

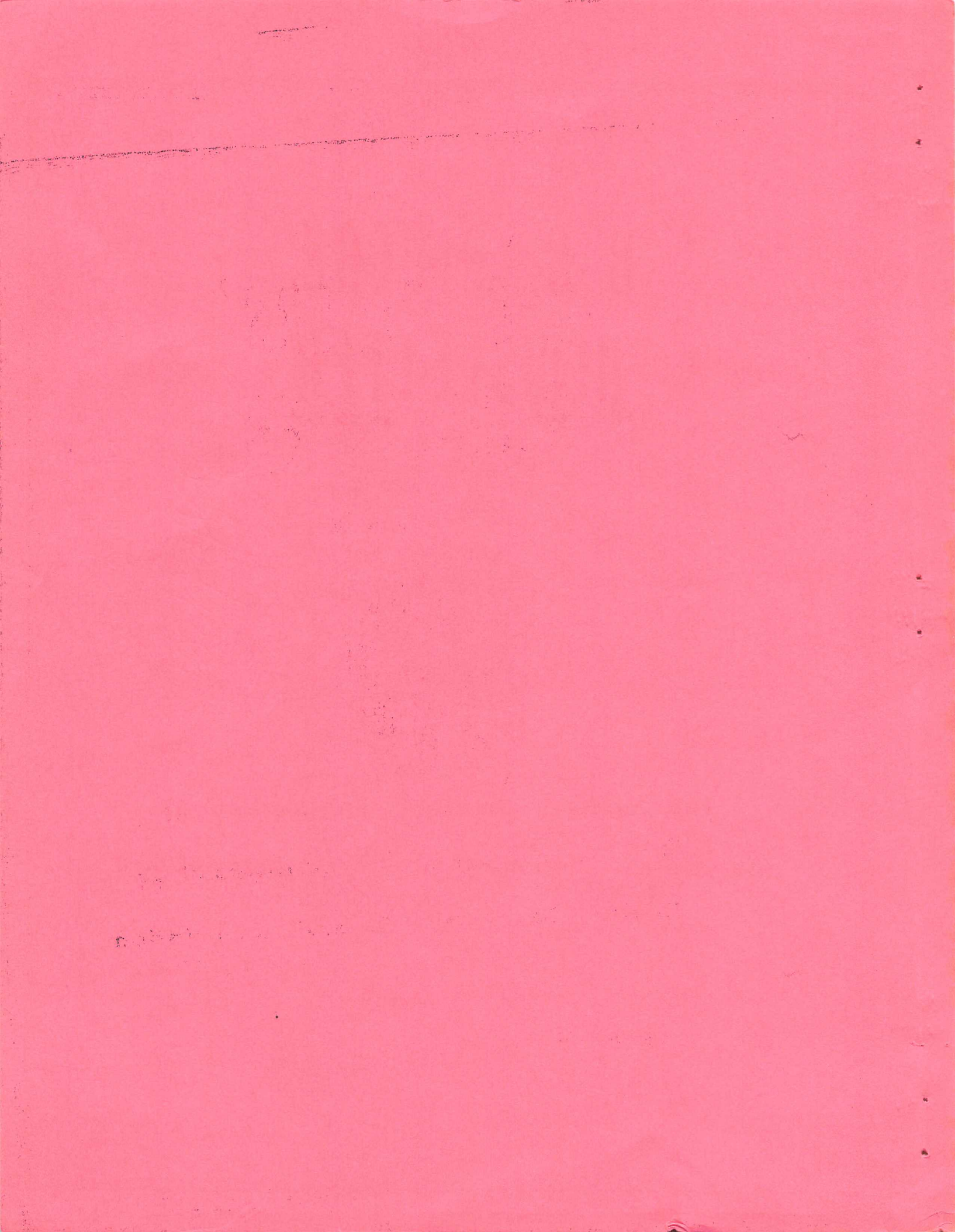
B. C. PIPERS' NEWSLETTER



**The official monthly publication of
the British Columbia Pipers' Association**

DECEMBER 1965

No. 68



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

Published monthly by the British Columbia Pipers' Association.

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The B.C. Pipers' Newsletter is published monthly at 3288 East 27th Avenue, Vancouver, by the British Columbia Pipers' Association, and is distributed to all members. Subscription price to non-members is \$2.00 per year. Address all communications concerning the Newsletter to: The B.C. Pipers' Newsletter, 3288 East 27th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C. Address all other communications to the Secretary, B.C. Pipers' Association, 2340 East 45th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C.

