

B. C. PIPERS' NEWSLETTER



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the British Columbia Pipers' Association**

APRIL, 1961.

No. 13.

AN ASSOCIATION FOR THE PRESERVATION OF BAGPIPE MUSIC

AND THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF PIPE PLAYING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

B. C. P I P E R S' N E W S L E T T E R

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The "B.C. Pipers' Newsletter" appears this month in a new form, which we trust will meet with your approval. We hope that the new layout will make our bulletin easier to read, and we would appreciate any suggestions or comments concerning the change.

There are presently three excellent publications dealing with piping: "The Piping Times", produced by The College of Piping, Glasgow, "The Pipe Band", put out by the Scottish Pipe Band Association, Glasgow, and "The Piper and Dancer Bulletin", published by W.A. McPherson, St. Thomas, Ontario. Although these three magazines give very excellent coverage of piping matters in Britain and in eastern Canada, the geographic isolation and the large piping element in British Columbia and in the West create a need for a publication of our own. It is hoped that eventually we will be able to produce the "Newsletter" in a printed form, but before such a step is feasible, we will need a great deal more support, both by way of subscriptions and of advertisements.

TWENTY-NINTH ANNUAL GATHERING:

On Saturday, March 25th, the British Columbia Pipers' Association held their 29th Annual Gathering, at the Seaforth Armoury. The competitions, which commenced at 9:00 a.m., continued, except for two brief intervals, until almost 11:00 p.m. In spite of an overcrowded schedule, the day was a successful one. Much of the success is due to the splendid work of Al Baillie and his stewards, who, as always, were responsible for the operation and coordination of our rather complicated schedule.

Chief Judge of the day was Mr. George Duncan, from Detroit, Michigan. Mr. Duncan, who was born in Edinburgh in 1902, began the practice chanter in 1909 with the well known piper and reed maker, William Campbell MacLeod. After a good grounding in piping he joined the Highland Pipers Society, where he became acquainted with such well known pipers as William Ross, J.O. Duff, James Taylor, Roddie Campbell, John Wilson and others. George Duncan migrated to the United States in 1923, living in New York City until 1938, when he moved to Detroit to join the old Ford Pipe Band.

While in active competition George Duncan won most of the coveted awards at the eastern Games, including the following: in 1946 the Hendrie Medal for Piobaireachd and the Gold Medal for the highest aggregate;

the Edinburgh Gold Medal five times, and the Cowal Medal for most points, at the Round Hill Games, five times. He was a boyhood friend of Lt. John MacLennan, and his two sons, George S. and Donald R. He played with D.R. in the Royal Scots Cadets band, before D.R. joined the Scots Guards. George Duncan retired from playing in 1956, since which time he has been one of the competent judges of piping in the East, judging regularly at the various games.

As explained in some detail in the March "Newsletter", short leets were held in the Novice Marches, and Juvenile and Junior Marches, Strathspeys & Reels. These short leets were judged by George Allan in the lecture room. Mr. Allan also judged the Amateur Strathspeys and Reels, due to the unexpected and unprecedented size of the Amateur class. Drumming was judged by Mr. Malcolm Graham, of the Vancouver City Police Pipe Band.

We were somewhat gratified to note that the Open Piobaireachd competition was not appreciably curtailed as a result of the experimental changes. In all likelihood a similar system will be used next year at our Indoor Gathering. At the conclusion of the summer games using our regulations concerning the Open Piobaireachd, the new list of tunes will be announced.

Mr. Duncan helpfully sent, by way of letter, a full report on his observations, both general and specific. We are reprinting these observations in full, since we feel that they will be of interest to all and of special value to those whom they specifically concern. We trust that his comments relating to individual performances will be taken in the spirit in which they are given, that is to say, as constructive criticism, wherever necessary. We are most grateful to Mr. Duncan for taking the trouble to prepare this interesting report, and we are very honoured to have had his excellent assistance at our Gathering. We also appreciate the keen attitude and interest which he showed in all aspects of local piping with which he had contact during his four day visit to Vancouver.

"I arrived in Detroit, Monday morning, and now that I'm rested up I would like to thank you again for all the kindness you showed me when I was in Vancouver. I would like also to extend my thanks to the entire B.C. Pipers' Association for the hospitality they showed me while I was there. I enjoyed myself thoroughly.

