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PIPING TODAY

At the Glenfiddich with **Rona Lightfoot**
and
Faye Henderson

BILL LIVINGSTONE — *It's all about the music*

The Piper's House — *Researching the Mackays of Raasay*

ANDREW HAYES — *Another Canadian takes gold*

TYLER FRY — *Helping the tenor flourish*

Upper Crossgare Pipe Band — *World Champions on the up in County Down*

GREY'S NOTES by Michael Grey — *Playing it by the book*

Youngstars

NYPBoS newsletter No.46

THE NATIONAL
Piping
CENTRE

ISSUE NUMBER 49 • 2010

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





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www2.piperscorner.com/bagpipe-school/anmeldung.html



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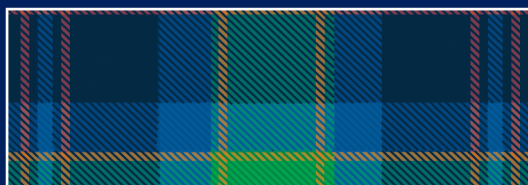


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FRONT COVER PICTURE:
Faye Henderson and Rona Lightfoot at
the Glenfiddich Piping Championship
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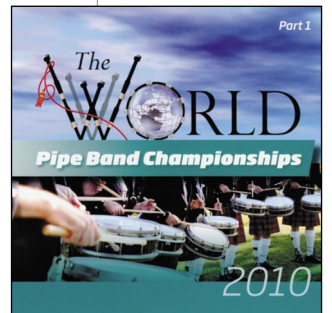


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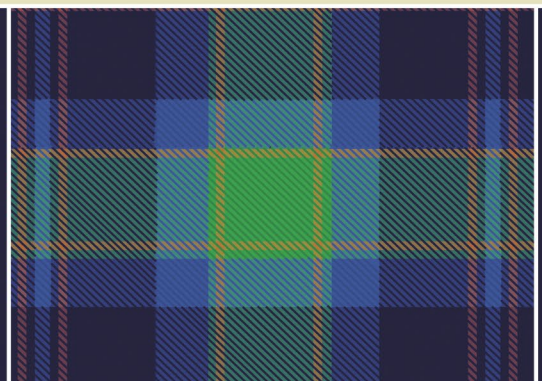
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For full details contact:

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

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





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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 2010

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Spirit of generosity

NOVEMBER 30 was an important day for The National Piping Centre and The Museum of Piping as we received a very generous and significant donation — the Iain Dall MacKay pipe chanter. The chanter is perhaps the oldest authenticated relic of the Highland Bagpipe tradition and the fact that it belonged to Iain Dall MacKay, known as The Blind Piper of Gairloch, is what makes it particularly special and also key to understanding the development of piping through the ages.



Iain Dall MacKay was born in 1656 and lived until 1754. It is thought that he became blind at a young age after contracting smallpox. Iain Dall initially learned to play the pipes from his father, Ruairidh, who was piper to the Mackenzies of Gairloch, and was later sent by his father to the MacCrimmon's college in Skye where he learned from Patrick Og MacCrimmon. After seven years excelling under tutelage from the MacCrimmons he returned to Gairloch and assisted his father as piper to Alexander Mackenzie. Later, after his father's death, he himself became hereditary piper to the Mackenzies of Gairloch.

MacKay is thought to have composed between 20 and 30 piobaireachds and among them some of our most noted and powerful compositions, such as *Lament for Patrick Og MacCrimmon*, *The Unjust Incarceration* and *The Blind Piper's Obstinacy*. Not only was Iain Dall MacKay regarded as a great piper and composer but he was also a bard and composed a number of Gaelic poems and songs. When looking at the chanter it is incredible to think that the first airing of these great tunes may have been on that actual piece of lignum vitae!

The Sinclair family who made the donation are eighth generation descendants of Iain Dall MacKay. Mike Sinclair told those who were present to celebrate the donation that he had given a great deal of thought over the past year as to where he wanted to display the chanter. He told us that his decision was informed by the fact that he felt there is great scholarship in piping associated with the museum and he felt that it would be a good location for the chanter to be seen and appreciated by young pipers. He took comfort in the knowledge that the chanter would be the property of the nation of Scotland and would be cared for by professional curators from The National Piping Centre and the National Museum of Scotland.

It was also particularly pleasing that Barnaby Brown and Julian Goodacre had quietly been working away to produce a replica chanter which Barnaby presented to the Sinclair family to take home to Nova Scotia.

We were glad that we were joined on the day by Dr Iain Blake, Chairman of the Iain Dall MacKay Piping Festival held annually in Gairloch. The festival runs a piping competition for young pipers and they have also erected a cairn in Gairloch as a memorial to Iain Dall. Dr Blake read a poem that he had composed for Iain Dall MacKay which was enjoyed by all. Dr Blake's presence, on behalf of the festival, provided further evidence of how we continue to this day to celebrate the life and works of Iain Dall MacKay.

In connection with this, I hope that you will enjoy reading the report on this year's Glenfiddich Piping Championship, where we did in fact hear an Iain Dall MacKay tune performed by Jack Lee, *The Unjust Incarceration*. As mentioned in my last editorial the competition was a special occasion for Faye Henderson and so it is very interesting to read in Fergus Muirhead's report about her perspective of the day and on piping nowadays in comparison to Rona Lightfoot's experiences in earlier years. The award of the Balvenie medal to Rona was an extremely popular decision as she has, without doubt, been one of piping's great characters as well as one of the most musical players. She also did a great job on the day as Bean An Tighe.

As always, and with all Glenfiddich-sponsored piping and fiddle events, Liz Maxwell did a marvellous job of keeping events running smoothly. Liz makes management and administration of these events seem effortless, although we know that to project this image will have taken weeks of meticulous planning. Glenfiddich have exacting standards about how things should be done and there is no one who understands these standards better than Liz.

It is in the public domain now that The National Piping Centre has been given a supporting role to play in the back office administration of finances for Glenfiddich piping and fiddle events. This arrangement has been in place for two years now. Responsibility for the continued smooth running of the annual programme of sponsored events, liaison with event organisers, competitors, judges, media and any other interested parties rests entirely, as it did previously, with Liz Maxwell — and who could do a better job!

Finally, many thanks to Glenfiddich for their continuing and generous support for piping. They provide support to events the length and breadth of the UK, support without which many would be unable to continue and without which we would certainly not be able to enjoy hearing inspirational performances from the world's top pipers in such fantastic venues such as Blair Castle.

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

Historic chanter returns to Scotland to go on show at The National Piping Centre

THE oldest Highland bagpipe chanter has been returned to Scotland from Nova Scotia in Canada, after being handed down in a direct line through a single family for eight generations.

Belonging to Iain Dall MacKay, who was known as The Blind Piper of Gairloch and was one of the finest Scottish composers of the 17th century, the chanter is one of the world's oldest dateable relics of the Highland bagpipe tradition and is key to the understanding of that tradition.

It has now been donated to National Museums Scotland and will go on display at The National Piping Centre in Glasgow, where a part of their piping collection is displayed.

Considered the 'golden age' of Gaelic piping, few instruments survive from the 17th century, so this chanter will become the most historically important item in the collection.

It has been cherished by the MacKay Sinclair family for hundreds of years, most recently in the hands of brothers Donald and Michael Sinclair.

Because of the significance of the chanter, they decided it was time to bring it to Scotland and chose The National Piping Centre as a place where it would be preserved, researched and viewed by an appreciative public.

They handed it over on November 30 – St Andrew's Day – at a special ceremony at The National Piping Centre.

Michael Sinclair said: "There's great scholarship in piping associated with the museum and we felt that it would be a good location for the chanter to be seen and appreciated by young pipers.

"We hope that its story will inspire them in their piping schooling."

Prof Hugh Cheape, formerly a curator at National Museums Scotland and an expert in the history of piping, helped to assemble the collection of bagpipes at The National Piping Centre.

He explained: "Iain Dall MacKay is still considered one of the greatest ever writers of piobaireachd and



Michael Sinclair and the Iain Dall MacKay chanter are welcomed to The National Piping Centre by Principal, Roddy MacLeod MBE, piping and early music scholar Barnaby Brown, back left, and Professor Hugh Cheape, right.

to think that these timeless pieces of music were possibly composed and played on this very chanter will be awe-inspiring for fans of the tradition. We must thank the MacKay Sinclair family for keeping such good care of the chanter over so many years."

Lady Oona Ivory, the Founder and Vice Chair of The National Piping Centre added: "We are delighted that this donation is going to be housed in The National Piping Centre.

"It will enhance the exhibition, which already contains many interesting and wonderful artefacts that allow us to understand our rich piping heritage."

Visitors can view the MacKay bagpipe chanter and other items from the 'National Collection of Scotland's National Instrument' at The National Piping Centre from Monday to Friday from 9.30am to 4.30pm, Saturday from 9am to 1pm.

News in brief...

● **AFTER** a successful launch this year, the Lomond and Clyde Grade 1 invitational contest is back for 2011 on Saturday, March 19.

The all-day event at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Glasgow will feature Boghall and Bathgate Caledonia, Cullybackey, Dysart and Dundonald, Fife Constabulary, Inveraray and District, Vale of Atholl, ScottishPower, House of Edgar Shotts and Dykehead, Strathclyde Police and Torphichen and Bathgate Pipe Bands, playing for a top prize of £2500.

Ticket prices are lower than 2010

levels, costing £18 for the whole day. They will be available from www.tickets-scotland.com

● **THE Arbroath & District Musical (Competitive) Festival Association will be holding their Solo Piping and Drumming Competition on Saturday, March 12.**

The venue for the event is Arbroath Academy, and the action gets under way at 9.30am. It is open to players aged 18 and under.

Entry forms are available from The National Piping Centre reception in Glasgow or by calling Muriel Steven on 01241 870501.

The closing date for entries is January 29.

● **THE Scots Guards Junior Solo Piping Competition took place on Sunday, November 21 in Edinburgh.**

The results were: PIOBAIREACHD, 11-15: 1. Connor Sinclair, 2. Andrew Broadly, 3. Rebecca Tierney, 4. Andrew Clark.

MARCH, 11-15: 1. Andrew Clark, 2. Iain Crawford, 3. Billy Millar, 4. Taylor Townsley.

STRATHSPEY AND REEL, 11-15: 1. Iain Crawford, 2. Andrew Clark, 3. Taylor Townsley, 4. Billy Millar.

PIOBAIREACHD, 15-18: 1. Sarah Muir, 2. Ross Ferguson, 3. Scott Wood, 4. Ross Mackay/Angus MacColl.

MARCH/STRATHSPEY&REEL, 15-18: 1. Sarah Muir, 2. Steven Gray, 3. Angus MacColl, 4. Ross Mackay.

● **THE National Piping Centre's Junior competition will be held on Saturday, February 19, 2011 from 9am at The National Piping Centre, Glasgow.**

There are three categories of events: **A** – Junior Championship open to 15-17 age group; **B** – Novice Championship open to under-15s; **C** – chanter contest. Players may enter no more than one category.

For full details of the competitions and requirements please visit www.thepipingcentre.co.uk/about/junior-piping-competition/



Angus is King of the Castle

OBAN piper Angus MacColl won his third Glenfiddich Piping Championship at Blair Castle in October.

He triumphed in the piobaireachd and also took the overall prize while Stuart Liddell was first in the March, Strathspey and Reel.

Angus, who was previously crowned champion in 1995 and 2006, said: "I am absolutely delighted to have won this year's Glenfiddich title. In the professional world of solo piping it is without doubt the most sought-after prize and it has been an incredible honour not just to win, but to compete alongside such exceptional talent."

Argyllshire Gathering Gold Medallist Faye Henderson made her debut and Rona Lightfoot was Bean an Taighe. Read about their experience on page 10.



The 10 competitors in this year's Glenfiddich contest, top, and overall winner Angus MacColl with MSR winner Stuart Liddell, above

First class progress in Italy

THE Italian Pipers' Association and the Bagpipe Italian Group have taken a huge step forward in their quest to bring the instrument to the next generation.

They have recently launched a Highland piping basics course for middle school students in Isernia.

Dr Duilio Vigliotti, president of the association submitted the piping course project to the Giovanni XXIII school and it got an enthusiastic welcome from principal, Professor Rossella Simeone, and music teacher, Professor Rosanna Carnevale.

The Highland piping course, which will be followed by a zampogna (Italian bagpipe) course, started on November 19 and initially involved 23 children receiving weekly lessons.

This is a preparatory course ahead of the fifth Italian Spring Piping School, which will be held in April 2011.

Dr Vigliotti said: "The first time a Highland piping course has been welcomed in a public school in Italy, thanks to the open-mindedness of both the school's principal and music teacher."

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Band calendar is a sell-out success

A 2011 calendar featuring members of Haddington Pipe Band has proved a surprise bestseller.

The first print run of 500 copies sold out on the launch night, a third print run was needed just two weeks after the launch of the calendar, and due to overseas sales they are now on the fourth run.

Photos from the bestseller show the band's pipers and drummers at a series of locations in East Lothian. But one picture has proved especially popular. Pipe major David Leckie, right, is seen standing amid falling poppies at St Mary's Church in Haddington. The photo has been presented to the church to commemorate Armistice Day.

Chairman of the band, John McMillan, said sales had surpassed all expectations.

He added: "We had no idea just how popular it would become but we are now on our fourth print run with demand outstripping supply.

"The money raised will go towards equipping the large number of youngsters joining the band, as well as helping to fund our 30th anniversary year, which includes a visit to Haddington by the pipe band from Aubigny-sur-Nere, our twin town in France.

"I would like to thank all of the sponsors, photographers John Archibald, Nick Callaghan and Garry Menzies and the designers at Shaw Marketing and Design. It really is a collectors' item."



Photo: John Archibald and Nick Callaghan

NYPBoS make Connections

PLAYERS from The National Youth Pipe Band of Scotland will take centre stage at Celtic Connections, which kicks off in Glasgow in January.

The young musicians are performing at the festival's annual piping concert in Glasgow Royal Concert Hall on January 15, alongside the Fife Constabulary Pipe Band, which is led by pipe major James Murray.

The drum corps of the Boghall and Bathgate Caledonia Pipe Band feature in the opening concert, The Pulse of World featuring Zakir Hussain, on January 13 at Glasgow Royal Concert Hall.

Lorne MacDougall, who has been keeping Piping Today readers up to date on the progress of album Hello World, will perform tracks from his new release at Oran Mor on January 15.

The Red Hot Chilli Pipers are also on the bill for Scotland's premier winter music festival with a concert at the O2 ABC on January 25.

There an interesting mix of cultures and style in Ceol's Craic Music and Banter at the CCA on January 20 and 21. Armagh Pipers Club and John Mulhearn feature both nights with piper Barnaby Brown playing on the latter date.

For programme details and bookings, log on to www.celticconnections.com.

Fundraising plea for piper statue

THE drive to raise money for a statue in memory of D-Day piper Bill Millin is being stepped up to raise awareness of the cause in the UK.

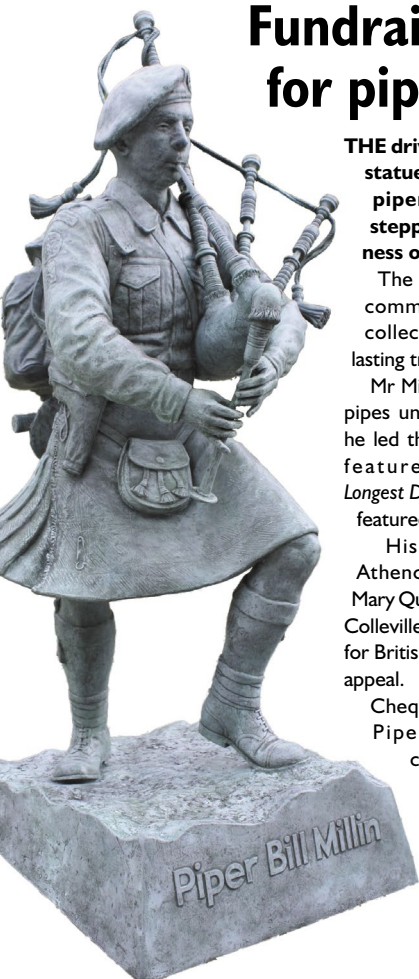
The Colleville-Montgomery community in Normandy is collecting funds to create a lasting tribute on Sword Beach.

Mr Millin's heroics, playing the pipes under a hail of gunfire as he led the Allied troops ashore, featured in the film *The Longest Day* and he has previously featured in Piping Today.

His son John and Serge Athenour, pipe major of the Mary Queen of Scots pipe band in Colleville-Montgomery, are keen for British supporters to back the appeal.

Cheques, payable to D-Day Piper Bill Millin appeal, can be sent to John Millin, The Old Saddlery, Laneham St, Rampton, Notts. DN22 0JX.

Or visit www.ddaypiperbillmillin.over-blog.com



Schools round-up ● Schools round-up

● **THE National Piping Centre** is running a series of piping and drumming schools in Glasgow as well as locations in the USA, Germany and Switzerland next year.

The Scottish schools run from April 11 to April 15, June 27 to July 1, July 4 to July 8, July 25 to July 29 and October 17 to 21.

The New York school runs from February 21 to 25 at St Joseph's School, Babylon.

The Swiss school is being held from May 1 to May 6 at a new venue — the Leissigen History Youth Hostel.

The Georgia school runs from June 12 to June 17 at Kennesaw State University, near Atlanta, and the Virginia school runs from June 19 to June 24 at Shenandoah University, Winchester.

Finally, there is a school in Munich from October 11 to 15.

Instructors for these schools include Gold Medal winners, World Pipe Band Championship winners and successful recording artists. For more details or to book, visit

www.thepipingcentre.co.uk/schools/ and follow the links on the left of the page.

● **THE National Piping Centre** is sending a team of world-class instructors to join the Piper's Corner Bruggen Winter School in Germany.

The event runs from February 6 to 13, in association with Wallace Bagpipes.

The instructors from The National Piping Centre include John Mulhearn, Glenn Brown and Callum Beaumont, as well as three students from the BA Scottish Music (piping) degree course.

A spokesperson for The National Piping Centre said: "We are delighted to be a new collaborative teaching partner in the Bruggen Winter School."

To enrol, or for further details, go to www2.piperscorner.com/bagpipe-school/anmeldung.html.