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Let me take this opportunity to wish all of you compliments of the season and best wishes for 1966.

1966 promises to be an exciting year for the British Columbia Pipers' Association.

This will be the year of the visit of Mr. Hector MacFadyen to our Annual Gathering, and of course is the year of the Pipers' Flight to Scotland. Both events will be a great stimulus to our endeavours, and together with our regular activities it is our hope that our contribution to the piping scene in British Columbia will be a valuable one in the coming year.

- Roderick MacVicar -
President

- 0 -

MEMBERS' BANQUET CANCELLED:

Due to the severe weather conditions, it has been decided to postpone the Annual Members' Banquet, planned for January 8th, 1966.

The new date will be announced as soon as it has been set.

We apologize to those who have been inconvenienced by this change of plan, but it was felt that the heavy snow would discourage our members and friends from venturing forth on a Saturday night.

- 0 -

PIPERS FLIGHT TO SCOTLAND - AUG. 30th - SEPT. 28th.

The proposed Pipers' Flight to Scotland has been settled as to dates. We are pleased to announce that the flight will leave Vancouver August 30th and will return on Sept. 28th. The flight will cost \$375.00 return fare, by full jet.

If you are seriously contemplating this flight, you are advised to contact the Secretary immediately. Naturally, reservations will be accepted on a first come, first serve basis, and there is every indication that the flight will be filled in the near future.

For further details contact the Secretary, Miss Georgina MacPhail.

- 0 -

GENERAL MEETING: - JAN. 28th, 1966.

The first General Meeting of 1966 will be held on Jan. 28th, 1966, in the band room of the Seaforth Armoury. We hope that the weather will have improved by that time, and that we can have a good attendance.

- 0 -

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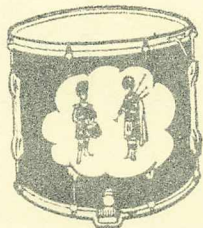
Friends will be saddened to hear of the death of one of the charter members (tenor drummer) of the Cameron Pipe Band, Bellingham, on Nov. 23rd, 1965. - Bill Hay. Mr. Hay was the brother of George Hay, Vancouver, well known in Vancouver Scottish circles.

- 0 -

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PIPE MAJOR EDMUND ESSON, M.B.E. - ON HIS RETIREMENT AS PIPE MAJOR
OF THE SEAFORTH HIGHLANDERS OF CANADA:

Forty-six years ago, following shortly upon the cessation of hostilities in World War I, in the City of Vancouver there dwelt a slender and tall Scottish boy of 13, whose problem of the moment was that he was being compelled to become a member of a Vancouver high school cadet corps. In his search for an alternative, the boy was quick to observe that one of his several male classmates had been exempted from this military training, because, as the classmate phrased it: "I belong to the Seaforth Cadets". Knowing nothing about that organization, the boy decided to go to a Vancouver drill-hall and watch them in action. Much to his surprise, he discovered that the Seaforth Cadet training program was remarkably different from, and vastly superior to, that which prevailed in the Vancouver high school. And, moreover, here was being presented on a silver platter the opportunity of wearing the Glengarry, the kilt, the sporran and the Inverness Doublet. And so it came to pass that, without further hesitation, the boy joined The 72nd Seaforth Highlanders of Canada Cadet Battalion.

Standing in the ranks of the Seaforth Cadets one evening at Beatty Street Drill Hall in Vancouver, there came to the ears of the boy an announcement that pertained to tuition on the pipes. But the boy treated the offer with disdain, since he was hard at work taking lessons on the violin at the time. To him, one musical instrument was more than enough. Possibly in a moment of weakness ... or was it the romantic history of the Highland pipers of ancient time beckoning him? ... he casually mentioned the subject to his father. And at the very next parade the boy stood among other would-be Seaforth Cadet pipers, ready for appraisal.

No long list of questions here. Nothing about name, address, other hobbies, work habits, experience or anything of that sort. Just three questions, brief and to the point: Where was he born? Where was his father born? Where was his mother born? And as the single name, "Scotland", answered all three of the questions, the boy was at once declared to be "an eligible candidate in good standing", and thus started the colourful military career of a young man whose uninterrupted service to his Regiment, to Vancouver, to British Columbia, to Canada and to the Commonwealth has extended over more than four decades ... a record which, because of its unusual significance and the special area of talent and leadership involved, stands immutable, both unequalled and unchallenged. "Unequalled" in that 46 years in pursuit of "a labour of love" is a supreme achievement, and "unchallenged" because in military circles of the Commonwealth there can never hope to be his like again. That Scottish boy's name was Edmund Esson.

