arena to hear some of the bands I'd admired since taking up the pipes — Field Marshal, Inveraray, St Laurence O'Toole and ScottishPower among them. Dozens of bands warmed up across the park and I thought about the connectedness this unique hobby provides. More than most pastimes, piping and drumming help us feel linked to the past and the future. Years ago,

many of the players competing in the Grade 1 arena were among the young pipers warming up in other parts of the park, just like many of those young pipers warmed up, hoping to make it to the Grade 1 arena some day. The tunes and the skills are handed down, and ideally, the student becomes the master.

The Grade 2 final was exceptional. Bands like Buchan Peterson and Lomond & Clyde made me wonder why they weren't in Grade 1. All the bands put on performances of which they could be proud. At the end of the day, once the everlasting march past was over and several other winners had been announced, the Grade 2 results were revealed. Bleary and District were awarded sixth place in Grade 2. Not bad for a group that hadn't been on the field in five years.

In a way, the Grade 2 final — and even the Sunday Grade 1 final — were somewhat anticlimactic. After all, Bleary and District Pipe Band had won a prize — quite an accomplishment by any measure — with my son in tow.

Jack had spent the summer living in Northern Ireland, played in the Grade 2 final and competed at Pipe Idol. These were all experiences that he would always remember.

As for me, not only did I get to visit Glasgow and realise my dream of attending the Worlds, but I got to do it all with my son. It doesn't get much better than that. ●

**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)**

# Grey's Notes

by Michael Grey



Photo: Ryan MacDonald Photography

## Pipers. Must. Compete.

**W**INNING isn't everything, but it beats anything in second place, said the American poet, William Cullen Bryant. Competing pipers and pipe bands might swear by Bryant's words. The driven need to compete is firmly soldered very near the heart of the piping world — and — to be truthful, near the heart of all who walk the boards. Pipers have been known to strike up a tune for the flimsiest of prizes: a plastic trophy, a chanter reed, a ball of hemp. Money is no object. Pipers. Must. Compete.

We know people have always loved competition. Even the Bible has something to say about it: "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it." I have no deep knowledge of this Book but holy smokes, even the Bible suggests — no says — if you're going to compete, you'd better damn well go for it.

But why do pipers compete? Other musicians seem to get by fine without the cruel competitive blood sport that is the piobaireachd at Glenfinnan, jigs at Glen Isla, or, the super atomic ring of death, arena one at the World Pipe Band Championships. True, there are high falutin competitions peppered throughout the classical music world — \$20,000 to the winner of the International Tchaikovsky Piano Competition, don't you know — but nothing seems to quite compare to the tradition and intensity tightly set among pipers.

I believe there are a couple of reasons at the core of the question why.

First, as an invention born of rural roots, a folk instrument,

there has always been plenty of opinion as to the questions of what's right, what's good piping. Geography and circumstance helped in the development of different styles and approaches. Isolated piping hotbeds and schools of thought would invariably meet — say, at a place like Falkirk — and the only way to satisfactorily settle the question of what and who stands as the best (outside of a fist fight) would be a competition. Many today view most big contest outcomes as the gold standard in preferred tune interpretation and what personifies "good piping". While today's piping may be more homogenised, less stylised, than the old days, contests still stand as an arbiter of what's good — and, in turn, what is not.

The second reason is all about the instrument itself: loud and proud. For an instrument not tailored for indoor performance or always easy-to-digest music, a contest offers an angle of entertainment that ups the listener's excitement level. The messy, dejected breakdown is solo piping's rolling Formula One car crash, the pipe band's missed introduction or "early E" is the singer's forgotten lyric. The audience at a piping contest is never averse to a little tragic choking among the sonorous examples of virtuosity. It's all part of the good fun.

Oh, one more, competition offers pipers a performance platform in a world where few exist. We've created our own special welcome world where the good old tunes can be freely administered, without fear of anything but (the cruel and cold) judgment of aficionados and peers.

But for all the good that comes of competition — consider alone the intensity of competitive performance that leads to high standard of play — there is one truth we can't overlook: with competition

comes winners and losers; in fact, far more losers than winners. The late prize-winning machine, Donald MacPherson,

said he always admired the pipers who competed regularly and got few prizes. For him, the high prizes kept him on the boards and without them he'd not likely play.

So if competition has an easily understandable place among drone and chanter, what sustains MacPherson's (large) admirable group of pipers and pipe bands that compete — and seldom win prizes? There's only one winner. The odds are stacked against anyone, or any band, entering a large competition. The world is rife with second-fiddles, runners-up, nearly men and losers. Competition often tears down rather than uplifts and when there's no shiny bauble or ball of hemp at the end of the day, what sustains a competitor, the winning impaired?

For some, it might be the thrill of the chase. For others, it might be a little like a lottery where you have to buy a ticket to have a chance to win; think contest entry as virtual lottery ticket. For most, I'd say, it's for love — the love of the music. Competitions offer a place to make music, a forum for those with winning mindsets to be the best they can be. Learning how to lose is a first-line character builder; learning how to win is a distant second.

To win first prize is not part of everyone's definition of success. Success comes in a broad variety of forms and flavours. Winning first prize is an outcome. That's not to say the self-aware also-ran fails to walk away with something — perhaps a prize of an intangible kind. For the vast majority, that is the winning impaired, competitions are only parts of a journey, a musical adventure where being your best trumps being the best. Piping is not all about winning the prize.

The author Margaret Atwood recently talked about the winning impaired, she offers a little competition insight: "There are lots of good writers who are not prize-winning authors but if you're really hooked on the prizewinning thing, go to the store, get some of those round, gold legal seals, get something embossed on them — Latin is good — and stick them on your books. People will think you've won a prize."

Or, treat yourself to a brand new beautiful ball of hemp and carry on. ●

*Illegitimi non carborundum*





R. G. Hardie & Co. Ltd.

*Makers of the worlds finest bagpipes*

# Piper Flight Case

The Piper Flight Case provides excellent protection for your bagpipes with a specially designed foam insert. Transform your bagpipe case into a weekend case by removing the foam insert!

**TRAVEL IN STYLE WITH THE  
ULTIMATE CABIN BAGPIPE CASE!**



External Dimensions  
**55cm x 40cm x 20cm**  
(meets IATA guidelines  
for cabin baggage)



Find out more. Visit us online.

**rghardie.com**

t: +44 (0)141 333 5696

e: info@rghardie.com