I really must say that I was very well impressed with the standard of the piping I heard on and off the boards in Vancouver.

I had heard the western standard was a high one, but I was agreeably surprized.

Here is the way I saw things:

CEOL MOR (OPEN)

1st prize went to James Yardley for his rendering of "The Desperate Battle." His performance was excellent and his pipe was perfectly tuned throughout.

2nd prize went to Ronald Forman who played "MacFarlane's Gathering" on a pipe which was equally splendid. His performance was very, very good and his errors consisted in only an occasional slip in the ground of his tune.

3rd prize I awarded to Fred MacLeod for his "MacLeod of Raasay." His performance was very good, marred by several slips in his Crunluath variation. His chanter, I thought, was inclined to be a bit flat on "F".

By way of general comment on the other competitors in this event:

Donald MacInnes was assigned the tune "His Father's Lament for Donald MacKenzie." Instead he played "MacDougall's Gathering", creditably, but unfortunately not in keeping with the rules of tune selection.

Cathie MacDonald ran afoul of the same rule, being assigned "Mary's Praise," and playing instead "Scarcity of Fish." Her playing was sound and good, though her chanter was somewhat off. In fairness, a judge must apply the rule of selection equally.

Albert Duncan was given "The Wee Spree" and gave a pleasing performance. However, his chanter, too, was somewhat off pitch.

Colin MacRae was assigned the "Massacre of Glencoe". He played it rather well, but not according to the accepted styles of the tune which are the common standard.

Norma Nicholson, who played "MacDonald of Kinlochmoidart", unfortunately broke down.

R.W. Lockie had the bad luck to misplay the crunluath of "Macrimmon' Sweetheat." Not all who attempt "Maol Donn" are successful with her.

Ceol Mor (Amateur)

1st prize in this event went to David Wilson, who played "Lament for Mary MacLeod," very well indeed, on a splendid pipe, making only a wee slip in the third line of his taorluath.

2nd prize went to Ian Walker for "Kinlochmoidart's Lament," which he played well on a good pipe. His drones were a trifle out toward the end, and his crunluath was slightly rushed.

3rd prize was given to Raleigh Smith of Seattle. His performance was fair, but marred by several chokes and poorly set chanter.

Here is my general comment on the other players in this event.

Bill Elder played "A Kiss of the King's Hand" on a poorly going pipe. His execution was not bad, but it went for naught on his pipes going as it did.

Tom Richardson, is I think, not long a pibroch player. He played "The Wee Spree" on a weak pipe and made several slips. Practice will, I think, improve him.

Harry Mumford was given the "Massacre of Glencoe", and had the bad luck to break down.

Ceol Mor (Junior Amateur):

This was a very good event; the playing was indeed fine for young players.

1st prize went to Bob MacDonald whose performance was very good, and whose pipes went well. He played the "Bells of Perth".

2nd prize was taken by Gordon Ross of Victoria, who played "Mary MacLeod". His performance was good except for a couple of little slips in the crunluath and its doublings. His chanter too, was a bit flat on "F".

3rd prize was won by Larry Gillott who also played "Mary MacLeod". His tuning was not the best, and he needs a bit of practice on crunluaths.

In general comment I would mention that 4th place went to Teresa MacInnes for "Sir James MacDonald Lament", in which she was unfortunate enough to break down. She has the makings of a good player.

OPEN MARCHES:

In this event Ronald Forman, James Yardley and Donald MacDonald, were first, second, and third respectively, and their playing was of a very high standard. Fred MacLeod is a very good player who, like a good many others, has trouble with his birl.

OPEN STRATHSPEY & REEL:

The first, second, and third prizes were taken by Fred MacLeod, Ronald Forman, and Al Duncan, in that order. James Yardley would have been well into the top of this event except for his breakdown.

OPEN JIGS:

Yardley was first here, and R. Forman and Cathie MacDonald were second and third. All three gave very good performances and all the other entrants played creditably.

QUARTETTES (SENIOR):

In this event Powell River was first, Seaforth Highlanders were second, and Vancouver Ladies were third. All three, played very well. Powell River had exceptionally rich heavy tone, and their execution was excellent.

MINIATURE PIPE BANDS:

Here the order of prizes was the same as in the Senior Quartettes, and the same remarks apply.