By 1921, Seaforth Cadet Piper Edmund Esson could play six tunes fairly well on the pipes and he considered himself ready for action. But, alas, the Cadet movement in Vancouver at that time, possibly as an aftermath of World War I, sank steadily into the doldrums, and he could see no point in remaining to back a dead horse ... especially when "the big band" of the Militia Battalion seemed so powerful and attractive. And so Edmund Esson left the ranks of the Seaforth Cadets and took himself to the "hallowed

portals" of Pipe Major John Gillies' emporium, there to consort with the cream of Vancouver's piping crop ... there to try to make a name for himself, ... there to emulate the idol of the pipers in the Canadian Army.

Edmund Esson was far too young for service in the Militia Battalion of The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada, and so he was told, in no uncertain terms. Undaunted, he turned to Pipe Major Gillies for sympathy and assistance. A "master plan", but way of which Piper Esson would henceforth be known as "Piper Fraser, D." was hit upon and, for the next three years, he came smartly to the position of "attention" and answered roll call to that name. In April, 1924, Piper Fraser, D., having reached the qualifying age, and able to satisfy certain other military requirements, joined his beloved Seaforth Highlanders of Canada. And that, to be sure, was a banner day in his life, and he rejoiced with infinite gusto. For Seaforth Cadet Piper Edmund Esson, who had had to assume the identity of Piper Fraser, D., had come into his own and was now Regimental Number 314, Piper Esson, E.

During the next twelve years, Piper Esson was promoted to the rank of Corporal and for ~~seven~~ long years remained in that exalted rank. Then, as though the gods had finally seen the light, he was appointed Lance-Sergeant and Acting-Sergeant and selected to attend a six-week course to qualify him as Sergeant of Infantry, all within the space of twelve months.

In 1936, Pipe-Sergeant Esson was appointed Acting Pipe-Major and, in 1937, in company with (then) Colonel Stewart-Lough, he was chosen to represent the Regiment at the coronation of the Late King George VI.

In 1938 and 1939, with the other unit components busy winning signal and shooting laurels on a national basis, the Regimental Pipes & Drums managed to win the coveted Stewart Trophy but once. World War II then suddenly burst forth with a vengeance, taking Pipe-Major Esson and his band for the next six years to the United Kingdom, to the Italian Campaign and to Northwest Europe. Quite modestly he confesses that, for outstanding service in that period, he was awarded the M.B.E. He is equally unassuming and silent about the exploits of his bandsmen in various theatres of war, except to recall that on one occasion the Pipes & Drums of The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada were ceremoniously "Beating Retreat" at one end of the town as the Princess Patricia's continued with their house-clearing at the other end. And the Regiment is proud that it was "the pipes of a famous Western Canadian Regiment" (as the announcer styled it) that sounded loudly and clearly over radio stations throughout the world, by way of confirming to all who would hear that the tide of battle had indeed turned and that the Allies were on the offensive with a vengeance. Pipe-Major Esson attended three Royal Schools for Army Piper Majors at Edinburgh during that overseas service.

Returning to Vancouver at the close of the war in Europe in 1945, he was one of only 15 original Seaforth Highlanders who had proceeded overseas with the unit in 1939.

In the post war years, Pipe Major Esson worked tirelessly to build a band that would reflect credit on the Regiment and also win band competitions. On that latter score, the Pipes & Drums of the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada, Vancouver, established a record that is unsurpassed in that they won the Stewart Trophy no fewer than on ten successive years. (Latterly, sad to relate, the winning of this cup has become increasingly difficult, what with such stiff competition from high-calibre Scottish imports).

In the year 1957, Pipe Major Esson was promoted to the rank of Warrant Officer, Class I by virtue of a Special Order-in-Council, and thus became the first Pipe-Major in the world to receive this high honour. He has served as Secretary of the British Columbia Pipers' Association and has been President of that organization four times, and is now a Life Member. Wherever he and the Pipes & Drums of The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada have appeared in massed bands, at tattoos, at Highland Games and in military parades, invariably he is the Senior Pipe-Major in Charge. That honour included the celebrated "Victory Parade" in London at the conclusion of World War II and a New Year's service in Royal Albert Hall when, in the presence of Their Majesties The King and Queen, King Haakon, Queen Wilhelmina, King Peter and the United States' Ambassador, the Pipes & Drums of The Seaforth Highlanders of Vancouver, British Columbia, were in the limelight.