Celtic Arts Winter School

BRUSH up on your Border pipes skills and get slick on the smallpipes with tuition from some famous names at the Celtic Arts Winter School.

Fred Morrison and Dr Gary West will be teaching at the event in Seabeck, Washington State in the USA, from January 29 to

February 2. A two-day weekend course is offered as well as a full five-day session.

Registrations are now being accepted by the Celtic Arts Foundation and the deadline for applications is December 31.

To find out more, visit their website at www.celticarts.org.

Barry beats the rest to make it four in a row



Barry Wilson with Nigel Hodgen of Andante

BARRY WILSON of ScottishPower Pipe Band continued his winning run to take the 2010 World Solo Drumming championship on October 23.

This was Barry's fourth consecutive title in the prestigious event, in which he was up against 10 others in the adult section.

Inveraray and District's Steven McWhirter placed second and Gordon Brown of Boghall and Bathgate Caledonia Pipe Band was third.

Held at Glasgow Caledonian University, the event was well attended and was an exciting day for competing drummers and spectators alike.

In the under-18 categories, Ryan Martin from Culleybackey won Juvenile Section One, House of Edgar Shotts and Dykehead's Grant Cassidy took the honours in Juvenile Section Two and Scott MacKenzie of ScottishPower won Juvenile Section Three.



Scott MacKenzie from ScottishPower receives his Juvenile Section 3 trophy.



Barry Wilson

Steven McWhirter

Stuart's Oz-some adventure

PIPING Today columnist **Stuart Robertson** has swapped Scotland for Perth, Western Australia to take up a job with the Western Australia Police Pipe Band.

Stuart, from Ardrossan in Ayrshire, was formerly with The House of Edgar Shotts and Dykehead Pipe Band and also previously played with Torphichen and Bathgate.

He is relishing the new challenge of playing and working with WAPOL.

He said: "This is an amazing opportunity for me to live and work in a country I have always wanted to visit.

The band is in the process of building up a strong corps of both pipers and

drummers to add to an already strong pool of guest players.

"My partner Mandy has also made the move and is guesting as a tenor drummer with the band.

"My day-to-day duties are pretty diverse, and although we do concentrate a lot on band engagements and perform most days, we also have other duties within the Police at the assistance centre, and also within our own office.

"I hope I can add something to the band, and bring my experience of

playing with some pretty good bands in my career to what I see as an exciting start to my new life here."

See Stuart's latest *Nine Notes and more* column on page 44.



Battling it out for the Quaich

THE 19th annual amateur Piobaireachd competition for the Archie Kenneth Quaich is on Saturday, March 5 at The Royal Scottish Pipers' Society, Rose Street Lane South, Edinburgh.

Competitors will be asked to submit two tunes with their entries, one of which they will be asked to play. Entrants may not submit any tune with which they have previously won first prize in the competition.

Entries and enquiries to Alan Forbes, 24 Garscube Terrace, Edinburgh EH12 6BN. Tel: 0131 337 4094 or e-mail: alan.forbes@btinternet.com

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by Fergus Muirhead

RONA Lightfoot and Faye Henderson had remarkably similar beginnings to their piping careers. Rona had the pipes on her shoulder in South Uist when she was nine-years-old. Her father, brothers and uncles all played and, in fact, at times Rona thought that it was compulsory for everyone in her family to play the pipes. Well, all the males anyway. “Even although girls and women didn’t normally play the pipes I just copied my father and brother and picked up the chanter and learned by ear,” she explained.

Faye’s beginnings were very similar. “It was almost impossible for me not to be a piper with both my mum and dad playing but it was never, ‘Oh, here’s a chanter, play it’. But then my sister started playing and I thought whatever she is doing, I want to do as well so I started playing the chanter.”

Both Rona and Faye were initially taught by family members, and in Faye’s case this has continued with her illustrious parents Murray and Patricia Henderson still guiding her career.

“My mum and dad have always taught me. When I was at primary school it would just be whoever was around at the time – if dad was working then mum would do it and vice versa. If a competition was coming up they would both sit in and give their different comments,” said Faye.

Rona and Faye came together to add an unusually feminine feel to this year’s Glenfiddich Championship. Rona was acting as Bean an Taighe for the day at Blair Castle and Faye was the first female competitor to appear at this prestigious competition for 20 years. Not only that but Faye, who qualified for the competition by winning the Gold Medal at the Argyllshire Gathering this year, was also the youngest competitor ever in the Championship, some 40 years younger than the oldest player on the day.

So it was a good time to talk to these two musicians and find out how they feel as the ‘minority sex’ in the piping world and to glean



Rona Lightfoot and

The Glenfiddich Piping

from Rona the changes she has seen since she started competing almost 40 years ago.

According to Rona, Faye should consider herself lucky that conditions for females have changed since Rona’s young days to actually allow the new Gold Medallist to take to the boards so easily. Rona explained: “In my day I was only allowed to compete in certain places. I competed in South Uist and in some Highland games but I wasn’t allowed to compete in the Northern Meeting or the Argyllshire Gathering because of my gender.

“Women were not allowed and that didn’t make me feel very good. I wanted to be allowed to play because I loved playing. But then sex discrimination legislation was introduced and we had to be allowed to play.”

Rona’s first foray into a major competition was a few years before the sex discrimination legislation was introduced and it was a great day for her.

“The Northern Meeting in 1972 was my first major competition and I felt good. I got third in the jig, the first prize for a woman. I’ve



Photo: Derek Maxwell

d Faye Henderson

Championship 2010

still got the £5 that I won — actually it wasn't a five pound note it was a five pound cheque." Having won a prize in the jig competition the rest of the day didn't go smoothly for Rona.

"I didn't get to compete in the march because a gentleman at the venue told me I wasn't properly dressed," she explained. "I was dressed kind of like a Highland dancer — I was wearing a waistcoat with long sleeves. They sent me home and by the time I came back they told me I had missed my place in the march. I said that I would play last but they

told me that I couldn't change my position and just couldn't play."

I wasn't around the competition circuit at that time and I have to confess that I found Rona's story about being refused permission to play because of her dress a bit hard to believe.

However, when I was recounting the tale in the bar during the Glenfiddich competition I was told that the secretary of a band due to play at the Braemar Gathering in 1969 had received a letter from the organising committee.

The letter explained that the committee had heard that this particular band was intending to play a female at the Gathering and asked if they knew they had to have permission for this to happen.

The irony of the situation was that the secretary of the band was the female who was going to play on the day.

Rona's views on the way female pipers should dress while competing haven't changed in the last 30 years.

She said: "There's no need for a girl to wear a collar and tie and skean dubh and flashes and brogues. She can wear a kilt with a frilly blouse and a jacket. She doesn't need to wear a sporran and can show off the kilt beautifully without it. The bagpipe is a musical instrument — you don't have to dress like a man to play it."

Faye agreed: "I don't wear men's dress. I don't wear brogues or a sporran. I wear what I would class as female attire. Obviously it's a different time and there was obviously a transition period when sex discrimination legislation came in but 20 or 30 years on it's been done and there are not a lot of females who wear the brogues or the sporran."

Faye reckons that the changes that have come about since Rona started to compete effectively mean that both sexes are now treated equally.

She added: "I don't see myself any different from the guys that play and I don't think the guys see me as any different — I don't think there's an advantage or disadvantage about being a girl. I know from experience that I haven't been treated any differently and I can only go from my own experience."

Looking at Faye's record this year it would be hard to argue with that last statement. Not only the youngest competitor at Glenfiddich, and the first female for 20 years, but she is also the first female to win a Gold Medal at Oban. She seems to take it all in her stride.

Faye explained: "When I came here to watch my dad playing I thought that it would be really cool to get to that level. It feels really

“I’ve practised to play a good tune and if I play a good tune I’ll be really happy with it. I don’t think I would enjoy it so much if I only saw it as a competition that I should be able to win.”

weird now that I am here to play. It’s obviously something that every piper aspires to and I don’t really think it has sunk in yet and I don’t think it will until after the competition – it’s still quite a surreal feeling to be here.”

Faye reckons that appearing at Blair Castle is on an equal footing to winning the Gold Medal, and although she was overjoyed with her success at the Argyllshire Gathering, winning is not always her ultimate goal.

“I don’t really see it as a competition,” she explained. “I’ve practised to play a good tune and if I play a good tune I’ll be really happy with it. It’s not that I’ve really come here to win and I really want to win this prize – I just want to come and play for me. That’s really important. I don’t think I would enjoy it so much if I only saw it as a competition that I should be able to win. I want to play for myself and I’ll just keep doing that.”

Of course as well as playing for herself, she will no doubt get a critique from her parents and teachers afterwards.

Faye said: “I always ask my mum and dad for feedback because I always want to improve and they are always totally honest with me which is how I would want it to be.

“If you can’t have a teacher that tells you straight ‘that wasn’t good’ then there is no point in them being your teacher. You go to them to improve and you want to make progress all the time so I do really appreciate their feedback and it is that feedback that has got me to the gold medal standard.”

Rona paid tribute to Faye’s achievements this year and, ahead of the competition, urged her to keep up the good work.

Said Rona: “I congratulate Faye for getting the Gold Medal this year. I’m really delighted for her. I hope she plays well and shows them that a woman can play the pipes equally as good as a man.”

Of course it was a big day for Rona as well. Although she has chaired the Springbank competition in Campbeltown and the Donald MacLeod competition in Stornoway, it was her first time on duty at Blair Castle. Rona said: “The competitors submit six piobaireachd

Faye’s Pipe Set-up

Chanter: Strathmore

Chanter Reed: Murray Henderson

Drone Reeds:
Henderson Harmonics

Pipe Bag: Bannatyne

Pipes: Strathmore

and don’t know until the night before which one they are going to play. As the chairperson you have to know a little bit about all of the tunes so I had quite a lot of swotting up to do. I have notes on all of the tunes from books, Piobaireachd Society records and other stories like that.”

Rona and I acted as comperes at the same concert was at *Piping Live!* in Glasgow in the summer and that night Rona told me that she didn’t really care what she said as long as she got to tell a joke in Gaelic.

But the Glenfiddich is a much less frivolous undertaking.

Rona said: “I think it will be serious this time. You have to remember that it is a serious competition for the competitors and I wouldn’t want to make light of that, having been a competitor myself. It wouldn’t be fair to have the pipers standing in the wings while I have some fun and tell the audience a joke or two.”

Having listened to her say that the night before the competition, she opened proceedings with a fabulous story about her phone ringing all night and not really knowing how to switch it off. She said she threw it in the wardrobe and it was fine the next day because the battery was flat. She is a natural storyteller.

In the bar before dinner on the night of the competition, she had John Wilson, Bob Worrall and I in stitches with a tale of how she fell off

her bike and hurt her wrist just before she was due to play at her first ceilidh.

“Were you not disappointed at missing the chance to play at the ceilidh?” one of us asked. “Oh, I didn’t miss it. I played at the ceilidh all right, I just didn’t tell my parents until the next morning that I thought I had a broken wrist!”

While travelling to Armagh for the William Kennedy Piping Festival in November I got into conversation with some young musicians from Skye who were over to play for a few days.

One of the adults with the group, who will remain nameless, told me a fascinating story about a post-Mod party where whisky had to be drunk out of the bottle as there were hardly any cups and a policeman’s hat got knocked off halfway through the night.

It was a hugely entertaining tale and I wasn’t at all surprised to learn that one of the participants in the late night revelry was one of the subjects for my piece on this year’s Glenfiddich Championship. It wasn’t Faye Henderson!

There were no such signs of broken wrists or tomfoolery with the long arm of the law from Faye at the Glenfiddich.

So how did she prepare for the big day?

“I don’t have any superstitions, but I like to just go to my room to have a few minutes to myself to think about the tunes and just to look forward to the day,” she said.

“I want to enjoy the whole day because it might only happen once.”

Was she pleased with the tunes chosen for her debut appearance?

“I’m happy with my tunes – *Battle of Watnish* in the piobaireachd and *The 74th Farewell to Edinburgh*, *Lady MacKenzie of Gairloch* and *Bessie McIntyre* is the MSR.

“I was happy with all of the tunes I submitted and whichever ones were chosen I would have thought ‘perfect’. I like to have all of my tunes at the same level. I’ve never gone into a competition thinking ‘Oh, I don’t want this one I’d rather have that one’.”

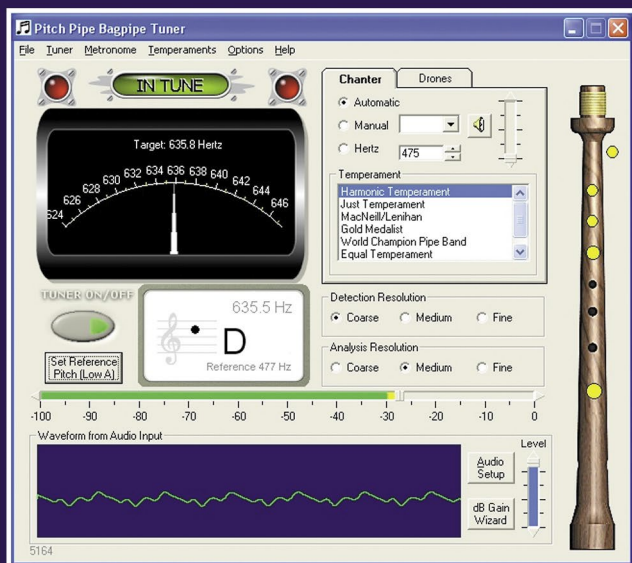
She had every right to be happy, as did Rona.

Faye’s debut at the Glenfiddich was a fitting end to a great season and Rona’s Balvenie Medal at the end of the day was a fitting reward for a lifetime of service to piping.

Two great debuts and then we all retired to the Atholl Palace Hotel for a cup of tea and to dissect day’s events. There were a few tunes from the competitors – all nine men and a lady. While the other lady looked on with her medal safe in her long since fully-healed wrist. ●

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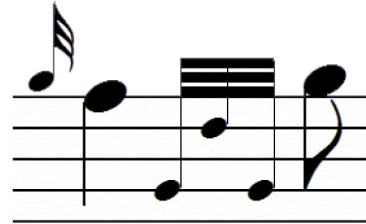
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The Piper's House

Taigh a' Phìobaire.



The music of the Mackays of Raasay lies at the heart of Scotland's piping tradition although our conventional wisdom tends not to engage further with issues such as the origins of the Mackays or the Hebridean context, cultural and social, in which they lived. With these and other questions in mind, piping scholars, Professor Hugh Cheape and Dr Decker Forrest, both programme leaders at Scotland's Gaelic college, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig in Skye, travelled to Raasay and began researching the rich and often underappreciated piping heritage of the Mackays of Raasay.

Most players of the Great Highland Bagpipe will come to recognise a significant list of place names that are associated, in one way or other, with pipe music. Names such as Anapool, Borreraig, Gairloch, Chillicassie, Kilberry and so on, creep into our vocabulary but rarely do we give them much thought beyond, typically, their appearance in tune titles. One of the best examples of this is the Island of Raasay, located between the Isle of Skye and the Applecross Peninsula on the mainland of Wester Ross. Most pipers can play the reel, *Mrs MacLeod of Raasay*, and those familiar with *ceòl mòr* will have heard of *MacLeod of Raasay's Salute* and *John Garbh MacLeod of Raasay's Salute* and few can fail to have heard of the celebrated 'Mackays of Raasay', of whom John and his son Angus are still hugely important to the history of bagpipe music.

For most of us, John Mackay is known for having passed his settings of *ceòl mòr* on to his son Angus, who subsequently notated and published some in 1838 and recorded others in manuscript. We are told, therefore, that Angus provides pipers today with a critically important link, that is, between the modern era of notation-led transmission and the older, exclusively aural tradition of *ceòl mòr* extending back through his father to the illustrious MacCrimmons of Borreraig. Sadly, the only other point known to pipers about Angus is of the 'Madness of Angus Mackay' and of his tragic demise, when, towards the end of his career he succumbed to mental illness and is believed to

have drowned in the River Nith while trying to escape from a sanatorium in Dumfries.

Some 150 years after Angus's death, it is timely for the received conventional wisdom of the Mackays of Raasay to be reappraised. In particular, what can be learned by examining the Mackays' musical tradition within the social and cultural framework of Raasay during the late-18th and early-19th centuries? Does the notion of the Mackays being principle tradition bearers to the MacCrimmons of Borreraig belie a more complex and discrete piping heritage of the Mackays themselves? Has the Mackays' influence on *ceòl mòr* overshadowed an equally important contribution to *ceòl beag*?

These and other questions took the authors to the Island of Raasay to discover and recover something of the celebrated family's piping heritage. The first discovery was a small memorial plaque commemorating John Mackay, father of Angus Mackay. We know that John Mackay was buried in Raasay on his death in 1848 and Raasay tradition recalls (as we discovered) that he is buried in the north-west corner of the roofless chapel of Kilmoluag, though the grave was unmarked. The chapel is an impressive structure in the religious precinct and ancient buildings dedicated to Saint Moluag, a seventh-century Saint of Columba's Celtic Church. The plaque is fixed on a stone to mark John Mackay's

burial place. This site was chosen because this was the burial 'lair' of the family of a Donald Mackay. The latter was known to tradition as *Dòmhnall Mac a' Phìobaire*, and in fact, turns out to have been a brother of John Mackay. The brief text engraved on the plaque, given in both Gaelic and English, represents in essence the conventional wisdom for a key moment in the received history of the Great Highland Bagpipe and its music. The English text reads:

This plaque commemorates John Mackay of Raasay 1767-1848. The last great piper to have had lessons from the MacCrimmons. He was the best player, composer and teacher of his day, and through his expert pupils – John Bàn Mackenzie, Angus Macpherson, Donald Cameron and his own four sons – the playing of the great music was carried forward faithfully to all the top pipers of the present time.