I would like now to make some remarks about things in general. The games were extremely well and efficiently run, with the senior events wisely reserved for the evening hours, when they were surprisingly well attended. The interest exhibited in the competitions was gratifying.

The "Ceilidh" held in the Seaforth's Sergeants Mess after the events was a grand one, and I give my special thanks to Pipe-Major Ed Esson for his kind hospitality.

I want also to mention the juvenile competitions. It struck me that there is an odd disparity between the quality of adult playing and juvenile playing, from what I heard at the competitions. It would almost seem that more attention could be given the young players by their senior counterparts.

If I had to make any unfavorable comparisons between the Eastern and Western standards of playing it would be in this area, and would be in favor of the Eastern Canadian and American juveniles; heavily in favor of them.

On my way to Vancouver, I spent an evening with Neil Sutherland in Winnipeg and I really enjoyed my evening with him. Neil is a credit to the West too.

Again, my thanks to all; not forgetting Mr. and Mrs. James MacMillan of Vancouver who supplied a swell Sunday morning breakfast.

I wish you every success, all of you, in your endeavor to raise and maintain the standard of very good piping which I heard. "

- George Duncan -

A summary of the results are as follows:

Junior Amateur Piobaireachd: (4 entries)

1. Bobby MacDonald 2. Gordon Ross 3. Larry Gillott

Amateur Piobaireachd: (6 entries)

1. David Wilson 2. Ian Walker 3. Raleigh Smith

Senior Amateur Old Highland Airs: (9 entries)

1. Rae Marie MacInnes 2. William Paterson (Bellingham)
3. John MacKay

Novice Marches: (20 entries)

1. Dorothy MacArthur 2. Bill Heaton 3. James MacLean
4. Laurie McIlvena

Juvenile Marches: (16 entries)

1. John MacLeod
2. Teresa MacInnes
3. Douglas Graham
4. Stephen Geddes (Victoria)

Juvenile Strathspeys and Reels: (16 entries)

1. Teresa MacInnes
2. Stephen Geddes (Victoria)
3. Glen Snow
4. Bruce Topp

Junior Amateur Marches: (6 entries)

1. Gordon Ross (Victoria)
2. Bobby MacDonald
3. David MacKenzie

Junior Amateur Strathspeys and Reels: (6 entries)

1. Gordon Ross (Victoria)
2. Bobby MacDonald
3. Larry Gillott

Junior Quartettes: (5 quartettes)

1. Kiwanis Boys Pipe Band (leader - Larry Gillott)
2. Seaforth Highlanders of Canada Cadets (leader - T. McHardy)
3. Kiwanis Boys Pipe Band (leader - Peter McNeil)

Amateur Marches: (18 entries)

1. Rae Marie MacInnes
2. Wm. MacKenzie (Powell River)
3. Arnie Stone
4. Ian Walker

Amateur Strathspeys and Reels: (15 entries)

1. Wm. MacKenzie (Powell River)
2. Rae Marie MacInnes
3. James Troy (Victoria)
4. Bill Elder

Open Piobaireachd: (9 entries)

1. James Yardley (Powell River)
2. Ronald Forman
3. Fred MacLeod (Powell River)

Old Highland Airs - Veterans 60 and over: (3 entries)

1. Seb. Nellies
2. Kenneth MacLeod

Open Marches: (10 entries)

1. Ronald Forman
2. James Yardley (Powell River)
3. Donald MacDonald

Open Sword Dance: (4 entries)

1. Marilyn R. Merry
2. Carol Hambleton
3. Donna Fraser

Senior Quartettes: (5 quartettes)

1. MacMillan, Bloedel & Powell River Pipe Band (P.M. David Westie)
2. Seaforth Highlanders of Canada Pipe Band (P.M. Edmund Esson)
3. Vancouver Ladies Pipe Band (P.M. Norma Nicholson)

Open Strathspeys and Reels: (10 entries)

1. Fred MacLeod (Powell River)
2. Ronald Forman
3. Albert Duncan.

Miniature Pipe Bands: (5 bands)

1. MacMillan, Bloedel & Powell River Pipe Band (P.M. David Westie)
2. Seaforth Highlanders of Canada Pipe Band (P.M. Edmund Esson)
3. Vancouver Ladies Pipe Band (P.M. Norma Nicholson)

Open Jigs: (9 entries)