The foregoing pomp, ceremony, glamour and honours notwithstanding, upon being asked which he considered to be the finest band that The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada, Vancouver, ever produced, Pipe Major Esson unhesitatingly alluded to the one which attended Sarcee Camp, Alberta, in the summer of 1954, when the solitary, unappreciative audience was but a prairie gopher.

This tribute, then, is to a man whom many of us have known and respected down through the years ... to a man who has contributed much to piping in general and to the music of his Regiment, in particular, in the Vancouver area ... to a man as impeccable in dress and deportment as he has always been in demeanour ... to a man whose wisdom and experience never failed to aid the Sergeants' Mess of his Regiment in matters of policy and protocol ... to a man who has helped, in a very real and practical sense, to raise to the dignity of a fine art the playing of all manner of melodies on the Great Highland War-pipe ... to a man whose devotion to the pipes and his ability to impart technical knowledge have quite obviously been mirrored in the ambitions, the potential and the skills of many of the younger set in the piping world ... to an every-thoughtful, ever-courteous, ever-sincere son of Vancouver ... and to a man whose gracious presence as an active member of The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada is being sorely missed, but whose supervision of the 1965 and subsequent versions of The 72nd Seaforth Cadet Battalion Pipes & Drums will inevitably lead to more than one championship and earn for them, through him and his understanding and his perception, prizes and plaudits in such abundance wherever they go. And most of all do those who are left in the Regiment to share his erstwhile responsibilities thank Almighty God for a man of the stamp and the calibre of Pipe Major Edmund Esson, M.B.E.

- 10 -

On Friday evening, October 29, 1965, the Commanding Officer and Officers of The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada had Pipe Major Esson as their guest at dinner in the Officers' Mess. Pipe Major Esson was presented with a grandfather clock by the Officers and with a magnificently engraved silver tray by the Regiment.

On the evening of Friday, November 12, 1965, during "Old Timers' Night" in the Seaforth Sergeants' Mess, Pipe Major Esson received a "Sony" tape recorder to be used in conjunction with his own stereophonic equipment.

Prior to the Officers' Mess Dinner, the Massed Pipes & Drums of the Cadets and the Militia took part in a Retreat Ceremony, during which, as a tribute to Pipe Major Esson, the pipe tune "Back o' Benachie" was played.

- Drum-Sergeant Ian MacLeod -
Seaforth Highlanders of Canada

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ALBERT DUNCAN NEW SEAFORTH PIPE MAJOR:

Lieutenant-Colonel Bruce Campbell, CD, Commanding Officer, The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada, gathered his (temperamental?) brood of Pipers and Drummers together recently to announce that, although there had been other candidates for the appointment, he had chosen Pipe-Sergeant Albert Duncan to be Pipe-Major of the Regiment, succeeding Pipe-Major Edmund Esson, M.B.E., now retired.

All of us realize that to follow in the footsteps of the late Pipe Major Gillies and Pipe Major Esson is not by any means an easy task. Quite the opposite. We wish Pipe Major Duncan every success and trust he will have the "Lads of Cabar Feidh" out in full force doing battle against Powell River and others when the 1966 Highland Games roll around.

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NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTION TO BE INCREASED IN 1966.

Commencing 1966, all subscriptions by non-members of the B.C. Pipers' Association to the B.C. Pipers' Newsletter are to be increased to \$2.00 per year. We hope that our readers will consider the increased price warranted, and will continue to support the Newsletter.

All members will continue to receive the Newsletter without charge.

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- Sword Dance ... 4 Slow and 1 Quick
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- Reel O' Tulloch .. 6 Slow and 2 Quick
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A PIECE WITH APPEAL TO PIPERS - LONDON HEARS B.B.C. WINNING PIOBAIREACHD:
(from The Oban Times, Nov. 18, 1965)

A special attraction during the ceol mor recitals at the opening meeting of the London Piping Society on November 5, was the playing of the piobaireachd "Cairn at Borreraig". Composed by Mr. Angus Macpherson, Achany House, Lairg, Sutherland, this tune won the B.B.C. piobaireachd competition last June out of 66 entries from all parts of the Commonwealth. The recital of Mr. Macpherson's composition was given by Mr. David Ross, Pipe Major of the London Piping Society.