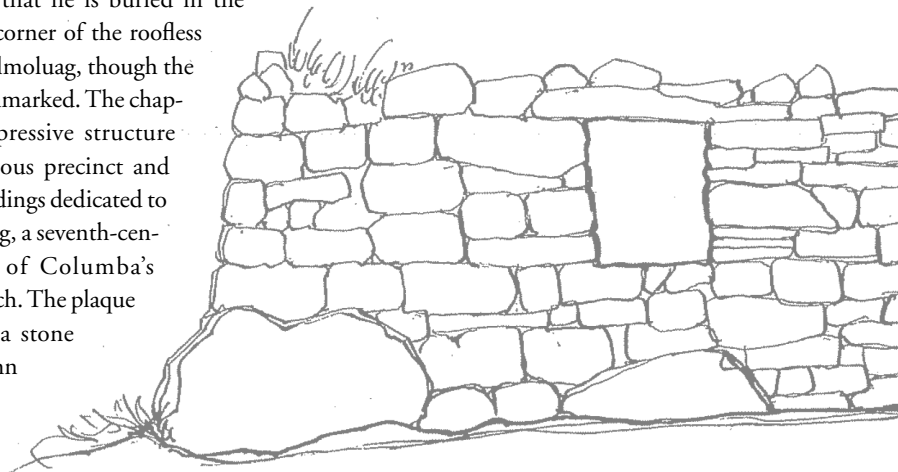




Photo by Decker Forrest

The Piper's House in its Raasay setting, looking from Oighre to Skye.



Photo by Decker Forrest

Memorial stone (in centre) to John Mackay of Raasay located within the chapel of St. Moluag

The plaque and its fixing on the stone is the initiative of the Raasay Heritage Trust, *Urras Dualchas Ratharsaidh*, as a notable Raasay man, Farquhar MacLennan, has written, 'as part of its endeavour to maintain and enhance the rich diversity of these islands in a social and cultural context'. The Heritage Trust's purpose is to offer the visitor to the island more of the

island's history and an enhanced 'visitor experience'. Such initiatives also serve to remind the island community about Raasay's history, when today's community is now reinforced with incomers. As the last tradition-bearers will say: 'everything went with the people', following the beginnings of the savage clearance of Raasay after 1846 when the long-standing proprietors,

the MacLeods of Raasay, sold the island and emigrated to Australia. In this and other ways such as 'heritage trails' and publications reflecting their stewardship and preservation of the history of Raasay, the Heritage Trust reminds the population about Raasay's past and helps to strengthen memory and identity.

Without prior knowledge of its existence, we chanced on the stone at Kilmoluag, on a first visit to Raasay in July 2009. We knew from the literature that John Mackay of Raasay was born and lived in Eyre, or *Oighre*, as it is referred to in Raasay itself. Oighre and Gleannan Oighre is at the southern end of Raasay, but, on a first visit there to locate the piper's house, there was no sign of where the Mackay home might have been and, more significantly perhaps, not a soul who might be able to point it out. Had the knowledge been lost of the birthplace of one of Scotland's greatest piping families, and the intimate association of person and place elided to a vague and superficial detail only that the Mackay pipers belonged to Raasay and were born and raised there? Not so, we subsequently learnt from Rebecca Mackay of Osgaig, Island of Raasay. Rebecca is married to Calum Don Mackay who is descended from *Dòmhnall Ruairidh*, or *Dòmhnall Mac a' Phìobaire*, the brother of John Mackay. Rebecca knows the

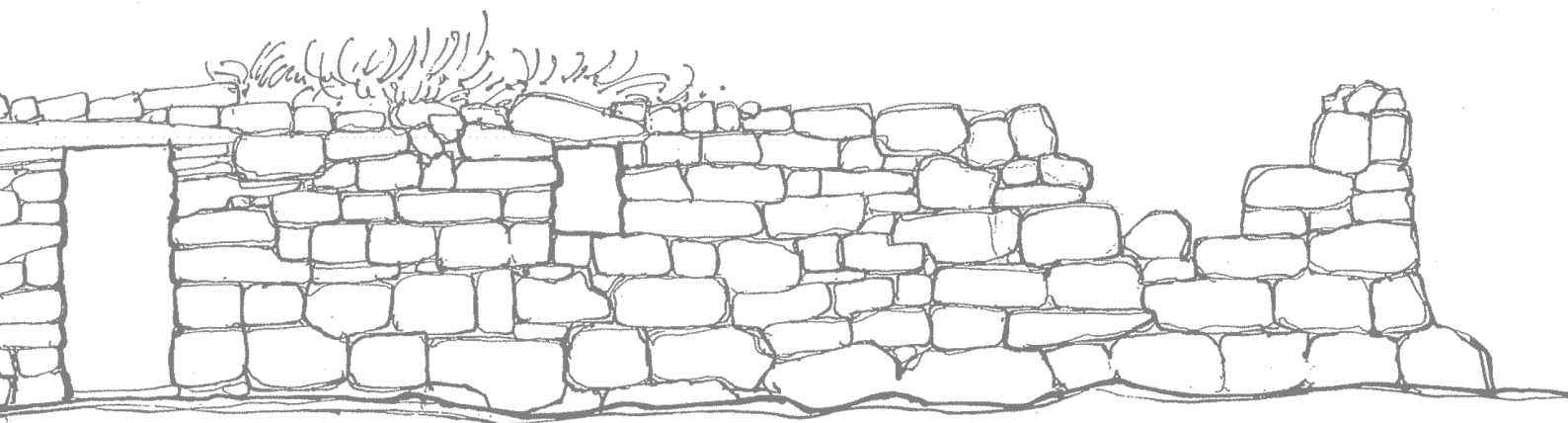




Photo by Decker Forrest

Westward view of the Piper's House showing the longhouse byre-dwelling layout.

house in Oighre where John Mackay lived and raised his family. It is still known to Raasay folk as 'The Piper's House' — *Taigh a' Phìobaire* — and *Tobhtai Taigh a' Phìobaire*, the word *tobhta* telling us that the house is now roofless and uninhabited.

Rebecca Mackay says that it is island tradition that John Mackay was buried at the west end of the chapel of Saint Moluag, in the spot marked by the stone. The stone itself, as we see it now, was brought from Oighre recently by Calum Don Mackay, a Trustee of the Heritage Trust. It was placed in position between Mackay graves and the plaque inscribed using a text in English provided by Seumas MacNeill and translated into Gaelic by Farquhar MacLennan. This mark of 'memory' and 'identity' which does honour to the history of piping is one which we can all applaud. A further piece of information was of different but great value for piping history; Rebecca Mackay is of the firm belief that the Raasay Mackay family is descended from the Mackays of Gairloch and that they are related to John Mackay, *Am Pìobaire Dall*.

The Raasay Mackays are known as *Clann Mhic Ruairidh* and she quotes the family naming pattern of patronymics of 'Angus, son of John, son of Roderick' — *Aonghas Mac Iain Mhic Ruairidh* — as significant corroborative detail, aligning the family with the same naming pattern as the Gairloch Mackays.

With Rebecca's guidance, we found the house in Oighre on a day of brilliant sunshine in June this year. Though indeed now roofless, the Piper's House is a very impressive structure, orientated with its front elevation facing approximately south-east and presenting a solid gable to the prevailing wind. The building whose dry-stone wall construction still stands to eave height is long — over 50 feet long and one room wide — a little under 18 feet across. The internal space is divided into two by a stone partition wall. There is an entrance door towards the lower end of the house and two (or possibly three) windows on the front wall. The house sits prominently in the middle of a shallow valley on an elevated plain, about 250 feet above sea level. It is a very good example

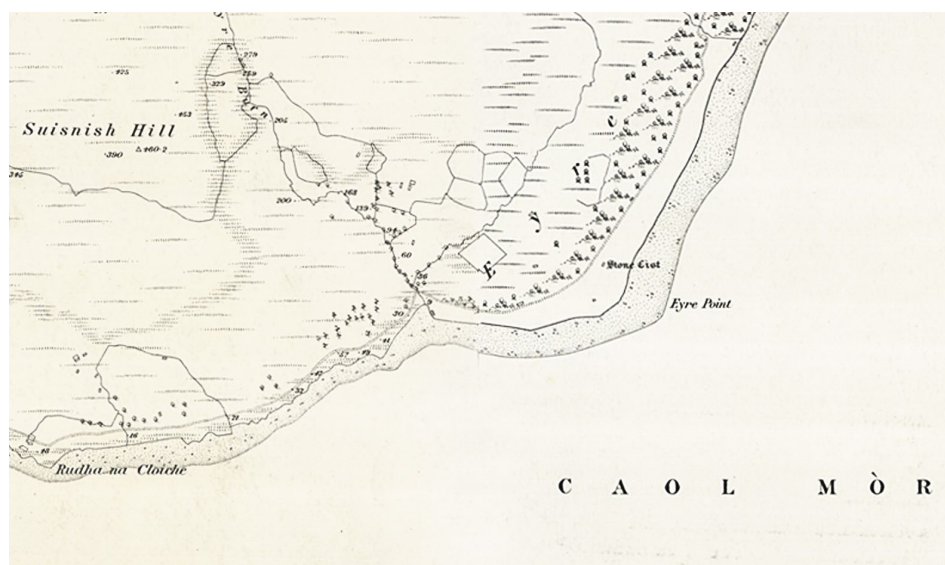
of the building which architectural historians call a 'longhouse' or 'byre-dwelling'.

The 'longhouse' can be defined as a building which combines accommodation for people and cattle, especially cows and their calves, under one roof with intercommunication between the two spaces. Such a building belonged to a cattle economy where cows were kept in the dwelling-house and benefited from the warmth and shelter of the house; they would be foddered with grass, hay and straw, and, with the cows inside, it ensured some milk supply through the winter months when adequate nourishment was in short supply. With the cattle bedded on straw, bracken, heather or turf, a further function of the byre-dwelling was the conservation of their manure to be used on the cultivated ground in spring. The custom of keeping cows within the dwelling-house was a universal practice in Northern Europe, and it is clear from the evidence that the longhouse was the primary form of dwelling throughout Scotland before the agricultural improvements of the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Photo by Decker Forrest



The Piper's House showing the exceptional drystone walling construction.



The township of Oighre as it appeared in 1875. The Piper's House can be seen just above the 'y' of 'Eyre'. Ordnance Survey 6 inch 1st Edition, Sheets 25 and 26. By courtesy of the National Library of Scotland.

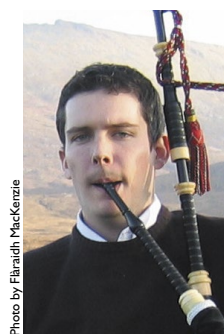
Photo by Decker Forrest



The landscape of Oighre showing the Piper's House in its 'township' setting with buildings and field divisions.



The ancient chapel of St. Moluag in Raasay.



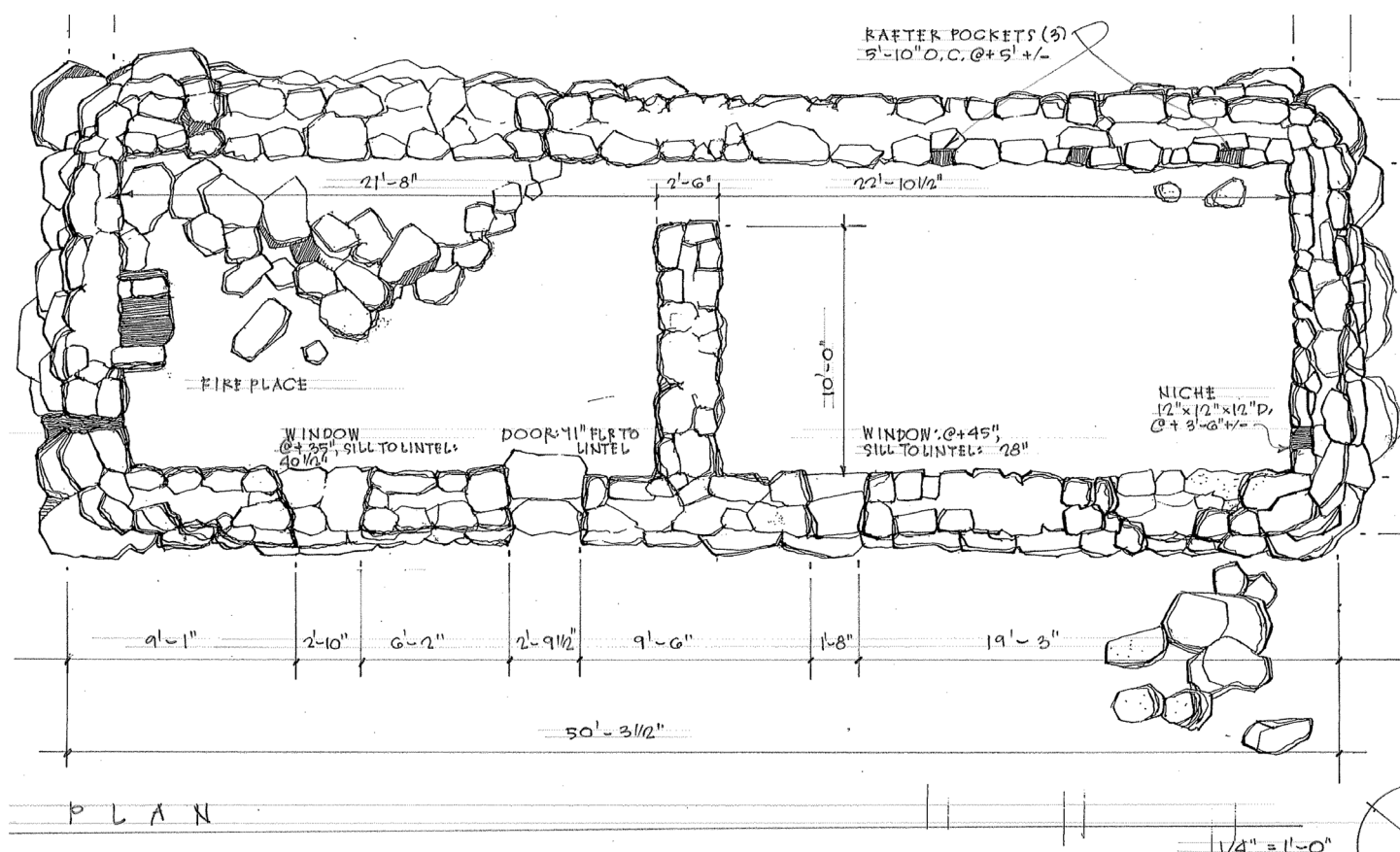
Decker Forrest



Hugh Cheape

As such, it survived into recent times in the Northern and Western Isles and on the northern mainland, and the remains of longhouse structures can be seen in these areas. With its thatched roof, it is sometimes misleadingly referred to as a 'black house' but this term was unknown in the past and leaves us with no impression of the status and function of these buildings.

Local tradition which refers to the house as *Taigh a' Phìobaire* also describes the builder of the house (as we see it today) as Donald Macfarlane MacLeod, born in Rona about 1901. He had been named after the first Free Presbyterian minister in Raasay, Donald Macfarlane, and may have been an elder of the kirk. The house was then used as religious meeting house and was large enough to accommodate a small congregation of local folk for worship or a class for lessons or bible class. He would hold services in the house when the Oighre folk could not get to church. It is assumed that there was an earlier house here which was the dwelling of John Mackay of Raasay and his family. The significance of the structure as we see it, however, is that it occupies the exact 'footprint' of John Mackay's house and incorporates much of the earlier structure. This is therefore a rare and significant survival and still has much to tell about the Piper and his life.



The Piper's House showing 'longhouse' construction with byre (left) and living-space (right). The chimney was added to the byre after this space was turned into a religious meeting-house. The interior partition wall might also have been added at this time. Other features include a drain hole beside the fireplace, roofing timber slots in the wall and collapsed masonry.

Features of an earlier house seem to be embedded in the structure and are evident still. This was originally, as we have described, a longhouse 'byre-dwelling' constructed on a linear plan on a slight slope with the cattle-byre accessed at the door. In this lower end of the house, there is a drain hole at low ground-level beside a fireplace and chimney flue. The fireplace and chimney look as if they have been added at a later date and have changed the function of this space from cattle to human accommodation. This hole in the gable would, speculatively, have been the exit-point of an open gutter or drain running down the length of the byre area and carrying away the urine of the tethered animals. In other circumstances, a drain hole would be an unusual or unexpected feature in a living room and, doubtless, this part of the building would be referred to as *ceann shìos an taighe* ('the lower end of the house'). The living space of room with fireplace, now accessed directly by the door, has probably replaced the earlier living space, now behind the substantial partition wall of stone. There is a tell-tale stone slab and step up to pass into this inner room, a sort of verge which once served to divide the living area from the byre area. This inner room was originally the 'fire-room'

or living space with fireplace. At this date of the late-18th or early-19th centuries, a central hearth or fire in the middle of the room was the norm; this was (and still is) referred to as *ceann shuas an taighe* ('the upper end of the house'). Another small but telling detail, evident in the main room with chimney piece, is that there is a 'winnowing hole' or *toll fhasgnaidh* in the back wall, more or less opposite the main door. There are substantial stone 'footings' in the wall or foundation course of the house and there is clearly a gap at this point. In the earlier phase of the house, this allowed for a through draught across the building and aided the task of sieving or winnowing grain to separate it from stalks and husks.

The Piper's House adjoins an area enclosed by a stone wall. This would have been a kailyard and arable ground for a crop of oats, potatoes and perhaps flax, and might have included a stackyard or *iodhlann*. There is some evidence on the ground for other areas of ploughed and cultivated ground where crops of 'bere' or barley and oats were grown. Cattle, sheep and horses were kept away from growing crops (which were not fenced as we would expect to see them) by being herded on grazing areas. This was the daily task of herdsman and children, just as

Angus Mackay described his father, John, doing while he practiced on his homemade chanter: 'my father used to ... pick up his lesson and play the same on the moor while herding ... on a *feadan seileasdair*' (i.e. on a chanter made of the stalk of an iris). Importantly too, there is evidence for other dwelling-houses and enclosures in the vicinity, but not in a linear formation such as characterises the 'crofting township' of today. These amount to an older form of 'township' which was the primary division of land and essential social grouping. The community of Oighre was a 'joint-tenancy farm', held from and paying rent to MacLeod of Oighre who, as the 'Tacksman', held the land from MacLeod of Raasay.

There is a dearth of written records to explain these features. We know from Census Records (and his own statement of his age) that John Mackay was probably born in 1767 and that he won the Highland Society of London competition in 1792 when he was piper to James Macleod of Raasay. Between then and 1823, he raised a family in Oighre of nine children, one of whom died in infancy. His son Angus wrote a biographical note on his father and family and described a special relationship with the Tacksman, Malcolm MacLeod of Oighre, who had

also taught the young John piping. His status as piper probably ensured his tenancy of house and land in Oighre, as well as some freedom from paying rent, though such advantages had barely outlived the period of traditional clanship.