1. James Yardley
2. Ronald Forman
3. Catherine MacDonald

Trophy Winners:

- MacIver Memorial Trophy: Gordon Ross (Victoria)
MacCrimmon Memorial Trophy: James Yardley (Powell River)
Laurie Trophy: James Yardley (Powell River)
H enderson Trophy: Ronald Forman
Walter Douglas Trophy: MacMillan, Bloedel & Powell River
Nicholson Trophy: Rae Marie MacInnes & Wm. MacKenzie (tie)
Alex Lobban Trophy: Gordon Ross (Victoria)
Tait's Jewellers Trophy: MacMillan, Bloedel & Powell River
Cabar Feidh Trophy: David Wilson
Alan MacNab Memorial Trophy: Seb. Nellies
Gordon Sinclair Memorial Trophy: Bobby MacDonald
Mrs. C.M. Crawford Trophy: MacMillan, Bloedel & Powell River
K. Nicholson Willis Trophy: Teresa MacInnes

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BI-MONTHLY COMPETITION:

On April 21st, 1961, the next Bi-Monthly Competition will be held in the Lecture Room at the Seaforth Armoury, beginning at 8:00 p.m.

The following classes will be held:

- Novice Strathspeys & Reels
- Juvenile 6/8 Marches
- Junior Jigs
- Amateur Marches
- Senior Amateur Old Highland Airs

A large entry is expected, and the evening should be an enjoyable one for all.

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THE VANCOUVER LADIES' PIPE BAND FESTIVAL:

The piping and drumming events of The Vancouver Ladies' Pipe Band were held on Saturday, March 18th, at the Cambrian Hall. John MacKenzie, from Powell River, judged the piping events, and Wm. Saunders judged the drumming events. The prize winners are as follows:

Under 12 - Novice Marches:

1. William McMichael

Under 18 - Novice Marches:

1. Dorothy MacArthur 2. Barbara MacArthur 3. Laurie McIlvena

Under 12 - Amateur Marches:

1. Theresa MacInnes 2. Raymond Irvine 3. David Irvine

Under 12 - Amateur Strathspeys and Reels:

1. Raymond Irvine 2. Theresa MacInnes 3. David Irvine

Under 16 - Amateur Marches:

1. Gordon Hardie 2. Robert MacDonald 3. Karen Ruddick

Under 16 - Amateur Strathspeys and Reels:

1. Robert MacDonald 2. John MacLeod 3. Larry Gillott

Over 16 - Amateur Marches:

1. Rae Marie MacInnes 2. Peggy Gillies 3. Bill Elder

Over 16 - Amateur Strathspeys and Reels:

1. Rae Marie MacInnes 2. Peggy Gillies 3. Bill Elder & Lyalla Nairn (tie)

Under 14 - non-prize winner: Strathspey and Reel:

1. Bill Lamont 2. William McMichael

Members of Vancouver Ladies' Pipe Band - March, Strathspey and Reel:

1. Rae Marie MacInnes 2. Peggy Gillies 3. Lyalla Nairn & Karen Ruddick (tie)

Individual Drumming:

1. Barnie Barnes & Dennis Wheeler (tie) 3. Steve Collins, Robert Collins & Ray Todd (tie)

Drum Corps Competition:
1. Optimist "A"

Aggregates:

Under 12: Theresa MacInnes & Raymond Irvine (tie)
Under 16: Robert MacDonald
Over 16: Rae Marie MacInnes

THE SEAFORTH SHOW:

The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada will present their annual Show on Saturday evening, April 15th, 1961, at Seaforth Armoury, commencing at 8:30, by kind permission of Lt. Col. Ian Bell-Irving, Commanding Officer.

On exhibition will be the Pipes & Drums of the Battalion and the Cadets, to be heard both massed and separately, playing the well-known Seaforth regimental tunes under the command of Pipe-Major Edmund Esson and Cadet Pipe-Major Terry McHardy, respectively. The Drum Sections of the two bands will also be seen playing in combination a new and striking drum cadence on the march, under the direction of S/Sgt. Bud March. The ever-popular "Awkward Squad", drawn from the ranks of the Warrant Officers and Sergeants, promises to be funnier than ever before, and the Officers' Mess is providing a team of Highland dancers.

Competitive obstacles courses, precision drill, weapon stripping and assembly, and piping, featuring contestants from the Regiment, Young Soldiers and Cadets, will help to round out the program. Those in charge of staging of the events also promise one or two unusual surprises.