This was not Mr. Macpherson's first attempt at composing, for he has had published in the Scots Guards Collection of Pipe Music, a piobaireachd "Salute to Pipe Major William Ross", together with a few more tunes in a lighter vein.

Our London correspondent writes:

"'The Cairn at Borreraig' has great merit and is a credit to the composer. A beautifully balanced piece of music, in this alone it shall have great appeal to pipers. It is a tune that symbolises all that the cairn at Borreraig, overlooking Dunvegan, stands for - the greatest age of classical pipe music known in history, the era of the MacCrimmons.

The London audience were captivated by this musical tune. If pipers had their way 'The Cairn at Borreraig' would soon be heard in competitions yet only traditional piobaireachd are accepted in major competitions.

It took a century for a moving piece of ceol mor 'Lament for Captain MacDougall of Dunollie' to be accepted in contests. Another tune that has only seen the light of day in recent years is "His Father's Lament for Donald MacKenzie", a pipe major of the 25th Regiment (now the K.O.S.B.) who died in 1863!

The art of composing ceol mor is by no means lost, as the B.B.C. contest has proved, and there are many tunes somewhere around that have been composed this century that are as yet frowned upon because they are new.

'The Cairn at Borreraig' shall one day without any doubt take its place among the 400 authorised piobaireachd played today. It would be a loss to the classical music of the Highland bagpipes if a century was to pass before it was accepted in contests".

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SUMMER GAMES SCHEDULE:

We are pleased to announce that the St. Andrew's & Caledonian Society, of Vancouver, will be holding Highland Games in Vancouver in 1966, having missed their annual event in 1965. We are informed that the Games will be held at Brockton Oval on August 6th.

Other games that have been scheduled to date are:

B.C. Highland Dancing Association	- July 1st
Portland Highland Games	- July 23rd
Victoria Highland Games	- July 30th
Seattle Highland Games	- August 6th

The date for the Nanaimo and New Westminster Games are not yet known. Let us hope that the conflict of dates of the Vancouver and Seattle Games can be resolved, since undoubtedly both will greatly suffer in the event that they go ahead on the same day.

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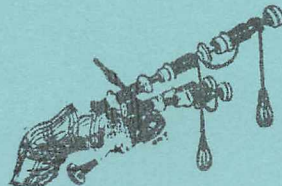
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NOTABLE WEEK FOR PIPERS BRINGS FIRST OF ANNUAL TESTS:

(Edinburgh Letter from The Oban Times, Nov. 25, 1965)

Last week was a notable one for piping enthusiasts in the Capital. The 60 year old Highland Pipers' Society held the first of a series of six-weekly competitions for the Rhoda McPhee trophy, and the Eagle Pipers' Society had their first, and resoundingly successful, open competition, attracting an entry of 66 players from all over the country.

It is some years since a fully open professional piping competition was held in Edinburgh, and the Eagle promotion in the Royal Arch Halls last Saturday demonstrated how much enthusiastic support there is for such a venture. It was, in fact, even more successful than had been expected, for some would-be listeners had to be turned away for lack of room, and supplies of the excellently printed programme were completely sold out in the afternoon.

The outstanding pipers of the day were Hector MacFadyen, Pennyghael, and Oban native Ronald Lawrie, of Glasgow City Police Pipe Band. The former carried away the Cameron Challenge Cup, given by Mrs. Flora Cameron, for the highest points of the day. He was third in the premier piobaireachd class open only to winners of the gold medal at either Oban or Inverness, second in marches, first in hornpipes and jigs, and fourth in the strathspeys and reels competition. Ronald Lawrie won the Tam Glen Medal for top marks in the premier piobaireachd class, and was also second in the hornpipes and jigs class.

Three other competitors also figured more than once in the prize list. Pipe Major Iain MacLeod, Edinburgh City Police Pipe Band, took second place in the second piobaireachd class and fourth in hornpipes and jigs; John N. MacAskill, Glasgow, was third in that piobaireachd class and third for hornpipes and jigs; and Archie MacPhail, Islay and Glasgow, won the strathspeys and reels and was third for marches.