From one or two sources, we can reconstruct the environment of music and song in the Piper's House where John Mackay and his wife, Margaret Maclean — *Mairearad nighean Aonghais* — nourished a large family and taught their four sons piping. Angus Mackay's own manuscript collection includes *ceòl mòr* and *ceòl beag*, and his later transcript, now labelled the 'Seaforth Manuscript', included music noted, as he described it, from his father's *canntaireachd*. Angus's published *Collection of Ancient Piobaireachd* of 1838 includes Raasay and Skye music. More importantly, the survival of the music manuscript of Eliza Ross, granddaughter of John MacLeod of Raasay and niece of his successor, James MacLeod of Raasay, the patrons of John Mackay, gives us a

near unique insight into music-making in the 'big house' of Raasay around the time of Angus Mackay's birth in 1812. The so-called 'Lady D'Oyly Manuscript', taking its title from Eliza Ross's married name, includes song airs, dance tunes and six pieces of *piobaireachd*. We know that the *ceòl mòr* and some of the *ceòl beag* and dance tunes drew on the piping of John Mackay of Oighre and take us to music-making in the Piper's House of Raasay. ●

[To be continued in the next issue of Piping Today]

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

We are extremely grateful to Rebecca Mackay, Osgaig, Island of Raasay, for all the guidance and information given freely to us. We have also benefited from the researches of Dr Keith Sanger in the public archives, particularly in Census Records and Sheriff Court Papers. We are grateful to him for making this research available to us. We are

indebted to John A Forrest, San Diego, who provided the architectural renderings after a visit to the site in October 2010.

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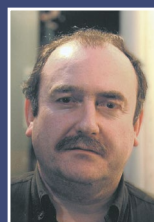
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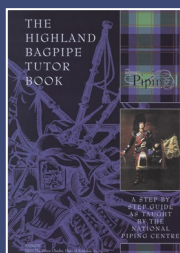
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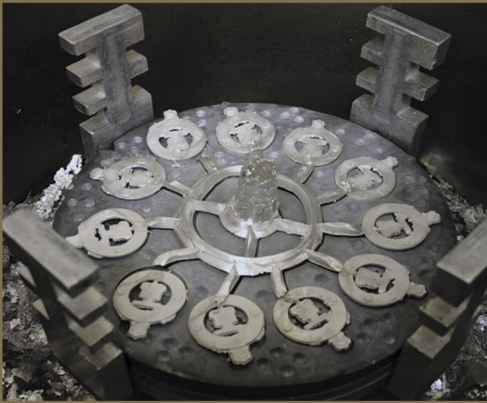
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It's all about the music

BILL LIVINGSTONE

AT 68, Bill Livingstone has retired from competitive piping, both as a consummate soloist and as one of the world's most successful pipe majors.

At the core of his lifelong and continuing involvement with piping, is the motivation, allure and impetus of his passion for the music. And that is unabated.

Bill won his first Highland Society of London Gold Medal at the Northern Meeting in 1977. Two years later, he won his second gold medal, and in 1981, he won the Clasp at the Northern Meeting.

In 1982, he established the 78th Fraser Highlanders Pipe Band from what was left of the General Motors Pipe Band after the car-maker cancelled its sponsorship and, just five years later, took it to the very top as the first non-Scottish band to win the grade 1 title at the World Pipe Band Championships. The band's album, *Live In Ireland*, released that same year, would have a radical influence on pipe band performance around the world.

Over the years, Bill has continued to amass a glittering array of top-level professional solo piping awards and pipe band honours. But there has always been more to it than the trophy cabinet.

In 2005, he marked his retirement from top level solo competition with the release of his reflective, four-album set of *A Piobaireachd Diary* recordings: "I believe recordings can have a profound influence," he said at the time... "inspire people, and give people a love for the thing. That's what happened to me."

Piobaireachd continues to be his first musical passion. "I'm well into recordings for another two or probably three volumes of the *Piobaireachd Diary*," he said. "I'd like to bring out another two, three, or possibly four volumes."

It is for piobaireachd that Bill believes the Great Highland Bagpipe came into being. He explained: "The intervals and the tonality of the scale are so perfectly suited to it... the strange pentatonic scales and mixolydian mode.

"The long, sustained notes of piobaireachd and the complex looping of the original me-

'At the very top of the tree, there are some great pipers who really, really 'get' it, but it's a thin layer'



Photo: John Savin @ designfolk.com

Bill in George Square, Glasgow with the 78th Fraser Highlanders at Piping Live! 2010.

lodic statement in the ground and all of the variations... I just think it's incredibly beautiful, unique music.

"But," he said, "I'm not sure what it is that gives a piper the taste for piobaireachd.

"A musician either responds to a kind of music, or she or he doesn't. It almost seems as though you have to be hard-wired to really 'get' what piobaireachd is all about. I don't see a whole lot of pipers being really passionate about trying to understand what it's really about these days. Many people, good pipers, are playing piobaireachd just because they think they can get a prize in the piobaireachd competitions. At the very top of the tree, there are some great pipers who really, really 'get' it, but it's a thin layer."

His *A Piobaireachd Diary* albums set out to share his delight and fascination with those whose interest can be ignited. "I've had a lot of feedback from folk who have the series and, interestingly, many people asked for more conversation and chat about the tunes.

"I'd been a little self-conscious about doing that," he said. "I didn't want to be seen to be lecturing people about the way these tunes came about and how they ended up in the form they're in... that was never the intention and that's why they're called a 'diary'. I was trying to get across that every piobaireachd player travels a musical trajectory, and trying to describe how tunes came into my repertoire and arrived at the state in which they find themselves now.

"So I'm probably going to do a bit more of that, and with much the same approach: here's how I'm playing this stuff, here's how that came about, here are the influences that have worked their way into my head and — whether you agree, disagree, like it or dislike it — that's how it came to be."

He bowed out as pipe major of the 78ths after the Worlds in August and the following month, Bill spent a laid-back week and a half in Italy, happily immersed in piobaireachd with Italy's leading piper and piping instructor, Alberto Massi.

"He's one of those rare people who have a complete passion for the music and tries so hard to understand what makes it unique and where the subtleties are," he said.

"Alberto approaches piobaireachd as pure music, he plays it for the sake of making music without being concerned at all about entering a contest and winning. We have struck up an amazing friendship. It's always a wonderful time

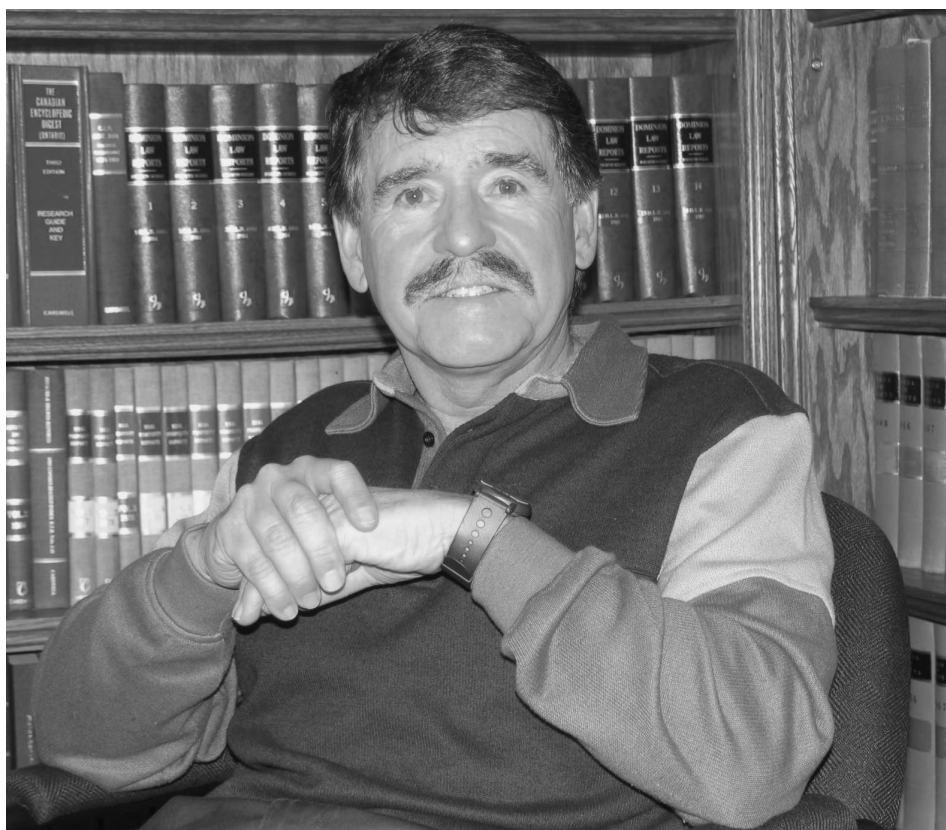


Photo: Mike Paterson

'I am concerned about what's not happening in pipe bands... the top bands in the world have reached a point of perfection that makes it very hard, really, to tell them apart'

we have together."

Back home in Whitby, Ontario, Bill is happy to step back from the demands and responsibilities of pipe majorship.

He admitted: "I'm lucky. I can still play and I've had this freakishly long career and that, in and of itself, is as good a reason as any to get out of the way. I didn't want to be that guy about whom people say, 'God almighty, is he never going to disappear?'"

"At the moment, I'm quite happy not to have any serious obligations in front of me ...no deadlines, no being away every single Sunday to band practice."

But it seems as though Bill would be pleased if, under the leadership of new pipe major Doug MacRae, the 78ths decide to take a few musical risks.

"I am concerned about what's not happening in pipe bands," he said. "The top bands in the world have reached a point of perfection that

makes it very hard, really, to tell them apart. They have wonderful tone, terrific tuning, good integration and are generally error-free. So what are we doing? We're on a plateau where there's this single-minded determination to be absolutely precise at any and all costs and eliminate any risk that might be involved in the material we're going to play... so the opportunity for creativity and expansion of the way a pipe band can actually work is really being compromised.

"A lot of it derives from the tyranny of the World Pipe Band Championships. That may sound hypocritical coming from someone who's taken his band to the Worlds 27 years in a row. But I wasn't doing it blindly. I see the constant narrowing now of material and how it's played and the formulaic copying of what worked for somebody else — instead of some real, independent thinking. There's hope from Brittany but that's because they have a whole different approach to things.

"There's hope in, for example, the explorations of the Toronto Police Pipe Band. They've decided to pursue their own vision regardless of the consequences and I wholeheartedly endorse that whole way of thinking. That's not to be confused with an endorsement of their particular material; that's another issue.

"Taking the whole thing by the scruff of the neck and giving it a good shake and setting out to make it better, more fun, more interesting, more musically attractive to a broad audience... it's important to be thinking about these things."

Bill is clear in identifying the critical baseline: "It's about playing inventive, creative, broadly appealing music, always having respect for the tonality of the instrument and the integrity of the music — which means it must come from some kind of Celtic, West Highland, Irish root. It has to be able to be played on a bagpipe or violin... it has to have that kind of authenticity. Within those limits, the possibilities are really endless.

"We need to see that kind of material being played in a concert format. The problem is that, unless you win a world championship, or come close to it, nobody's going to come to your concert because of the stupid environment pipe bands thrive in."

He is referring to the hierarchy of events and performance opportunities that are crowned by

participation in the World Pipe Band Championships.

"If you want to consider an analogy," he said, "it's like somebody saying 'Let's get the best 10 string quartets in the world and invite them to play in Glasgow in August, outdoors, in driving rain and wind, and let's have the audience stand yards away so nobody can get a clear hearing or view of what's going on'. That's the preposterous nature of what we do. It's self-defeating."

It is a situation that calls for some fresh gusts of creativity.

"One of the essential characteristics of a great pipe major is that there's some kind of creative juice flowing," he said, "and, yes, there are people with some good creative ideas and composers of good tunes... but, in terms of raw creativity, it's time to knock the walls down and start thinking in a completely different way.

"However, nobody wants to do that," said Bill. "They've devoted all this time and energy to the single-minded pursuit of the World Pipe Band Championships and they won't compromise any chances they have there by doing something risky. To see the consequences of taking the system on head-on, all you have to do is look at the fate that befell the Toronto Police Pipe Band at the Cowal Highland Gathering this year."

They finished in last place and as Bill explained: "It's not too different from what

happened to the 78th Frasers back, I think, in 1994, when we walked into the circle playing a waulking song. We had recognised the rules... we had compromised what we were doing to meet the rule that requires you to play two very long, slow, stupid three-pace rolls... and then we marched on in this kind of stately, French Foreign Legion kind of march. I thought it was wonderful.

"Then some guy with a swagger stick under his arm came to me before the march-past and said, 'Pipe major, you'll be pleased to know your band has not been disqualified.' Not disqualified? No, they did something much more punitive: they buried us.

"Disqualification would have been very controversial. Telling us that our material was rubbish protected them from that, and that's what we're facing. The *raison d'être* for a lot of pipe bands is simply to be in that arena.

"So they're getting more and more refined at playing together on perfectly tuned instruments and, at some point, that gets pretty stagnant."

Moreover, it is past time, Bill believes, for pipe bands to shake off the militaristic accessories that continue to characterise their appearance and presentation.

"What the modern pipe band does now has literally nothing to do with the military," he said. "To see how deeply rooted we are in that history, you just have to consider the mock military trappings that adhere to all pipe bands. I can't think of a less comfortable way to play a physically demanding, difficult instrument than to put on 20 pounds of wool. What could be worse?"

For Bill, it is the music that matters... it always comes back to that.

"I very clearly remember being home on a visit while I was still in law school. My wife Lillian and I were at my parents' home, probably for Christmas, and my father, who was a good light music piper, had just got these two *Pibroch* albums — vinyl recordings on the Waverley label that had been put out by the Piobaireachd Society. They were of John MacLellan and John D. Burgess, two of the day's great piobaireachd exponents, playing some of the classic piobaireachd repertoire: the *Lament for the Viscount of Dundee*, *The Battle of the Pass of Crieff*, the *Old Men of the Shells*, *Black Donald's March*...

"I listened and listened and listened, and I was absolutely transported by it; I haven't been away from it since." ●



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PIPER

Youngstars

Keith Christie



Q. Where are you from and how old are you?
I'm from Dundee, and I'm 18 years-old.

Q. How did you get into piping and when?
My piping career began when I was 10 years old. My tutor Ian Duncan walked into the classroom to find out if any of us wanted to learn the chanter. I was dared by a friend to put up my hand and that was it; Ian played a couple of wee tunes to show us what it was all about and I loved it.

Q. What pipe band do you play with?
I have just left the Tayside Police pipe band, I currently play for Lothian & Borders police pipe band.

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

I currently spend most of my time in/around music as I'm studying Traditional Music at The Music Box, at Stevenson College in Edinburgh. My second instrument is voice/Scots singing.

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

I don't like to think of my piping as strong or weak points; I just believe that I am improving all the time and everything should be improved upon.

Q. What do you want to achieve in piping?
Just to play to highest possible standard that I can play at.

Q. What is your favourite pipe tune?
I don't have a favorite tune but I love playing the "Annihilator Suite" because it's "Gallus".

Q. Have you written any tunes?
I have written a few tunes but nothing that great.

Q. What make of pipes do you play, and are they set up with sheepskin and cane or synthetic?
I play 1940's R.G Hardie's with a sheepskin bag, a cane bass and White Henderson tenor drone reeds.

Q. What is the best trip or playing experience you have had with the NYPBoS?
My favorite trip with the youth band was Germany in 2009. I lost suitcase and had to go shopping but you can't buy a kilt from the local sports shop.

→ continued on page 28

Youngstars

It's been a quiet few months for The National Youth Pipe Band of Scotland as both development and senior bands took a small break from performance duties to focus on revamping their concert repertoires.

At the beginning of September, members of the senior band once again took part in a recording studio workshop designed to improve their knowledge and skills on working in this type of environment. The band was fortunate enough to again have access to Castle-sound Studios, who are regarded as one of Scotland's premier studios. Owner and sound engineer Stuart Hamilton has given the guys a fantastic insight into different ways of recording the band over the duration of both workshops. I must say a special thank you to Finlay MacDonald for assisting the band during both workshops. His experience in this environment was evident as he gave the guys many useful tips during the two days.

On September 19, a team of 20 pipers travelled by train down to London to perform at a memorial service for world-acclaimed fashion designer Alexander McQueen. For the occasion the band had tailor-made uniforms to wear, which included a feather bonnet designed by Philip Treacy, who has previously designed hats for celebrities such as Lady Gaga and Sarah Jessica Parker as well as for blockbuster films such as Harry Potter.

Within hours of the event, photos and news articles featuring the band were seen in news media all around the world. It was fantastic exposure and great experience for our members as it was possibly one of the most high-profile events that the band has been involved in. Well done to all the pipers who took part for performing to a high standard and looking first class in what was a memorable tribute to the designer.

Although the band has been pretty quiet over the past few months, some of our members have been busy in various junior solo piping competitions.

At the recent Festival of Juvenile Solo Piping, held by the Caledonian Piping Club in Stevenston, Ayrshire, eight members of the NYPBoS were successful in getting in the prize list. Well done to Seamus O'Baoighill, Iain Crawford, Lucy Ferguson, Ross Miller, James Harper, Aimee Craig, Ciaran Sinclair and Caitlin MacDonald who all performed exceptionally well at this competition.

Elsewhere, piper Andrew Gray was the winner of the Falkirk Banner, a competition organised by the Gordon Duncan Memorial Trust which put together four of Scotland's best young pipers. This was a prestigious event commemorating the previous tradition of the Falkirk Tryst competition which began in 1781. Other NYPBoS members competing in Falkirk were Keith Christie and Callum Moffat. Well done guys!



All Photos: Andrea Boyd

Solo Achievements, Celtic C

October also saw the annual World Solo Drumming Championships take place at Glasgow Caledonia University. Most of the drummers from the NYPBoS competed in this very tough competition and all represented themselves very well.