The sounding of "Retreat Bugles", "Drummers' Call" and "Point of War", followed by the traditional Seaforth Retreat Marches, Slow Air, Quick March, Strathspey and Reel and "National Anthem" will bring the program to a close.

You are urged to support this effort by the Seaforths. Tickets are \$1.00 each for adults and 25¢ each for children. Those who have already committed themselves for the other entertainment being sponsored at Queen Elizabeth Theatre by the Sons of Scotland on the same evening may see the Seaforth Show by attending the Full-Dress rehearsal on Friday evening, April 14th, for which the price of admission is only 50¢ for adults and 25¢ for children. Tickets are available from RQMS Ashby at RE 8-9510 or Ian MacLeod at MU 3-7171 (during weekdays).

Dear Sirs:

The item concerning Piper Findlater by J.M. Thomson in the March Newsletter must be of interest to many. Well do I remember the stir over the gallant piper's exploit at Dargai. "Cock of the North" became what we'd now call a "smash hit", and for a time was whistled and hummed everywhere. I have heard, however, that "The Haughs of Cromdale" was played by some of the pipers in the heat of the charge.

To have heard Findlater play "Where Gadie Rins" must have been a piece of real good luck. It is interesting to note that this fine tune, like "Green Hills of Tyrol" is of Continental origin, and is listed as "The Hessians' March" in old books. Not unlikely it was played by German mercenaries during the American Revolutionary War in the 1770's, and taken to Scotland by returning soldiers. The original second measure, retained in the song, is of course unsuited to the pipe, and one with a similar lilt was substituted. It may be mentioned that the most popular verses of "Where Gadie Rins" were composed by an inspired Divinity student at Aberdeen University, and it would appear that the good man's song has far outlasted his sermons!

These "asides" may be of no particular importance, but are of interest to some of us oldsters at least, and while there is no wish to clutter up the Newsletter, the fact that the items are some small part of the lore of the pipes may serve as an excuse for sending them in.

James A. Berry
Secretary
Vancouver Island Pipers' Society

(No excuses whatsoever are necessary! - Ed.)

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ANNUAL MEETING:

The Annual Meeting of the B.C. Pipers' Association will be held on Thursday, April 27th, 1961, in the Band Room of the Seaforth Armoury. This meeting will commence at 8:00 p.m., and we would urge all of you to try to be prompt. The election of officers and the annual reports will be the features of the evening. We need not remind you of the importance of this meeting. Refreshments will be available and piping will be offered after the meeting. No member should miss the Annual Meeting!

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NEWS FROM SCOTLAND:

It seems that not only in Vancouver do pipers meet with unenthusiastic audiences. We were given a clipping which recently appeared in an eastern paper. Although expressed in the hackneyed terminology typically employed by the popular press when dealing with piping matters, the news contained in this clipping will be of considerable interest to our readers.

"PIPER ENDS SILENCE AS NEIGHBORS MOVE Inverness, Scotland.

A familiar droning wail is echoing once again amid the glens and heather. Donald MacPherson is back on the bagpipes-thanks to a new set of neighbors. Mr. MacPherson's comeback after four years in retirement was the best news in years for Scots. Last season, he collected nearly every major piping award.

A sturdy, 38-year old fellow with lungs of leather, Mr. MacPherson went into retirement for a curious reason. The neighbors could not stand his practicing. Mr. MacPherson, who lives with his wife and three daughters in a Glasgow suburb, straightaway hung up his pipes. Gruff protests were emitted by piping fans all over Scotland, but Mr. MacPherson stuck to his decision and began taking piano lessons.

The break came last fall. Mr. MacPherson's old neighbors moved away and the new ones said nothing would please them more than to hear the wailing through the wall. Tenderly Mr. MacPherson took down his pipes and blew a reel or two. The touch of the master was still there.

"Welcome back, Donald, lad," they cried when Mr. MacPherson reappeared at Highland gatherings. He carried off shields and trophies galore at the Oban and Inverness meetings. "He has a muckle blaw (Strong lung power) said one enthusiast. "And man, what a drone." "

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DON'T FORGET:

BI-MONTHLY COMPETITION: APRIL 21st.

ANNUAL MEETING: APRIL 27th.

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