

# B. C. PIPERS' NEWSLETTER



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

MAY, 1961

No. 14.

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

Published monthly by the British Columbia Pipers' Association.

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B.C. Pipers' NEWSLETTER

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ANNUAL MEETING: April 27th, 1961.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

I would like to review briefly the year's activities of the British Columbia Pipers' Association. In examining the report which I gave last year at this time, I note that our activities have not significantly varied from those of last season. I do not know whether this is good or bad; whether you would say we are in a rut, or have just a firmly established pattern.

This year we held our Ceilidh at the Scottish Auditorium in September, and as well as being entertained by the winners of the previous season's Bi-Monthly Competitions, we heard an interesting variety program. It was decided to hold this year's members banquet separate from the Ceilidh and in January at the Stanley Park Sports pavilion, a very successful evening was enjoyed by the members and ladies present. For the first time since the formation of our association life memberships were awarded. These were presented to Edmund Esson, Kenneth MacLeod, Roderick MacLeod and Malcolm Nicholson.

Bi-Monthlies have been held in October, December, February and April and the final one will be held in June. Since December, these competitions have been held at the Seaforth Armoury lecture room. The move, which seems to have been successful, was made largely for reasons of economy. The entries in the Bi-Monthlies have been gratifying in the Novice and Juvenile events, although the entries in the Junior and Amateur classes have been disappointingly small. The enthusiasm in the younger classes, however, has been extremely keen.

The White Heather Concerts held in October were a great success. The ticket sales were very good, and the standard of the three performances held at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre and the Vincent Massey High School was high indeed.

The 29th Annual Gathering held in March at the Seaforth Armoury proved to be quite successful with what might be considered as a record entry of approximately seventy-five solo competitors, 10 quartettes and 5 miniature pipe bands. The chief piping judge was Mr. George Duncan of Detroit, Michigan, who did a very fine job.

One piping evening was held in March, and in November a special exhibition of slides was given by Roderick MacRae. Finally, general meetings and meetings of the Board of Directors were held almost monthly, and it can be said that we had an active year.

During the past year the "Newsletter" has steadily developed in scope and size and has recently emerged in a new form which I consider to be superior. I have a great deal of faith in the "Newsletter" and I feel that it has become a very useful and interesting voice for our organization in piping circles. It is my opinion that the "Newsletter" will eventually be developed into a journal which will be accepted along with the other regular piping publications. I would like to say at this time that if any of you are interested in assisting in the production of the "Newsletter" every month, let me know and you will be recruited immediately.

We are, as always, faced with the same old problem, that is, lack of general interest. Although attendance at the meetings seems to be slightly improved, it seems that it would take nothing less than the Treasurer or Trustees leaving for Mexico with the bank account to get a good turnout. I have sometimes thought it would be rather interesting to announce that at the next meeting all of the assets of the Association would be divided among the members present at the meeting. We would probably get members out whom we did not know were still alive. Seriously though, I am concerned about this problem, but I am at least consoled by the realization that those who do attend are certainly enthusiastic. Our membership has increased by about ten during the past year, although I note that most of them are parents or associate members who, unfortunately, do not seem to attend very many meetings. I would especially urge the younger players to join our Association and become active in our affairs. I would like to see more bandsmen as members and I am of the opinion that we should have at least one active member from each local pipe band.

I have only a few suggestions for the Association for the future. I am of the opinion that we are wise in investing our assets for the eventual purchase of our own building, but I feel that the acquisition of the building is still several years away. I do not think that we should make such a step without careful thought and I would counsel you to consider this whole matter very carefully and would appreciate hearing your comments about it in the future.

Although the suggestion is made annually that we move our indoor meet to a place with better acoustics, the matter never gets past the suggestion stage. No one seems able to make a good alternative suggestion. I am of the opinion that we are extremely fortunate in having such excellent facilities as those of the Seaforth Armoury, and although the acoustics are less than perfect, in general the gatherings are successful. I feel that we would be foolish in changing our locale especially considering the hospitable and friendly reception which we receive with the Seaforths.

I would like now to comment on a matter which caused considerable controversy this year, and that is the matter of our judge for the Annual Gathering. It had been originally decided to use local judges as an economy measure, but at a later date and when it was learned that we might be able to get assistance from the T.C.A., an outsider could be brought. The thought of getting this help of course dispelled any of the critics of bringing an outsider. However, I would like to state now that I feel it would be false economy to use local judges after having set such a high standard since 1952, when we first started to use judges from distant points. I feel that impartiality is absolutely essential in competitions such as ours, and although I do not wish to impute bias on the part of local judges, I feel that there would always be at least an excuse for criticism when they were used. I would therefore recommend that as long as we are in our present financial position we do everything in our power to use outside judges.