Some stand-out achievements on the day included Grant Cassidy, who won his fifth consecutive World title and his second in Juvenile Section

2, Drum Sergeant Steven Shedden, who finished second in the Juvenile Section 3 and Grant Edwards, who was fourth in the same competition. In the adults section, Chris McNicholl had a fantastic day, playing through the heats and semi-finals to make the final which is geared as the main event. He put in two solid performances to finish in 8th place overall.



by **ALISDAIR McLAREN**
DIRECTOR, NATIONAL YOUTH PIPE BAND OF SCOTLAND

Youngstars



All Photos: Andrea Boyd



Pipe major Emma Buchan wearing a feather bonnet designed by Philip Treacy for the memorial service of fashion designer Alexander McQueen.



Members of the NYPBoS pictured with Philip Treacy.



The NYPBoS rehearsing at Air Studios in London

Connections and Switzerland

The next few months look like a busy period for the band as both senior and development bands will be working on a new concert repertoire to be released in 2011.

In January, the senior band will be performing at Celtic Connections alongside the grade 1 Fife Constabulary Pipe Band at the annual concert. It should be a fantastic event so please get your tickets and

come along and support both bands. On January 26, the band will be flying out to Zurich, Switzerland, where we have been invited to take part in the 23rd Mercedes-CSI in Zurich performing in a traditional British Showcase.

As this will be the last Youngstars for 2010, I'd like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. ●

Youngstars

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

Meeting loads of great young pipers from across the UK/Scotland.

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

I don't really know, hopefully good things.

Q. What is the secret of your success?

There is no secret, just hard practice.

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

I don't have an ideal uniform as I like the number of different kilts on stage.

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

Just keep going even on the dark days of playing your pipes.

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

Yes, don't eat too much and if it's wet don't try to jump any puddles'.



Photo: John Stavin @ designfolk.com

Keith pictured playing with the NYPBoS performing their *Dragon's Lair* concert in Perth earlier this year.

Q. Who is your pipe idol?

I don't really have a piping idol as I like to listen/play in different styles to improve my overall piping.

Q. What are your interests outside of pipe bands?

I don't really have any other interest as I'm constantly involved in music.

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

I would like to become a piping tutor but if that does work out then I would like to be a policeman.

Q. What other music do you like?

I like all kinds of music but I mostly love Drum and Bass.

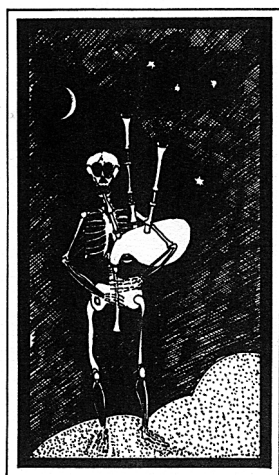
Q. Who are your heroes?

Sir Norman Wisdom, as he was the best at slap-stick comedy.

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

I used to be, I played football for five years in the local Sunday league team. I am a season ticket holder for Aberdeen Football Club. ●

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Another Canadian takes gold

ANDREW HAYES

THE *Lament for Viscount Dundee* is one of the great familiar classics of the piobaireachd repertoire — settings of it are recorded in the earliest sources — and it was the tune with which Canadian piper Andrew Hayes won the 2010 Highland Society of London Gold Medal at the Northern Meeting in Inverness.

It was the third time he had performed the tune for Gold Medal contention in two years.

In 2009, at the Argyllshire Gathering in Oban, he placed fifth with it. At this year's Argyllshire Gathering, it was again the tune that came up for him.

So it was a surprise to be asked to play it yet again at the Northern Meeting.

He explained: "I think there's been a kind of convention that you wouldn't be asked to play the same tune at both events. But the way it worked at Inverness this year was that they drew the tunes randomly from each player's list... I think they did that because it was a year in which they asked us to submit eight tunes of our own choice.

"I got to play a tune I've played for a very long time and I knew exactly what I wanted to do with it. I immediately felt comfortable."

Andrew was pleased with the draw: "I was in the mix in a particularly strong area of the draw. The nature of our competition is that you're compared with others and it makes the comparison a bit easier, in my view, if you're among the strong contenders. Then, obviously, there was an advantage to playing later in the day because you get the march, strathspey and reel out of the way in the morning and can focus solely on the Gold Medal in the afternoon."

Although his performance at the Argyllshire Gathering a week before had not got him into the prize list, Andrew felt happy enough with it. "I've been competing long enough to have become quite used to not being in the prize list: Oban wasn't a particular disappointment," he said. "I felt I'd played well.

"I've played tunes I've been extremely happy with and not made the prize lists; other times, even in 2008 at Oban when I came second,

'At the Glenfiddich, being in the back with the senior guys and seeing how they approach things was very interesting... there's a lot more discussion, calmness and camaraderie'



Photo: Derek Maxwell

I've felt I could have played better but I got into the prize list nonetheless... that's just the way it goes."

The judges — Bill Livingstone, John MacDougall and Iain MacFadyen — came to their decisions and the results were announced. "Initially it's a shock; it's surreal," said Andrew Hayes.

"It doesn't really sink in for a while. It was hard to believe that a goal I'd been after for so long had finally come to fruition and, inevitably,

'I played on, partly in a state of shock, and partly in the hope that something might happen. The bass drone suddenly popped back in tune'

you think about the people who got you there. My father, who passed away in 2005, was immediately on my mind, as was Scott MacAulay, who's no longer with us, and the contributions to my piping that Bill Livingstone and Murray Henderson have made."

His father Pat, pipe major of the Ottawa Police Pipe Band, started him on the pipes in 1985 as an eight year-old learner with the band — and Andrew now leads their grade 3 competition corps. "We've never been to the World Pipe Band Championships but we're growing, attracting new players every year and have a good, stable base of talent," he said.

"Through good tuition, my dad built what was a very small band into a strong grade 3 band. It won the North American grade 4 championship in 1994 and was second in grade 3 in 2004. It's a wonderful group of pipers and drummers, and we now have the grade 3 competition band, a grade 5 band and a street band. It's incredibly satisfying for me to be involved with because I see people achieving their potential, year-to-year. We're a public relations vehicle for the police force and we support functions from funerals or memorial services to swearings-in and medal award ceremonies. We compete primarily in Ontario but we have a Highland dance group and do concerts and tattoos. We've been to Cleveland, Bermuda, and New York, including a spot at Carnegie Hall as part of the 2003 9/11 memorial programme."

Recognising his son's potential, Pat took him for tuition to Scott MacAulay who then was at his competitive peak and living in Ottawa. It was Scott who introduced the 12 year-old Andrew to piobaireachd. After Scott moved to the College of Piping and Celtic Performing Arts

in Prince Edward Island, Andrew took summer breaks there. Iain Speirs — who was at the time making his mark on the competitions circuit in Scotland — was also spending time at the College. "I cherish some wonderful memories from those trips to P.E.I., and particularly from being around Scott and Iain," said Andrew.

Pat then began driving his son once a month to Whitby — a four-hour journey each way from Ottawa — to study piobaireachd with Bill Livingstone. It was from Bill, one of Can-

ada's most distinguished all-round pipers, that Andrew got *The Lament for Viscount Dundee*. "That was in the early 1990s," he said. "It's a tune Bill's had some strong ideas about and one he'd played for a very long time. It became a tune I played around the games.

"It's an attractive, powerfully evocative lament and the first variation, a strongly emotional passage, sets up the rest of the tune. The ground is very musical with a lot of turns in it that make it interesting all the way through.

"I played it on and off during the 1990s and then my focus turned to Scotland and the set tunes for Oban and Inverness. Then, in 2009, it was set for the Gold Medal: it was a tune I wanted to pick up again."

Back home in Canada, meanwhile, Andrew was building up a formidable string of achievements, including the Canadian Gold Medal for piobaireachd in 2003 and winning three bars, three years in a row: 2006, 2007 and 2008. He also put in some time with grade 1 pipe bands, playing with the Toronto Police Pipe Band from 2003-2006, and the 78th Fraser Highlanders in Whitby, Ontario in 2007 and 2008 — a chance to work again with his solo mentor, Bill Livingstone, before he retired.

"It was wonderful to spend that time with Bill," he said. "He has left the 78ths in strong shape for the future."

It also gave him six opportunities to play in the World Pipe Band Championships, adding to the experience he was getting year by year on the Scottish Highland games circuit.

"The games are great," he said. "They give you experiences you'll never forget and you play in all sorts of conditions, you need results from the games to get a track record that will

get you into the medal contests. It was freezing in Drumnadrochit this past year. Cowal, even on a nice day, is cold in the wind. Games parks are invariably noisy, and there can be some unexpected distractions.

"I remember a games near Loch Ness with Willie MacDonald from Benbecula judging. The sheep dog demonstration was underway when Andy Rogers began playing his piobaireachd. The sheep gathered around Andy, and then the dogs were trying to herd them. It was hilarious. Things like that put it all into perspective.

"One time at Birnam, I was playing *The Vaunting* with Tom Speirs and Donald MacPherson on the bench. About halfway through, my bass drone went out of tune — as far out as I can imagine a bass drone being. I played on, partly in a state of shock, and partly in the hope that something might happen. The bass drone suddenly popped back in tune. I ended up placing second, which totally surprised me. Tom Speirs came up to me and asked if I knew what had happened. He told me Donald saw a wasp climb into my bass drone and he'd seen it come out so they hadn't penalised me. It's a good thing I didn't know — I'm phobic about wasps."

In Scotland, Andrew also took opportunities to have tuition with Murray Henderson in Kirriemuir. "I'd work with tape recordings from Murray, then I'd arrive in Scotland five or six days before Oban and Murray would give me two sessions before the Argyllshire Gathering. It was great to get some final pointers. He was very generous with his time. Also, I have fond memories of some years when Greg Wilson was staying with Murray and, one year, Donald Bain was there from New Zealand as well. It was an awesome experience to have the opportunity to play tunes for Donald Bain and to get his perspectives on the musical presentation of some of the classics like the *Lament for Patrick Og MacCrimmon*.

"I've been to Bill for tunes as recently as 2008. Murray stopped teaching me in 2003. I'm still applying the lessons they gave me and the foundations they laid in terms of my piobaireachd playing."

His Gold Medal win took Andrew back to Scotland in October for the Glenfiddich Piping Championship, sponsored and organised by whisky-makers William Grant and Sons Limited, at Blair Castle. "It was an amazing time," he said. "It's a superb event and I see



Photo: Derek Maxwell

why everyone who's been there works so hard to get back there the next year.

"As a Gold Medal competitor, you're not in the tuning area when the senior guys are there. At the Glenfiddich, being in the back with them and seeing how they approach things was very interesting, and a lot different, frankly. There's a lot more discussion, calmness, camaraderie. Jack Lee and Bruce Gandy, fellow Canadians I've seen around the games and have come to know, were tremendously encouraging... but all the players were helpful and friendly. Liz Maxwell (the event's organiser for William Grant & Sons) does a fantastic job, taking care of the details and making the players feel as at ease as possible."

At the Glenfiddich, Andrew placed fourth in the piobaireachd contest with *Lachlan MacNeill Campbell of Kintarbet's Fancy*. "It was another tune I got from Bill Livingstone," he said. "Its first variation builds off the last two bars of the ground and continues that rhythmic pattern all the way through, rather like the *Lament for the Earl of Antrim*. One of the very interesting things about the Glenfiddich is that you get to hear some of the beautiful, less frequently played tunes."

Opportunities to hear and play wider varieties of music come too with the invitation-al competitions to which the Gold Medal win opens the door. "I've accepted an invitation to play at the Donald MacLeod Memorial Piping Competition in Stornoway in April, and I'll be back to the Dan Reid Memorial in San Francisco," he said. "I like these events that challenge you with tunes you might not otherwise learn. The Donald MacLeod requires players to submit tunes from Donald's compositions in piobaireachd and ceol beag; and the Dan Reid sets its own lists for light music and piobaireachd."

Having the Gold Medal changes the equations of competing and takes some stress out of it, according to Andrew. "I don't feel the pressure, for example, of having to qualify for a spot in the Gold Medal any more and that is a huge weight off my mind."

"The difficulty of even getting into the Gold Medal is formidable, once winners of the other Gold Medal have taken their places, then the previous year's prize winners and you need at least a Competing Pipers Association 'A-' rating to stand a chance of being considered."

"Pipers need to have made a strong showing

Andrew's Pipe Set-up

Chanter: David Niall (c. 1987)

Chanter Reed: Colin MacLellan

Drone Reeds:

Tenor Reeds, Eezedrone

Bass Reed, Crozier

Pipe Bag: Ross

Pipes: David Niall

during the year, but that still doesn't guarantee a place in the Gold Medal. From my experience in 2005 when I didn't make it in, I'll admit to having had become a touch neurotic about whether or not I'd get a spot and obsessing over it each year — from October, when there's nothing more I could do about it, until March when I'd finally find out that I was back in. It's a huge weight off my mind and I'm able to think about the senior events which will provide other interesting challenges.

"The Silver Medal competitions are even more daunting to get into these days," added Andrew. "There are probably around 100 players who have a shot at getting into the Silver Medal. Then you can look at the Silver Medal tunes set by the Piobaireachd Society, and it's apparent that all you need sometimes is for your bagpipe to stay in tune for eight or nine minutes and have a good run."

"That makes it all the more challenging for the greater players to actually win. That said, the cream always rises to the top so, over the course of time, they will. The Silver Medal is a tough place to be. I had the good fortune of being in the Silver Medal for only five years, not longer."

"Faye Henderson, Murray's daughter, went from being in the Silver Medal last year to being on the reserve list for the Gold Medal this year, then winning at Oban. I listened to as many of the performances at Oban as I could and heard some wonderful tunes. I heard Faye's tune. It was a fabulous performance and a deserved win. I heard Chris Armstrong, and Fiona Manson who were also in the prize list and, as you'd expect, particularly in a year where people are able to submit eight tunes of their own choice,

the performances were very, very good... very musical, very confident.

"I think it's intentional that, historically, the Silver Medal has had some challenging but smaller tunes and the Gold Medal lists have some bigger tunes. Finally, the tunes set by the Piobaireachd Society for the senior events present the greatest challenge they can put to you."

"So it's been a lot of fun thinking about which tunes I might be able to do a good job with, on a musical level, for next year. I'll be the first to admit that, as a competitor for the Gold Medal, I've often looked at the list and asked myself which tunes I could best hope to play perfectly in the technical sense as opposed to which tunes I could draw the most music from."

"This past year, with eight tunes of your own choice, I was able to choose tunes which suited me from both musical and technical points of view and maybe I learned a lesson from that because, obviously, my approach hadn't worked in the past."

"Right now," said Andrew, "I'm looking forward to playing in the Clasp at the Northern Meeting. That's one of the challenges that's at the forefront of my mind. Over the years you've had around 90 Gold Medal winners at Inverness and, of those 90, there are around 35 who have won the Clasp."

"The opportunity to be on that stage, knowing what it means historically is incredible."

As a lawyer with Canada's Auditor General, Sheila Fraser, Andrew has reasonably regular hours and opportunities to get away to compete.

"I work with great people who are very flexible and the senior general counsel — who emigrated from Scotland — is very supportive of my piping," he said.

For most of the year, he practises for an hour and more, five or six evenings a week.

"I get home from work, have some time with my wife, Katherine, and our two daughters: Megan and Rachel. They're three-and-a-half and five so they get to bed at a reasonable hour — and, in general, it's about 9.30pm when I get down to practise."

For now, following a year to remember, there's a short break, and a little more time for Andrew to spend with his family. However he will be back into his regular practice regime by mid-February... five or six days a week.

"It's what it takes at this level." ●

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Helping the tenor flourish

Tyler Fry

TYLER FRY. The name is now synonymous with tenor drumming around the world and the man behind the name is arguably one of the most energetic personalities in the pipe band scene. With his own business, hundreds of students around the world and even a tribute song dedicated to him on YouTube, Tyler has had a busy time of it over the last 19 years and he shows no signs of slowing down.

Growing up in Kincardine, Ontario, in the south east of Canada, Tyler wanted to be a tenor drummer from a very young age. When he was a boy, bass drummers were still flourishing their sticks and Tyler would often be seen imitating them with a toy drum which he would wear around his neck like a bass drum.

He said: "I had a pair of tenor sticks almost my entire life and got my first real tenor beaters at three-years-old from my grandfather, who imported a pair from Scotland. I had followed my local pipe band, the Kincardine Scottish Pipe Band, almost since I was born. They parade up the main street every Saturday night and I used to sit on my dad's shoulders with my toy drum and play along. My grandma put a couple of pom-poms on strings on the end of sticks and I used to twirl them around while I was on my dad's shoulders watching the band."

It wasn't until Tyler was 11 that he signed up with Kincardine Pipe Band for lessons. The band had been experiencing declining numbers and advertised in the local paper that they were offering snare drumming tuition. Tyler showed up to the band for lessons and told them he wanted to be a tenor drummer.

"They told me indirectly that they didn't have much use for a tenor drummer but that I could play snare," he said. "I still wanted to be a tenor drummer but studied snare drumming with the band for two years. At the same time I was secretly



Tyler performs at the 2008 Mastery of Scottish Arts Concert at Benaroya Hall in Seattle

Photo: Celtic Arts Foundation



watching videos of Maxville from 1988, which was the only access I had to bands from Scotland and around the world. The video really inspired me as I saw people like Haggis MacLeod and Ian Sinclair on tenor and Chris Ross on bass doing their thing and I was secretly learning by watching those guys. Having access to this recording was good as tenor drumming was scarce in Canada and North America in general and these guys were doing things that I had never seen before. It was then that I decided that even though I was enjoying the snare, I really wanted to be a tenor drummer."

In 1995, Tyler joined the Milton Optimist Juvenile Pipe Band as a snare drummer under the instruction of Doug Stronach. At the United States Championships in the same year, Tyler was talked into signing up for the tenor drumming event by Blair and Graham Brown, who were also in the Milton Optimist corps.

"I ended up winning the 1995 United States Tenor Championships," he said. "Then, in the middle of the season, the 78th Fraser Highlanders asked me if I would be willing to join the band as a tenor drummer."

For a short while, Tyler was playing

snare with Milton Optimist and playing tenor with the 78th Frasers but didn't start competing with the 78ths until the following season.

He then stayed with the 78th Frasers all the way until joining the House of Edgar Shotts and Dykehead Pipe Band in 2004.