The system of numbering competitors and printing the numbers in the programme was a help both to listeners and to stewards, and the heavy programme was so well organised in both the upper and lower halls that playing which began at 9:30 a.m., was completed by 7:50 p.m. The judges were High Macrae, Captain D.R. MacLennan, Pipe Major George Stoddart, Pipe Major Gordon Asher, Pipe Major John MacLellan, and Pipe Major Ronald Ackroyd.

Pipe Major MacLellan, speaking as president of the Eagle Pipers' Society at the end of the day, welcomed everyone to the first of what they hoped would be a series of annual open competitions. It was the duty of any piping society to foster piping as hard as it could, he said, and one of the best ways was by providing a platform for competition so that pipers would get down to practising and then come and play before a critical public.

Pipe Major MacLellan welcomed representatives of kindred societies, the Highland Pipers' Society, which he hoped Eagle members would support, and the Royal Scottish Pipers' Society, which was, of course, an all-Scotland or perhaps a world wide society meeting in Edinburgh.

Results:

Piobaireachd, Class I:

1. Ronald Lawrie, Glasgow (Macfarlane's Gathering) - Glen Medal
2. William M. MacDonald, Inverness (MacCrimmon's Sweetheart)
3. Hector MacFadyen, Pennyghael (Macnab's Salute)
4. William MacDonald, Benbecula (Lament for Mary MacLeod)

Piobaireachd, Class II:

1. Dugald Ferguson, Glasgow (Glengarry's March) Witwatersrand Challenge Cup
2. Pipe Major Iain MacLeod, Edinburgh City Police (Lament for Donald of Laggan)
3. John N. MacAskill, Glasgow (MacLeod's Salute)
4. Cpl. L. Ingram, 2nd Battalion Scots Guards (Lament for Donald of Laggan)

Marches:

1. Duncan J. MacFadyen, Glasgow;
2. Hector MacFadyen, Pennyghael
3. Archie MacPhail, Islay;
4. Duncan D. MacDiarmid, Aberfeldy

Strathspeys and Reels:

1. Archie MacPhail
2. Iain MacFadyen, Glasgow
3. John MacFadyen, Glasgow
4. Hector MacFadyen

Hornpipes and Jigs:

1. Hector MacFadyen
2. Ronald Lawrie
3. John N. MacAskill
4. Pipe Major Iain MacLeod

Cameron Challenge Cup for most points - Hector MacFadyen

Special prizes:

Books of piobaireachd by Dr. Roderick Ross and Mr. J. Hector Ross, presented by Mr. Alastair Macdonald and awarded to competitor having hardest luck in piobaireachd, Class II - George Lumsden, Edinburgh

Bag cover, presented by Mr. John Abbott for competitor having hardest luck in marches - John A. MacLellan, Glasgow

Records made by Pipe Major John MacLellan to competitor with best sounding set of pipes in hornpipes and jigs class - Thomas Pearston, Glasgow.

ROBERT STOKER PASSES:

It is with regret that we announce the death of ex-Pipe Sergeant Robert (Bob) Stoker of The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada, as the result of complications arising from an extended illness.

Bob served his country well, being Pipe Major of The Calgary Highlanders during the early part of World War II and Pipe Major of The Essex Scottish Regiment later on.

Numerous young people in the Greater Vancouver area owe their ability to play pipes to the careful tuition and unfailing patience of Bob Stoker. Pipers of The Seaforth Cadet Battalion, in particular, came under his supervision and many an hour did he spend with them, in groups and individually, at Seaforth Armoury ... more particularly on Saturdays and Sundays.

Quite apart from his piping ability, Bob was a lover of music of all kinds, and more especially the classics. His beloved pipes, of course, invariably took precedence over the other pursuits, but he loved to sit and listen to "Aida", "Tanhuaser" and other works of the masters.

One of Bob's favourite slow airs, "The Prince in Exile", was his own composition and it sounded best ... or, at least, so it seemed ... when he played it on the pipes himself.

Cadet Pipe-Major John MacDonald and his brother, Cadet Pipe-Corporal Murray MacDonald, together with Piper Gordon Whaley, WO II Larry Smeaton, Sergeant John Galbraith, Drum-Sergeant Ian MacLeod, Drummer David Tilston and Private Robert Mosley, in Full Highland Dress, acted as pallbearers, and Pipe Major Edmund Esson, M.B.E., played "The Land o' The Leal" at the funeral service.

- Ian MacLeod -

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IN MEMORY OF ROBERT R. STOKER:

DEDICATION:

It takes a special kind of folk
With a special kind of love
For a special kind of music
To keep the sun from setting
On the hum-m-m of the Highland drone.