His business acumen dates back as far as his teenage years.

When Tyler was 13, and still with Milton Optimist, he had to devise a project as part of his eighth grade home economics studies. He decided to do some research on how tenor drum beaters were put together and spent some time creating his own.

"I made my own blue fur tenor drum beaters by using a big ball of hockey tape as a core and covered it with blue felt," he explained. "I'd been experimenting with making tenor beaters for myself for a while and I had started with the pair that my grandpa had given me when I was three. I regret it now but I remember cutting the beaters and replacing the heads as I wanted to make something that sounded better on the drum. I cut the stick down, placed a tennis ball on the end of the stick, covered it with a sock and then put some little crocheted covers on them."

Coming from a small town where almost everyone worked for the local power plant, Tyler wanted to do something different. "There's a mentality in Kincardine that you naturally just work for someone else but ever since I was a boy I always had the urge to work for myself.

"After experimenting with making sticks I first used a pair of tenor beaters that I had made when I was playing with the 78th Frasers in competition in 1996. After that, people started asking me to make sticks for them and by the time I was in high school I had already established the TyFry business. I continued to make sticks all through college and then on the weekends I would get the orders out to customers."

As well as making tenor sticks, Tyler had decided at a young age that he wanted to be a teacher. After high school he gained a degree in geography and went on to teach the subject to 13 and 14-year-olds at St Thomas Episcopal School in Texas, as well as teaching tenor drumming at the school.

"I love teaching more than you could ever imagine and I loved teaching that



age group as we had so much fun in class. It's a stage where you can have a lot of impact on kids' learning and I would love to go back to that but at the moment I have so many projects and ideas on the go that I couldn't balance the two. There was a period of time where I was teaching geography Monday to Friday, hopping on a flight to teach drumming somewhere over the weekend and then would be back in class teaching on Monday morning.

"You would never know that when I walked into that class on Monday with those kids that I had just come off a long flight in a different time zone but I just realised that it wasn't a sustainable lifestyle and there was only so much of that that I could do. I still have the honour of working with the kids at St Thomas teaching tenor but I hope to one day go back to teaching geography as well."

Tyler taught his first workshop in 1996 — at the age of just 13 — and soon after was asked to take classes at the 78th Fraser Highlanders Celfest.

"You can imagine what it was like — a bunch of adults who have been playing all their lives walk in to see me, a kid, there ready to teach them a thing or two about tenor drumming."

Then in 1998, Tyler was invited to teach at the prestigious Mastery of Scottish Arts School in Seattle. He was only 16 but was teaching alongside such names as Roddy MacLeod MBE, Ian MacLellan BEM, Bill Livingstone, Jim Kilpatrick, Craig 'Hoss' Colquhoun, Mike Cusack and John Fisher.

Tyler then branched into the United States, teaching during his spring holidays and then got involved in tutoring in Europe.

"I taught at the German Summer School in 2001 which would have been my first European teaching gig but was also teaching at the Scandinavian School in Denmark. A few years later I attended the Back to Basics school in Scotland and from there the invites to teach in Australia and New Zealand have come more recently. Teaching was definitely my passion all those years ago when I started and it still is today. It started off as a local thing and has blown up to something much bigger than I ever anticipated."

Getting the chance to visit many countries each year, you'd expect that Tyler would relish the chance to jet off to a sunny holiday resort, but he loves being in Scotland.

"People complain about the rain and how cold it is but I love being in Scotland and teach-

Photo: Ryan MacDonald Photography

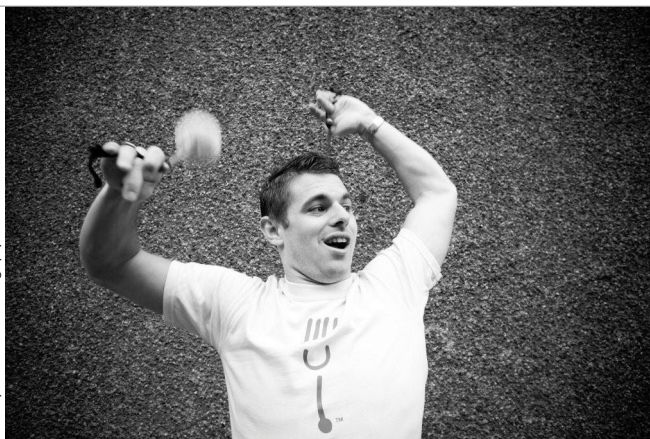
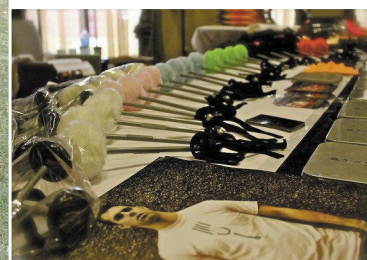


Photo: Libby O'Brien



ing in Scotland. It's the birthplace of everything I do and I have a huge respect for what Scotland has done for pipe bands."

After recent trips 'down under', he has had his eyes opened to what is happening on the other side of the world from the birthplace of pipe bands.

He explained: "Without a doubt my favourite countries in the world are Australia and New Zealand. There is so much in common with the culture that I grew up in in Canada, which is ironic considering they're countries on opposite sides of the world. They have the best aspects of Scotland and the best parts of Canada and as far as I'm concerned, Australia and New Zealand have the best of both worlds with regards to the climate.

"The best thing for me is the people I have met as they are the most passionate tenor drummers that I know. I think people have finally seen the potential of what tenor drumming can be and I think the next hotspot of bass and tenor drummers is going to be Australia and New Zealand, because they're just so unbelievably keen and energised by the whole thing. I'm super excited to see how things develop down there in the next 10 years."

With his cheerful animated facial expressions and highly energetic style of playing, Tyler stands out from the crowd in an avocation where, all too often, players are forced to look serious due to concentration and the traditional style of performance. Some might say that he has helped to inspire tenor drummers around the world to have the same energy and passion, but Tyler is humble about his 'full of beans' style.

He admitted: "There have been a lot of energetic and passionate people who have helped to bring tenor drumming to people around the world and there are a lot of highly passionate and energetic individuals in most pipe band communities. I have no hesitation in saying that I am a highly energetic individual and, without a doubt, my best teachers at school were highly energetic as well. Their enthusiasm for what they were doing was infectious and trickled down to me and I hope that I can apply the same energy with respect to what I do. If I've played a small part in getting tenor drumming out there then that's really neat and I hope that I've inspired, energised and convinced others to be excited about their tenor drumming but there are many other people that have done that as well, both in the present and in the past."



Photo: John Savin@designfolk.com

'Getting to play with Shotts really was a dream come true for me. It's without a doubt still as much of an honour to play with now as it was when I joined'

With so much international travel each year, the demands of students, a business, a career, his own band and the usual demands of life, where does Tyler get his energy from?

It's not energy drinks and coffee, but his love of tenor drumming which keeps him upbeat.

"Without a doubt the passion for what I do is what keeps me focused and energised," he explained. "I made a mandate of my own life and it was to raise the profile of tenor drumming in the world and I'm always so excited getting on a plane to go to try to keep raising the profile that I don't think of the time zone I'm in or how tired I am.

"I can sleep when I'm on my deathbed but in the meantime I've got a lot of things I want to do and see and people I want to meet and when you're able to share your passion with others with the same interest, then that's what keeps me going."

Tyler is about to start his eighth season with the House of Edgar Shotts and Dykehead Pipe Band and naturally, it's a challenge living a long way from the pipe band hall where your bandmates practise each week. Tyler admits it would be great if he could live in Scotland but unfortunately his schedule doesn't allow it. Running his company from Canada and living

and working in Texas, Tyler says he needs to be there for the kids he teaches at St Thomas Episcopal School to help them reach their respective goals.

"The bottom line is that this stage in my life I need to have my base in North America," he confirmed. "Yes, it's difficult in terms of playing in a band at that level to get music together and practise, but technology has made the process of playing in a pipe band on the other side of the world a million times easier than it was 10 years ago."

It was always Tyler's biggest dream to play in the same corps as Jim Kilpatrick MBE, who he believes has made the biggest impact on pipe band drumming. Jim's passion for teaching and competing made Tyler yearn to apply the concepts and ideas he had for tenor drumming in the Shotts drum corps.

"Getting to play with Shotts really was a dream come true for me," he admitted. "It's, without a doubt, still as much of an honour to play with them now as it was when I joined and the corps has had such a dramatic impact on pipe band drumming in general through the years – especially when Alex Duthart took over in 1957. I really do treasure every moment that I have playing in the band."

With success has come popularity, and Tyler has a strong army of fans around the world who support him and his business, mainly due to his savvy marketing techniques.

By promoting himself in ways not typically found in pipe bands and with the help of the internet, Tyler has pushed his way into the pipe band celebrity ranks.

He comes across as modest however, and blushes every so slightly when asked how he feels about the attention he receives on a regular basis.

"I'm honoured that some people see me as a 'celebrity' but I definitely don't see myself that way," he said. "It doesn't bother me at all that people want a photo with me or an autograph as it's people that love what I do in the same way that I love what I do who just want to say, 'Hi'. These people share the same passion and love of pipe bands and drumming and I love meeting new people. When I was younger I loved how

easy it was to walk up to my idols and I could walk up to people like Jim Kilpatrick and Tom Brown and talk to them. It's cool that we still have the opportunity to approach the people we look up to and I'm honoured and humbled that people want to talk to me."

It seems that Tyler never has two minutes to himself, and he says that it's only on long flights that he manages to get some down time.

"Whether it's to the United Kingdom or flights down to Australia or New Zealand, my best ideas, and I guess the worst ideas as well, come from these really long flights," he explained. "It's the only time I have to think and slow down and relax and even just read and better educate myself as I'm so busy teaching and educating others.

"Every area of my life right now is busy and it's hard to try and get the hands of the clock to slow down so I can work on my own professional development and to brainstorm musical and

business ideas. Luckily there have been more long flights than usual in the last few years so ironically, I've had a lot more time for myself."

With Tyler seemingly working at full steam to achieve his personal goal to raise the image of tenor drumming around the world, will he ever be satisfied that his goal has been realised?

"If you ask any ambitious person if they're ever satisfied then they'll probably say no and I see the entire thing as a process without an end."

He added: "I think we've come a long way over the past 10 or 20 years as a discipline and I'm excited to see what will happen over the next few decades in the art. I don't think I'll ever be fully satisfied and I think I'll die trying out new ideas and doing new things.

"We'll probably never reach the end of the capabilities of what tenor drumming can be and I don't think we're even close to accomplishing our mission. The best thing is that I'm pretty stoked with what's on the horizon." ●

www.rodymacleodpiobaireachd.com

Roddy MacLeod MBE is the Principal of the National Piping Centre in Glasgow, Scotland and is considered to be one of the most accomplished pipers of his generation and a highly regarded teacher, recitalist and adjudicator.

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Band on the up in County Down

Upper Crossgare Pipe Band

Field Marshal Montgomery have been flying the flag for Northern Ireland pipe bands at the top level for years now, but the strength in depth throughout the grades is reflected by the World and European Championship success this year from several other Northern Irish bands.

Ravara were crowned grade 2 world champions, Geoghegan Memorial won grade 3B, Gransha took the title in grade 4A and Upper Crossgare clinched top honours in grade 4B — with all the winning bands from County Down.

Pipe major Mark Rodgers was at the helm for Upper Crossgare's successful season, and his band's triumphs were a dream come true, especially after 31 years with the band.

Upper Crossgare is a very small townland in the countryside between Ballynahinch and Dromara in County Down, and Mark was born and brought up just half a mile from the band hall. He was just seven when Upper Crossgare last won the Worlds, in grade 4, and it was then that he decided he wanted to join the band and one day become a world champion.

Aged nine, Mark followed in the footsteps of his brothers and joined the band. He said: "The band is connected to an Orange Lodge. It was a family tradition to get involved and my older brothers were in the band before me. The band leads parades on July 12 and Black day.

"It's the only band I've ever played with and the tutors I've had were the pipe majors over the years. The first was Duncan Graham, who is retired from piping now, then Ivor Chambers and Trevor Connor. I've only ever been with Upper Crossgare."

He started competing with the band in 1984, when they were in grade 2, and they won promotion to grade 1 in 1990. But their stint at the top level was short-lived and after a couple of years they were back in grade 2.

Mark explained: "We have won the Cowal, European and British titles on different occasions and several Ulster and Champion of Champions titles in grade two, but in grade 1 we found it difficult to compete with the 'big



Pipe major Mark Rodgers and son Lewis at the Worlds 2010

hitters'. Our successes returned in grade 2 under Trevor Connor's leadership.

"Trevor left the band at the end of the 2004 season and William Wallace then took over as pipe major. We were still in grade 2 at that time but were struggling and were downgraded into grade 3. At that time we started to look at the structure of the band and decided we would try to generate some new talent and start a secondary band."

The new band started competing in 2007 in grade 4B and Mark was pipe major as well as still playing in the grade 3 band. In time, the grade 3 band folded and four of the players moved to the grade 4 corps, including the current pipe sergeant William Laffin.

The hard work intensified in the winter of 2009 as Mark tried to instill his will to succeed into the rest of the band, which is a blend of young talent with the more experienced players who have been with the band for years.

Mark explained: "The youngest member of the corps is one of the tenor drummers, Matthew Chambers, who is 10-years-old and

'I think it's down to the determination to beat all the Scottish guys — no offence!'

the youngest piper is my son Lewis, who is 11. Both have been competing with us this year and we have several teenagers in the band.

"There are a lot of family connections too with parents coming along to learn after their children got involved in the band.

"Pamela Truesdale took up the pipes when her son Joshua joined the band and we also have a father, son and daughter. Trevor Sands joined around the same time his son Christopher and daughter Emma.

"Our members are all from the local community — within a 10-mile radius. Our most mature member Hans Whan, is in his late 60s, it's really important to have more experienced players to help the youngsters along."

It wasn't long before the new-look Upper Crossgare had their first taste of competitive success and gained second place in their first outing at a competition in Malahide, near Dublin, with several other prizes that year and getting a win on the last local contest of 2007. The following year saw them winning the Ulster title and again the last title of the season in Portrush. In 2009, they attracted more young recruits but only a couple of prizes, though 2010 was to be a different story.

Mark said: "On our first day out in the 2010 season we picked up a first prize at the local RSPBANI branch competition in Banbridge. We took part in 13 competitions this year and had 11 wins.

"We won the Scottish and the Europeans. We won the all-Ireland and Ulster and were the Champion of Champions in Ulster. We were only a point away from being the Champion of Champions in Scotland too after only com-

Upper Crossgare Pipe Set-up

Pipe Chanter:

Chesney Chanters

Chanter Reeds:

Chesney Reeds

Drone Reeds:

Mainly Ryan Canning reeds but there is a mix.

Pipe Bag:

Canmore Bags

Pipes:

Majority is Henderson's



Upper Crossgare Pipe Band celebrate their win at the European Championships in Belfast this year.

peting in three out of the five majors.

"But of course, winning the Worlds was the highlight. It meant such a lot to me personally.

"Upper Crossgare have only ever won one other World title which was in 1977 and I was just seven at the time. That's when I decided I wanted to be in the band and to win the World title. From when I started learning until we won only took me 31 years. It was a good day for me and brought me a lot of satisfaction, and to lead the band was extra special."

It was a special season for Ravara, Geoghegan Memorial and Gransha too and the achievements of all the bands were honored with a civic reception at the Stormont Parliament building in Belfast in November, hosted by the Northern Ireland minister for culture, Nelson McCausland.

So how does Mark explain the success of Upper Crossgare and the rest of the Northern Ireland bands?

He said: "I think it's down to the amount of dedication we have. We practice two nights a week and increase that to three times a week coming up to major competitions as well as our own personal practice at home, which we are trying to get the guys to do every day.

"It has to be down to that dedication. I think that attitude is shared by the rest of the Northern Irish bands and it was a great honour to be asked to go to our Parliament buildings for the civic reception to mark our achievements.

"I think it's down to the determination to beat all the Scottish guys — no offence! We constantly strive to play at our best and more importantly, to have fun along the way. I'm driven like that myself and that's what I'm trying to instill in the rest of the band."

Their triumphant season now means a step up for the band, and more hard work this winter, but Mark believes that their progress will be helped by the MAP tunes, introduced by the RSPBA to help lower grade bands with their repertoire for competitions.

Mark explained: "The way the structure is at the moment, the grade 4Bs play 2/4 marches and with our promotion next year into 4A, we'll be playing two 2/4 marches, a strathspey and reel with two parts in each tune.

"When you progress into grade 3B, it's a four-part MSR and a bigger medley selection, so I think it's one of the best things the association has done in providing these MAP tunes.

"The MAP tunes provide a great stepping

stone. It used to be in grade 4 you could keep it fairly simple with 3/4s and 4/4s. Then if you moved up to grade 3 you hit a major obstacle and a couple of years experience would be needed before you would be anywhere near the standard.

"Already we're really working hard at the MSR and we intend to be among the prizes again next year.

"We have a number of guys who are experienced, have done it all before and played at a higher level. With a young band you need that, and they can encourage the younger players to come on. At the moment the younger ones are eating the tunes up.

"If we keep up that sort of determination hopefully we can feature somewhere in the prizes next year and continue to make progress.

"I think we have the potential with the youth and the experience to move up the grades again but how quick we do that remains to be seen. It's not just a matter of the piping going well; the drumming has to be going well too to make it successful. Everything has to be going together. Hopefully with the hard work over the winter we should be ready to get into the prizes next year. I would like to push it on as much as we can." ●

Highlights of Armagh

The William Kennedy Piping Festival

The superb quality of the opening concert of the 17th annual William Kennedy Piping Festival set the tone for the rest of the weekend. Highland pipers Jonathan Greenlees and Dr Angus MacDonald were in very good form, especially on Jonathan's spirited arrangement of the *Cameronian Quickestep* and Dr Angus's performance of Liz Carroll's *The Air Tune*.

Julie Fowles and husband Eamon Doorley produced one of the highlights of the weekend. Julie has always had a superb voice but in this performance it seemed even richer than I've heard before. Perhaps it was the venue, perhaps it is motherhood — who knows? — but there was definitely a slightly different timbre to her voice as Julie treated us to songs such as *Fraoch a Ronaigh* (Heather of Rona), *A Chathrion' Og* (Young Catherine) and of course waulking songs and puirt a beul. She also displayed her musical dexterity on a couple of delightful sets playing whistles and smallpipes. Throughout, bouzouki player Eamon provided thoughtful accompaniment that gently weaved around Julie's voice and subtly enhanced the presentation of the song.

The young Irish band Canntaireachd entertained with a diverse and interesting set played on their mix of Highland pipes (pitched in A and made by Hamish Moore), Uilleann pipes, cello and snare drum. The unusual and arresting start to their set had cello player Alana Henderson singing the canntaireachd to *The Glen is Mine* with accompaniment from the rest of the band. The rest of their set saw a mix of Irish and Scots tunes with the arrangements combining both types of pipes, cello and snare. Highlights included a version of *Paddy's Green Shamrock Shore* and a sweet rendition of *The Sands of Kuwait* and a finale including *The Little Cascade*, *The Clumsy Lover* and *The Pie Eyed Piper*.

Never mind the inscrutability of the Northern Meeting crowd, audiences don't come any tougher than several hundred schoolchildren aged between nine and 11 as they will let you know instantly if you haven't captured their imagination. So the scene was set for the schools concert. First in the lions' den were Zephyrus, a group of six men and one woman playing variations on 17th century tunes on assorted Border pipes (high C, low C and G). I feared for them, but from the instant they put their pipes up the young audience settled down and listened intently. Using the different pitches of the pipes the band blended together a rich sound that cleverly changed as the different pipes were brought in to and out of play. Throughout Terry Mann kept everyone honest with his steady percussion and the band made the most of the portability of their instruments to move around the stage and create some visual interest on top of the musical interest.

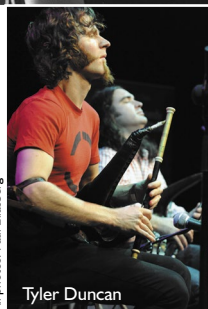
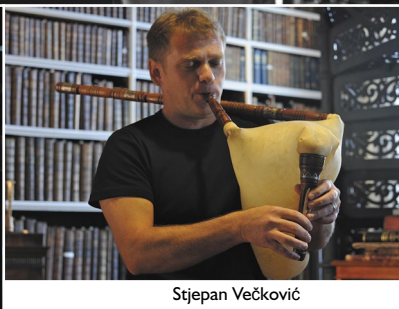
Next to entertain the youngsters was Croatian piper Stjepan Večković, a man who plays an almost bewildering array of Croatian pipes. Some with bags, some without, some with one chanter, some with two and some with more reeds than you would think it possible to blow, let alone play. He captivated the children, with his talent and enthusiasm for the music shining through, and he soon had the audience bouncing in their seats and clapping along to his infectious Croatian rhythms.



Jonathan Greenlees



Dr Angus MacDonald



All photos: Paul Ellsberg

Dr Angus MacDonald followed Stjepan and played with his usual class. The concert ended with the Portuguese band Roncos do Diabo. With four pipers and one drummer playing traditional Portuguese tunes with passion and energy this band, and particularly drummer Tiago Pereira, had the children eating out of their hand and yelping for more.

The lunchtime session at the Market Place, the focal point for the Festival, featured Zypherus and Stjepan as well as Griff Trio. Belgian band Griff Trio played an eclectic mix of tunes both new and old, from an impressive array of sources (although with a distinct Flemish tint) and on a diverse selection of pipes, enthralled from start to finish with a captivating set. Songs featured heavily and the powerful vocals of Raphael De Cock combined with the clever use of the different pipes gave this small band a big impressive and very enjoyable sound.

Friday night brought the Hooley at the Hotel Piping Extravaganza, which was held at The Armagh City Hotel with three different rooms boasting stages. There was a different line-up on each stage and the audience were free to wander between them (a kind of outdoor festival feel indoors). The result was a kind of controlled chaos as the audience moved from one room to another to catch the acts they wanted to see. The downside, of course, was that you couldn't see all the acts. Highlights for me were Breabach, who played an outstanding set and even had the audience singing the ground to *The Desperate*

Battle of the Birds. At full throttle and with twin Highland pipes to the fore it is safe to say the band rocked the joint. It was well worth their 13-hour journey to get to Armagh. The other highlight was the John McSherry Band, who carried on from where Breabach left off. With John's Uilleann pipes leading the way, they stormed through blistering sets that had every foot tapping and every head bobbing. Having the Goat System (more of them later) follow these two bands was not the best bit of scheduling but Millish (also later) revived the room and ended the night on a high.

Saturday was about as good as a day gets for a fan of all things related to inflated animal skins and bits of bored wood. It started with the premiere of Sally Walmsley's film *A Perfect Passion*. This film looks back at the origins of the Armagh Pipers Club from its formation in 1966 through to today and its links with the Feis an Eilean in Skye. Throughout the film I was struck by the commitment and dedication that Brian Vallely and the rest of the founder members have had to seeing this club grow and develop to the extent that it now has. The film is a fitting expression of their passion.

After the film there was just enough time to hotfoot it from St Patrick's Trian to the Armagh Public Library, that wonderful room with its spectacular array of ancient books. It seemed appropriate to be in such a seat of learning to discover *A World of Piping*. First up was Georgi Makris from Greece who treated us to

15 minutes of delightful music from Greece and the surrounding countries. When he wanted to switch sounds, he simply unplugged one chanter and stuck another in. He finished with a set on the Tsampouna, which had a bag so big it looked like Georgi was playing a sofa. Georgi was followed by the aforementioned Stjepan Večković and his wonderful introduction to the world of Croatian bagpipes. Dr Angus MacDonald followed and treated us to a three cracking sets consisting mainly of strathspeys and reels including *South Uist Golf Club*, *Over the Sea to America* and a Jerry Holland-inspired set. As Dr Angus played, two things were evident. One is the Highland pipes are just louder than any other European bagpipe and secondly they take a lot more physical effort to play. Trust the Scots to make it harder than it needs to be! Galician piper Edelmiro Fernández closed the recital with a dazzling display on the Gaita. Whether playing traditional, self-composed material or even a Galician-style set from the Irish composer Shaun Davey, Edelmiro's exquisite technique and feel for the music shone through.

After lunch it was up to the St Patrick's Cathedral for the world premiere of Lorcán Mac Mathúna's *An Táin*. This was a musical interpretation of the Ulster epic tale *An Táin* from the book of Leinster, which tells of the Connacht king and queen's war against Ulster and the young Cú-Chulainn's attempts to defeat them. Lorcán put this to music and presented it in the spectacular surroundings of the Cathedral.



Raphaël de Cock and Birgit Bornauw

St Laurence O'Toole Pipe Band



FESTIVAL



All photos: Paul Ellsberg

Rémi Decker



Chris Walshaw and Anne-Marie Summers



Ronan Browne

Lorcán is one of the younger generation of Sean Nós singers and as he sang the eight-part story, the supporting musicians — Seán Óg MacFhirláinn on bass clarinet, Flaithrí Neff on Uilleann pipes/whistle, Martin Tourish on accordion and Owen Neff on fiddle — echoed the story with atmospheric sounds that emphasised the moodiness and foreboding or energy and rage as needed. Once the initial sound balance issues were sorted, this settled into a compelling piece that engaged and enthralled with each twist and turn in the story. The supporting slide show of beautifully crafted illustrations gave visual clues for the non-Gaelic speakers, and there was some very clever use of loops recorded live and played back immediately to add depth and complexity to the music. At just shy of an hour this was a substantial piece that deserves to be heard more.

After that it was the back down to the Market Place and, as I walked in, I heard the familiar sounds of a session and wondered who it might be. I was astounded to see five children aged about 10 to 13 knocking out tunes on boxes, fiddles and whistles like they were old hands. It is testament to the great work being done by the Armagh Pipers Club that they are nurturing children with such talent. Indeed this is a major theme of the festival and, as well as the schools concert, there was a series of day-long workshops for children. The fruits of this effort (and of course the year-round efforts of the Piping Club) were everywhere to see, whether on stage

in formal groups (Macha, Realta, Canntaireachd) or individually in sessions where age is no barrier and younger participants are encouraged to have a go. When you go, be prepared to be very impressed by this young talent.

The New Directions concert showcased The Goat System from France. With these three pipers citing their influences as, among others, as Bjork, Massive Attack and Iron Maiden, the music was always going to be different. This was avant-garde piping with clever use of pre-recorded loops of sound made using just their pipes, yet sounding like a whole battery of instruments giving the whole ensemble a big powerful sound. However be warned this is not music for the faint hearted — gird your loins well before attending!

Millish, who hail from the western side of the Atlantic, were also forging a new direction but this one had a far more familiar feel. I guess it was only a matter of time before someone took a ladle-full each of country, jazz, rock and pop and stuck it in a pot with a large helping of Irish traditional music. With the irrepressible Tyler Duncan on Uilleann pipes and whistles driving the melody along, the other band members set up a rocky/jazzy/country/klezmer/trad vibe that had so many layers it made politicians look thin-skinned. This was classy music that cleverly avoided becoming over-indulgent and indeed the boys have a keen sense of humour. You will find melodies by Micheal Jackson and even Led Zeppelin in their sets.

Their eponymous CD is well worth seeking out for a listen.

The big concert of the weekend featured the current World Pipe Band Champion, St Laurence O'Toole Pipe Band. Sold out weeks beforehand, this was eagerly awaited by those at the festival and they weren't let down. This was essentially a pared-down version of the concert the band gave in Glasgow in August, just prior to winning the Worlds. Highlights included *The March of the King of Laois*, their winning medley from the Worlds, *Midnight on the Water* and, of course, as a finale their iconic arrangement of *The Dawning of the Day*. A delightful variety of time signatures, great tune selection and that impressive set-up and sound all led to a fabulous night's entertainment. Also on the bill for the concert were young band Macha, who charmed with some lovely songs including *Fear a Bhata*, and the aforementioned Roncos Do Diabo. All in all, a very good night.

Another of the great things about this festival is that they tell you where the sessions are and the one on Saturday night had a cast of thousands, including all of Millish and many other well kent faces on the Irish traditional scene. At one point there were 14 Uilleann pipers giving it laldy and it went on until well past my bedtime.

So do yourself a favour and seek out the William Kennedy Piping Festival. You will have the time of your life, just don't expect to get much sleep. ●



John 'Jock' Roarty

IN THIS feature, we talk tunes with John Roarty, from Fife, who is now based in Perth, Western Australia.

John, or Jock to his friends and family, is currently employed by the Western Australia Police Pipe Band as a piper.

In the late 1990s he spent five seasons playing with Dysart and Dundonald Pipe Band under the leadership of Brian Lamond, where the band frequently featured in the top six at major championships.

He furthered his grade I experience with Vale of Atholl Pipe Band and served four seasons under the leadership of Andy Renwick.

He had some great times with the band, featuring in the top six on many occasions and also had the privilege of performing at the prestigious Pre-Worlds Concert in 2006 at the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall.

More recently he has moved to the other side of the globe which has given him a different perspective on the piping scene.

It's clear Jock has come a long way in a short space of time — literally and musically — so I asked him to share his composing secrets and give an insight into his piping career.

How did you get started in piping?

I was first introduced to piping in November 1995 on my 16th birthday at my local band, Kirkcaldy and District.

I immediately found my passion in life and absorbed everything I could about it. The drives home from lessons and practice would involve listening to any grade I album that we could get our hands on. Most often it was one of the earlier Shotts & Dykehead albums, *Gracenotes* or *By The Water's Edge*, as far as I remember.

From this minimal exposure to pipe band recordings, I decided I wanted to get a few of my own and for Christmas that year my parents got me the 1994 *World Pipe Band Championships CD*.

At the complete beginner's level I was at then, I was completely blown away by it all. The winning band that day was Shotts and the medley had me mesmerised!

Was this the point where you caught the composing bug?

After going through the tune listings on the CD, I noticed that almost every tune in their medley that year was composed by Robert Mathieson. This introduced the concept of being able to compose and play your own music and I found it a really appealing thought that one day I would maybe compose my own music.



When did you write your first tune and what inspired it?

My first composition, *Menin Gate*, came in 1997. I was in the Army Cadet Force (ACF) and was attending the annual visit to Menin Gate, Ypres, Belgium, as part of the WWI battlefield tour. The Menin Gate memorial bears the names of all those who died in battle in the Ypres Salient but whose bodies were never found.

The tune came quite easily to me and I had a really good buzz about having composed my first piece. After playing it under the arches of the Menin Gate to 2000-3000 onlookers, and receiving an overwhelming amount of positive feedback from my ACF colleagues and spectators, I found myself almost addicted to trying to pen new material.

You have given us a few tunes here. What influenced them and where did they come from?

Turbulence came soon after *Menin Gate*. The tune came to me whilst on the plane en route to Detroit, Michigan, to a friend's wedding. It was a particularly memorable flight due to the recurring turbulence we experienced.

The next tune here is *Cpt. D.Y.G Robertson RA*, a 6/8 march dedicated to the officer in charge of our annual WWI battlefield tour to Belgium. He has sadly passed away now, but his dedication to the ACF and the encouragement he gave me and other young kids was second to none. A sad loss.

The last tune is my latest composition, *The Reekin' Reel*. I wrote this to fit into a set of reels the band were putting together for our latest concert.

How do you start composing a tune and do you feel you have a specific style of writing?

My style of composing, as would be expected, has changed significantly over the years. Most of my earlier compositions came to me late at night. Often as I was drifting off to sleep some random tunes would come in to my head.

Lately, tunes have come in broken stages, usually one part at a time then building the rest of the tune around that over a couple of days. That isn't a constant and the whole process varies from tune to tune.

So what else keeps you busy these days?

Other than playing the pipes and randomly taking my hand to composing, I also have a keen interest in photography & IT, and I am currently the webmaster for the Western Australia Police Pipe Band website (www.wapol.com.au), as well as a few other sites. To find more of my compositions you can visit my personal website at: www.john-roarty.com.

In a relatively short space of time, Jock has shown what a natural talent he has for penning quality music. I've had the pleasure of playing some of these tunes, and I would urge readers to check out Jock's website, or purchase *The Warning Collection*, a collaboration between Jock, Paul Hughes and Ben McLaughlin, all based in Perth, Western Australia. ●

Menin Gate

Lament

John Roarty

Anacrusis to be played first time only

Musical score for 'Menin Gate' in 4/4 time. The score consists of four staves. The first staff begins with an anacrusis (upbeat) marked 'Anacrusis to be played first time only'. The melody is written in treble clef. The second staff continues the melody. The third staff is marked '2.' and shows a second ending. The fourth staff continues the melody. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

Turbulence

Hornpipe

John Roarty

Musical score for 'Turbulence' in 2/4 time. The score consists of ten staves. The melody is written in treble clef. The piece features a repeating rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The first staff begins with a key signature change to one sharp (F#). The score includes first and second endings, indicated by '1' and '2' above the staves. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

Cpt. D.Y.G Robertson

March

John Roarty

Musical score for the march "Cpt. D.Y.G Robertson" by John Roarty. The score is written for a single melodic line in 6/8 time. It begins with a repeat sign and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is composed of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some triplets. There are two first endings: the first ending is marked "1st time only" and leads back to the beginning; the second ending is marked "2nd time 2nd part" and leads to the end of the piece. The score is divided into two systems, each containing four staves.

The Reekin' Reel

Reel

John Roarty

Musical score for the reel "The Reekin' Reel" by John Roarty. The score is written for a single melodic line in 2/4 time. It begins with a repeat sign and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is composed of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some triplets. The score is divided into two systems, each containing four staves.



by Lorne MacDougall

RECORDING

Applying the final touches

A piper's blog — part three

AUGUST 2010

WE'RE back up to Watercolour Studios for the final few days of recording then on to mixing. These have been split into two sessions — one in August and one in September with the release date planned for November 1. Troy McGillivray's parts have arrived and we're looking forward to Martin Simpson's coming in the next few days.

The track list is completely up in the air. What started as track one is now sitting somewhere in the middle of the album, with the set of jigs being completely transformed from a modest pipes and bouzouki set to a massive ride with multi-tracked pipes, strings, whistles, percussion and guitar.

I'm thinking of this one for the opening track now — but we will see. I'm off to Don Bradford's party and leaving Brian in the studio on his own so I need to make sure his time isn't wasted. I'm getting a lift back up with Duncan Lyall, the bass player, on Monday morning and I'm looking forward to him adding his magic touch.

MONDAY MORNING...

Good party, but it's back to work for two more days on the album before another break. Duncan is amazing — he listens to the track and scores ideas as he hears them. I suggest a couple of ideas that I had in mind and we begin by banging down the bass for the title track *Hello World*. As expected, the bass really fills out the sound and gives it a very classy touch. We talk a bit about sounds and instruments. I need to keep in mind a realistic band when recording, so there are a few tracks which feature only four musicians and Duncan is part of this team.

Duncan heads off early afternoon and we have some free time for mixing. Martin Simpson's parts have arrived. I leave the control room to make some tea while I wait for Nick and Brian to get ready for the premiere. This is the first time I've heard the complete recording (but not mixed) version of the title track with all instruments in place.

If it wasn't for the fact I was still not entirely over Don's party last night I'd be jumping for joy! Everything sounds great and now I'm wondering where this will sit on the album. Track two? I have a month now to consider before we return for the final batch of days in early September.

SEPTEMBER 2010

This is it. We spend the first morning recording a couple of finishing touches then the priority is mixing. Pipe sound is so important and I am a big fan of having the drone coming through all of the time. It's a big part of where the energy of the pipes comes from but if you take it too far it can totally cloud the sound.

We start by mixing the jigs, which we touched on in August. We make the changes and move on. Once we get the sound right, we can use the same template for the other tracks. It's a long process, with some

Miss Rebecca Brown's Welcome to Campbeltown

Waltz

Lorne MacDougall



really hard decisions to be made that we just don't have time to go back and revisit.

Once all the mixing is done it's time to master it. I now have 11 bits of paper strips with the tracks on them trying to figure out how they will run on the album and I need to decide soon.