Have you ever played to a Rowan tree? Or to Robbie Burns? One evening near Burns night we were gathered for a social hour and Piping after a general meeting and Seb Nellies was playing tune after tune in his own happy way. Suddenly, on a whimsical impulse, he turned and walked up to

a bust of Robbie Burns on the mantel and sensitively played Burns old songs to him, an inspiration only a Piper would dream up.

Then there was the delightful performance this Spring of Robert Stoker of the Seaforth Highlanders Pipe Band. We had company at our home that day and I had just told the story of the Rowan tree I had planted several years ago. Picking up his pipes he went outside and played around it very slowly, the sweet, sweet song of The Rowan Tree, and no tree ever had a more loving serenade. What better place to play The Rowan Tree? As the music lingered in the air I looked at the swelling buds of the greening tree and discovered the first blossoms ready to open --- twelve of them.

And there was the time Ed Esson ended a group of tunes with a little surprise, the old Scottish hymn tune of The Lord is my Shepherd. My mind went right back to The Rowan Tree, to the last sweet verse ..

Oh! there arose my father's prayer, in holy evening's calm,
How sweet was then my mither's voice in the martyr's psalm.
Now a' are gane! we meet nae mair, aneath the Rowan tree;
But hallowed thoughts around three twine o' hame and infancy.
Oh! rowan tree!

I couldn't help thinking these tunes should go together sometimes, this one following The Rowan Tree.

After Robert Stoker played here that day I wrote this little story for the Newsletter, and I now feel he would like to know his many friends are reading it, and recalling memories of their own of a proud Piper who could play so beautifully.

I had not known him long, but I soon found him to be a man of very good taste in books and music. We were talking once once of Pipers and I said, "Do you know what I think is the nicest thing to see?" Immediately he answered, "A well-dressed Piper!"

Just before his illness I took my one and only Piobaireachd lesson from him. I could tell he was a good teacher - what he had he wanted to give, and in that lesson I learned more than just playing those notes, a little treasury of knowledge. I looked forward to my next lesson, which never came. He was so happy to be teaching Piobaireachd, and sharing his love for the old Classics.

Now I can join his many pupils in appreciation of his "giving" and a feeling of loss, the promise of what I could have learned, from one who loved the pure Highland Classics, and loved teaching, so much. The boys he taught in the Seaforth Armoury will miss the man who had just one big heart for teaching, and welcomed all who came to him for help.

- Cathrine Paterson -



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LETTER FROM GRAINGER AND CAMPBELL LIMITED;

Anything that comes from the pen of Pipe Major Donald MacLeod is eagerly absorbed by the piping fraternity and his latest release, a Bagpipe Tutor and Record is up to his usual high standard.

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- George Grainger -
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FOR SALE - SURPLUS UNIFORMS:

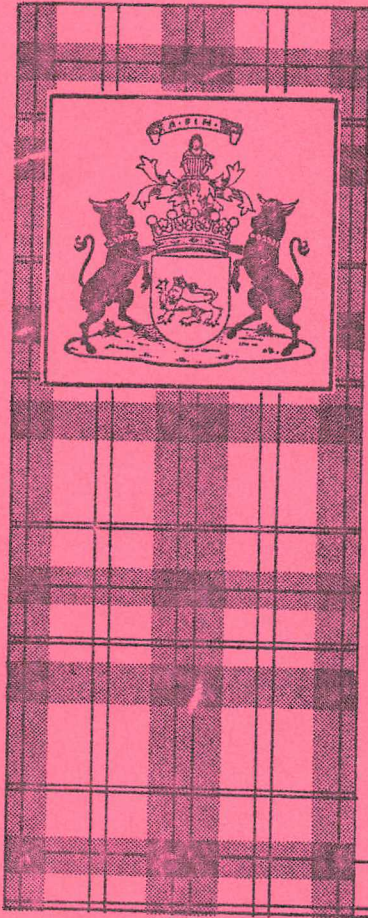
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The whole lot can be had for \$400.00. Bulk purchasers will be given preference.

For information contact J. Munroe, P.M. Cameron Pipe Band, 1259 Island View Ave., Bellingham, Washington, 98225. P.M. Munroe would like to make it clear that this is surplus gear, and the sale does not indicate that the band is breaking up!

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GENERAL MEETINGS FEBRUARY 4th and 25th

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