It's tough — do I ease the listener in, do I hit them straight away, jigs or reels? The track I had originally intended to be the opener is now much more acoustic than I had planned and now sits better in the middle of the CD. Brian always liked *The Gravel Walk* as an opening track — although it was never supposed to be that. Lots of albums start the way I wanted this one to start — with a fairly long intro before we even hear drones. Maybe it would be nice to make this one different and start with a real, live, four-piece band just like what is heard in *The Gravel Walk*? Decision time, yes — *The Gravel Walk* it is. That now means the other tracks need shuffled. Brian makes dinner and we discuss and come up with the final running order just as we start mastering.

The mastering process isn't all that exciting but I think it is very important. As well as sorting out the volume of the tracks, it's also where you decide the

length between them. You'd never want to come out of something really sad and not have time to recover from it before the next happy track. This pushes us quite late into the night and by 11pm we are ready for a full listen to the finished album. I have a beer to celebrate.

With the exception of a couple of things — that is it — finished, finito, i terminado! At about 1.30am I finally get my hands on a copy of the master.

TWO MONTHS LATER

Well, it's now November 23 and the album has been out for almost a month. I'm very happy to see it popping up constantly on radio playlists, forums and the likes. My mind's already started thinking about the next album, which will no doubt be a few years away but it certainly feels like there is room in there now for the whole process to start all over again.

I really hope that you have enjoyed this little blog. I've already had a lot of feedback on the album and the above tune seems to be many people's highlight so it's printed here for you all to enjoy. ●

Turn over to find out what our reviewer Alex Monaghan thought of *Hello World*.

CD reviews

The World Pipe Band Championships 2010

MONARCH CDMON 884 & 885



ANY recording captures a particular moment in time. Even in studio recordings, the take before or the take after the one chosen will be subtly different. When the recording is of an event such as the World Pipe Band Championships and it is taken every year, the recordings build into a historical archive that captures not just those moments in time but the changes across time.

Why the quasi-philosophical intro for a piece on the latest of the Monarch label recordings on the Worlds?

Well, this year's Worlds felt like it was one of those moments in history when there was a quantum shift in the prevailing power hierarchy.

Of course, there was an entirely new name on the trophy, but there was also a pipe band led by a different pipe major for the MSR and medley (Shotts — a good quiz question in years to come). There was the consolidation of Boghall and Bathgate into the very top rank and it was also the last Worlds as pipe major for two of the legends of the pipe band world: Robert Mathieson and Bill Livingstone.

Let's not forget the small matter of a band finishing ninth in grade 1 when only five years ago they began competing at Novice Juvenile — Inveraray and District. So if nothing else the 2010 Worlds CDs capture some very significant events. Will 2010 turn out to be the changing of the guard? Only time will tell.

In a break from tradition and perhaps a smart marketing move, the two CDs have the grade 1 competitors in the order they played and according to final placing. This means to hear the top four bands you need to buy both CDs.

On the music front, both the MSR and medley from the final are included, and again as usual for the MSR, the old favourites of Susan MacLeod, John Morrison of Assynt House, and MacAllisters Dirk feature heavily. For a change *The Highland Wedding* and *Mrs McPherson of Inveran* only make one appearance each.

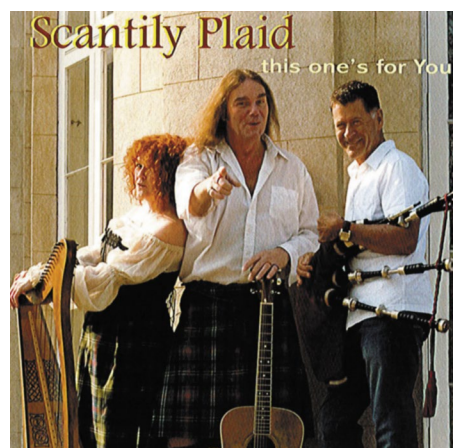
There has been a bit of a swing back towards melodic tunes in the medleys and all the top-placed bands have strong tuneful medleys with St Laurence O'Toole's being the jewel in the crown. With *The Rose* as the air in their medley will we now see a trend for

show tunes? Outside of the top four, other medleys that deserve special mention are Inveraray with their *Clumsy Lover Waltz* finale and ScottishPower with *Castle Dangerous* as an intro. **CHRIS MACKENZIE**

SCANTILY PLAID

This One's For You

SPCD 102



SCANTILY Plaid by name, but had they been a little more scant with the plaid on the cover, this CD might have a little more kerb appeal. If you can get past the boho Gael look and the tartan CD, then there is some good music on offer.

This One's For You is Scantily Plaid's second CD and follows on from the earlier *Just Checking In*. On the face of it, this is a band comprising a harp player, a piper and a guitarist which would be fine, if a bit limiting, but all three participants pitch in with a much wider range of instruments to give this CD a broader diverse sound. Add an eclectic mix of tunes and songs, both old and new, and it adds up to an interesting CD.

At the heart of the band's sound is the piping of Bob Worrall. Bob is, of course, a seen-it, done-it-all piper with a stack of titles to his name. Although he is perhaps now best known on the eastern side of the Atlantic as the voice of authority on the BBC's World Pipe Band Championship coverage. As you would expect, Bob's piping is delightful, whether it is on some of the hoary old favourites such as *The Braes of Mellinish* or *Donald MacLennan's Tuning Phrase* or some of his own compositions like *Salute to Cap Caval*, or *Last Train to Malaga*. Bob is renowned for writing good tunes and while his compositions on this CD are all good, the standout is the cracking *Dos Lunas Sobre Montevideo*, played on Scottish smallpipes, which along with Don Bradford's *The Spice of Life* is a set that is guaranteed to lift the spirits of all but those with accountancy degrees. Prize winner, judge and commentator he may be, but no one can accuse Bob of being a stuffed shirt as a spirit of fun runs through this CD, typified with the pairing of *Lexy MacAskill* and *Coming Through The Rye*.

Ruth Sutherland and Doug Feaver share the vocal duties. Ruth features on the opening track, best described as a mash-up between the Robert Sutherland song *Ciamar A Tha Sibh*, the aforementioned *Lexy MacAskill* and *Coming Through The Rye*. Arran Farewell

showcases Ruth's lovely voice as she laments leaving the island and Bob weaves the *Bells of Perth* into the arrangement. Doug gets to feature on the CD's most surprising inclusion, *Here Comes The Sun*, which although pleasant doesn't trouble George Harrison's status as the definitive version. Doug is on stronger ground with his self-penned *Ride the Wild Horses* with its delicate arrangement of guitar, harmonica and backing vocals. The ubiquitous *Caledonia* gets an airing and the CD finishes with the *Big Jigs* set where the band rip into *The Braes of Mellinish* and *Paddy's Leather Breeches*.

In summary, Scantily Plaid may play it a little safe in this new world of progressive traditional music and occasionally slip into the 'Celtic mists', but their music is none the worse for that. **CHRIS MACKENZIE**

LORNE MacDOUGALL

Hello World

GREENTRAX CDTRAX345



ONE of the brightest young stars of Scottish piping, this Kintyre piper is not yet quite in the same class as Angus MacColl or Stuart Liddell, but he's getting there.

Comparisons with the late great Gordon Duncan would be premature, although Lorne MacDougall has taken a leaf or two from Gordon's book: grafting great Irish tunes on to the Highland chanter, playing piobaireachd in a way which would have been almost blasphemous a few years ago, squeezing more than nine notes into a tune and even featuring the practice chanter on this recording. There are parallels on the composing side as well: Lorne's debut solo CD includes eight of his own compositions — some of them excellent — and to my ear Lorne MacDougall treads the tightrope between traditional and modern piping with almost unerring good taste. There are one or two points where he maybe loiters on a single note for too long, with or without ornamentation, but that's a very minor criticism compared to the outstanding musical qualities of this recording.

Lorne MacDougall is a Highland piper first and foremost, but *Hello World* also showcases his abilities on Border pipes, smallpipes and whistles. The impressive opening *Gravel Walk* is most notable for the change into *Richard Dwyer's*, a great reel recorded by Gordon Duncan, and there's a similarly slick shift into Phil Cunningham's *Appropriate Dipstick* later on.

Switching to Border and smallpipes, Lorne plays two waltzes next — one of his own, *Rebecca Brown's Welcome to Campbeltown*, and one a superb and musically adroit adaptation of *The Jig of Slurs* — ceilidh pipers take note! His slow air *Lament for Small Isles Bay* is imaginatively arranged for Highland pipes and eerie slide guitar. *Mull Festival Reels* didn't grab me — too many long notes, not enough lift and swing — but *Trip to Aviles* is a fabulous set of jigs with all the right touches, including an inspired 6/8 version of *The Sound of Sleat*.

There are two lovely pieces of pure whistle here, the title track and the final slow air, plus several briefer whistle interludes. Lorne plays low and high whistles, not as flawlessly as his piping, and his breathing on the low whistle is a weakness, but the whistles add another dimension to *Hello World*. There's also a song from Ross Kennedy, and plenty more Border pipes and smallpipes. I particularly liked *Learning to Fly*, a suite of tunes by Dougie Campbell with multi-tracked smallpipes. Bouzouki, fiddle, bass and drums crop up at various points, all nicely played and tastefully deployed. *MacDougall's Gathering* sees the return of the Highland instrument for a final fanfare of traditional tunes, culminating in the wonderful *Mrs MacPherson of Inveran* — first class piping indeed. www.lornemacdougall.com has more information, but really, why wouldn't you want this album? **ALEX MONAGHAN**

PADDY KEENAN, NOLLAIG MACCÁRTHAIGH & MICK COYNE

The Piper's Choice Volume 3

NA PÍOBÁIRÍ UILLEANN NPU DVD009

THE established format for the Piper's Choice series is to interview three eminent pipers while they perform some of their favourite music and explain the details of their approach to piping.

It's half performance and half patter, with piper and broadcaster Peter Browne getting the best out of his interlocutors. The DVDs are recorded in the grand and slightly echoey halls of Na Piobairí Uilleann's home in Dublin, with piping memorabilia panelling the walls. Sound and video quality is excellent, and there are adequate notes on the pipers and the music, as well as scene selection menus.

The main attraction of Volume 3 for most people will be the section featuring Paddy Keenan, extraordinary piper and star of The Bothy Band. Paddy plays seven selections here: reels, jigs, airs, and a set dance, and talks on a wide range of subjects. In his trademark leather hat, he describes his introduction to piping, his approach to the music, his pipes, his own and indeed other people's styles on the regulators. *Paddy Fahey's Jig* is fitted beautifully on to the pipes, and the modern air *John Walsh's* shows something of the

direction Paddy's piping is taking these days. For pure virtuosity, it's hard to beat *The Rambling Pitchfork* or *The Skylark* as played here.

The contributions of Mick Coyne and Nollaig MacCárthaigh shouldn't be ignored. Mick is a very lively piper whose background with the Liverpool Céilí Band and the group Garva is widely known. From lack of a teacher in his youth, Mick evolved an individual style with the rolls and snaps of the flute, making for very exciting piping. His versions of *Rolling in the Ryegrass* and *The Flogging Reel* are fascinating. Mick also sings with the pipes, a neat trick if you can manage it.

Nollaig is a piper I hadn't come across before, a Dublin stalwart and very experienced tutor. I was expecting a female piper, a first for this series, but it seems Nollaig is also a man's name. He plays a storming set of slip jigs starting with the unusual *Hey for Stoneybatter* (a version of *The Butterfly* named for an area of Dublin's North Side), as well as reels, jigs, some great hornpipes, the air *Johnny Seoige* and a couple of fine polkas.

Both Mick and Nollaig talk knowledgeably about styles, instrument maintenance, learning new tunes, and all the things which obsess pipers the world over. Like previous volumes, this DVD is a boon for both learners and advanced pipers, a treasure trove of good music, and a great evening's entertainment.

ALEX MONAGHAN

National Youth Pipe Band of Scotland *Outreach Programme 2011*

The National Youth Pipe Band of Scotland is a non-competing, cutting edge performance pipe band for 10-25 year olds in Scotland. Since it was created by The National Piping Centre in 2002, the National Youth Pipe Band is the first and only organisation of its kind to bring together Scotland's most talented young musicians at a national level.

In 2011 we want to meet you!

Through this outreach project The National Youth Pipe Band will bring its young members to communities across Scotland to help teach and collaborate with other young pipers and drummers to help develop Piping and Drumming throughout Scotland.

**In 2011 The National Youth Pipe Band of Scotland will be visiting:
Scottish Borders • Ross and Cromarty • East Lothian**



So if you are a piper or drummer aged 10-25 and would be interested in coming along please go to the website below for full information about dates, venues and programme structure.

www.thepipingcentre.co.uk/youth-pb/

Or email Alisdair McLaren, Director : amclaren@thepipingcentre.co.uk



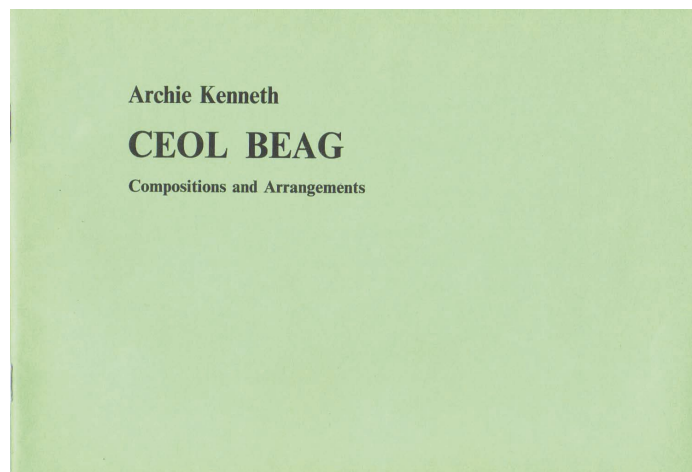
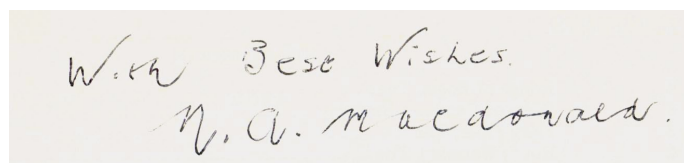
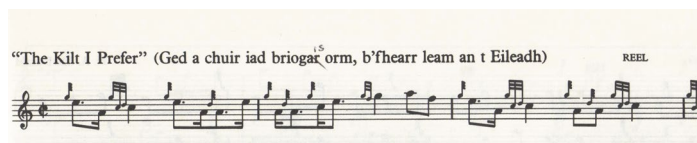
Grey's Notes

by Michael Grey

Playing it by the book



Photo: Ryan MacDonald Photography

Neil Angus MacDonald's autograph, left, and hand-corrected page for *The Kilt I Prefer*

BAGPIPE music publishers will never experience the mass market appeal of a Stieg Larsson (can you imagine?). But when it comes to supporting the health and vibrancy of the music, they are every bit as important as the mainstream print houses.

Beyond the anecdotal — and those connected with my own books — I don't have solid statistics around the bagpipe book market. I do think, though, that these books are a tough sell and, for a lot of retailers, real dust collectors. While today there appears to be a greater variety of bagpipe music books available, and from a broad swath of composers, my sense is that, relatively speaking, fewer people are buying pipe music books.

In part, we can thank the inventor of the photocopier; a guy from New York named Chester Carlson. He patented xerography in 1937. Xerox invested and since the 1950s or so, most of us have learned our band tunes on mottled, copyright-shattered copies of the masterworks of McLennan, Macleod, Ross, et al.

Where Chester's brainwave may have given bagpipe publishing a kick in the sporran, it's probably the internet builders and those responsible for cheap technology that have really kicked the stuffing out of the business. Such as it was.

Take the internet. There are rogue sites aplenty where copyright pipe music can be found and downloaded free and without compensation for copyright owners. Who needs a tatty old book when the one tune you're looking to learn is but a click away? There are also legitimate places to download one-off tunes where composers and publishers receive

compensation. The same questions stands. Who needs a book?

You do. We do.

There's a lot of debate around the value of an open, Creative Commons — a sort of copyright-free world. Google a few of those words if you're keen to dial in what people are saying. My contention, though, is simple: books are important. If publishers lose money, they don't publish books. That's not so good.

I've always been an avid consumer of pipe music books. (NB, a collector collects the music and a consumer plays the music.) For me, one of life's simple pleasures is sitting down with a music book and practice chanter and playing through the book from start to finish, from first to last page.

Where I might get a one-off look at what was in the mind of a composer in a single, photocopied page, a person's full book tells a far more interesting and insightful story. Who doesn't want more of that?

The other day I was ploughing through my collection looking for a book to, um, consume. Two thin volumes jumped out at me: Archie Kenneth's *Ceol Beag* and *New Bagpipe Collection of Old and Traditional Settings* by Neil Angus MacDonald. It had been a while since I'd last visited both. I knew both books to be of serious merit and both books would offer interesting — and entertaining — chanter time.

I met Archie Kenneth once and saw him around the games. So I didn't really know him. His *Ceol Beag*, though, is an example of a music book that is brimming over with personality — his.

Wit, intelligence, humour and a love of the outdoors jump off the pages. From the unusual tune

titles — *Alistair Campsie! Alistair Campsie!*, *The Price of a Bottle of Beer* and *Waiting on the Tide* — to his clever turns of melody and technique, all with a West Highland feel, his book gives us insight into the man, his music and his life. While tunes for mostly good doctors abound, I have to say I've never seen a tune written to commemorate a hospital, *West Highland Hospital, Oban*. Undoubtedly a place that earned Kenneth's gratitude. Long after he has left us, his book of bagpipe music provides real biographical insight — and some really good tunes.

Neil Angus MacDonald's bright orange volume has long been a favourite. My copy is autographed complete with his hand-corrections of typos in scores and titles. I dropped by his home in Inverness after one Northern Meeting and Neil Angus and his wife, Nan, graciously provided a cup of tea and, of course, a book.

Can a book have a vibe? I don't know but I can say that Neil Angus's comes close. There's sentimental warmth to it that's almost comforting. There's not a bad tune in his book — a rare thing for any collection (I speak from personal experience). His tunes and settings, too, give us a good idea of what pipe music sounded like in Barra between the wars. His 6/8 march, *Mary Kiely*, sticks out a mile. Just, by the way.

So you can cosy up to your cold iPads and laptop views of PDF copies of music. I'm going to stick to warming my fingers to tunes bound in paper pages. Books tell the story and give that little extra bit of inspiration that just can't be beaten. Isn't it always that rare and precious little bit of inspiration that always makes the difference? ●



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