In closing, I would like to thank the Officers and Directors in the association for their assistance and loyal support during the past year. I would like especially to thank Lt. Col. Bell-Irving, Commanding Officers of the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada, for his kind hospitality and the hospitality of his regiment. I am confident that we will have an even better year next season, and we will be successful in promoting still further the cause of piping in British Columbia.

- C. I. Walker -

After the President's Report, reports were given by Wm. McAdie, the Treasurer, and Donald Urquhart, on behalf of the Trustees.

The next order of business was the election of officers, and the following persons were elected officers:

President	C. I. Walker
Vice President	Charles MacKenzie
Secretary	Roderick MacVicar
Treasurer	William A. McAdie
Directors	George Allan
	Albert Duncan
	Edmund Esson
	Ian MacDougall
	John MacLeod
	Georgina MacPhail
	Donald Murray

Auditors	John T. McHardy Al Baillie
Trustees	Donald Urquhart (3 year term) Roderick MacRae (2 years of term remaining) Kenneth MacLeod (1 year of term remaining)

CAPTAIN THOMAS MITCHELL:

One of the oldest members of the association, Captain Thomas Mitchell, died on April 19th, at the age of 86.

Born at Lindores Farm, Fifeshire, Thomas Mitchell went to sea at an early age. He made two voyages, but did not care for the life. At seventeen he joined the 2nd Battalion Black Watch, and eventually became Corporal Piper. Once when the Regiment was supplying the Guard of Honour to H.M. Queen Victoria, at Balmoral, he was the Corporal Piper, and met the late P.M. William Campbell. These two later met again for the first time since that day at Balmoral, at the Haney Games, several years ago. They had a long and interesting conversation about what had taken place since, and the piping friends they had in common.

Tom Mitchell was on the reserve list when the South African War broke out, and rejoined his Unit as a Colour Sergeant. Of all the engagements the Unit participated in, the most interesting was the Battle of Magersfontein. He told of seeing the bodies of three Colonels, lying side by side at Magersfontein, those of the Gordons, the Argyles and the H.L.I. Mitchell felt very bitter about this Battle, and said that it should not have taken place, and was against the wishes and advice of his idol Maj. Gen. Wauchope, who was one of the first killed. Annually Mitchell inserted an announcement in the Weekly Scotsman, at the anniversary of Magersfontein.

After returning to Scotland he joined the Dundee Police, and was responsible for organizing the Dundee Police Pipe Band. At the outbreak of hostilities in 1914, he received a commission in the Somerset Light Infantry, and retired with the rank of Captain.

Back in civilian life, Thomas Mitchell was rather unsettled, and eventually bought a hotel. He did not like the life of an innkeeper, and left this business. Finally through the efforts of Winston Churchill,

he received an appointment with the Irish Police, and went to Cork as an Inspector. Here he had many hectic times - too numerous to mention.

After his retirement from the Irish Police, he came to Canada, and settled first in Saskatchewan. He eventually arrived in Vancouver during the hungry 1930's. Thomas Mitchell turned his energies towards the Wallace Pipe Band in North Vancouver, and served as its Pipe Major for several years. This interest continued unabated until the end, and he could be found every Thursday enjoying a tune at the Beatty Street Armoury.

Thomas Mitchell was an exceptionally well read man, and was noted for his pride and independence. In later years, he unbent slightly, and would accept small favours, but would always try to do something for the donor in return.

At his funeral, the Rev. Turpin said in tribute to Thomas Mitchell: "He and others like him patrolled the outposts of the world, in small detachments, keeping the peace and doing their duty for Queen and Country". He was a most remarkable man.

- Patrick J. Campbell -

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EVENING OF PIPING: - MAY 19th.

A General Meeting will be held on Friday, May 19th, in the Band Room at the Seaforth Armoury. This meeting will commence at 8:00 p.m., and we would ask you to be prompt. An Evening of Piping will be held after the meeting, and it is hoped that we have a good turnout.

We would ask anyone who is interested to bring his pipes and give us a tune. These evenings have been most successful in the past, and the evening should be an enjoyable one.

Refreshments will be available.

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BI-MONTHLY COMPETITION - APRIL 21st.

At the Bi-Monthly Competition, held on Friday, April 21st, at the Seaforth Armoury, the judge, Edmund Esson, chose the following winners:

Novice Strathspey and Reel:

1. Linda Rowe    2. Dorothy MacArthur    3. Laurie McIlvena

Juvenile 6/8 Marches:

1. Raymond Irvine    2. John MacLeod    3. Bruce Topp  
4. Glen Snow

Junior Jigs:

1. Bobby MacDonald

Amateur Marches:

1. Bill Elder    2. Peggy Gillies

Senior Amateur Old Highland Airs:

1. James Coubrough.

The final Bi-Monthly competitions of the season will be held on June 16th.

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THE PIPE BAND:

We would recommend all bandsmen, both pipers and drummers, and all pipe band enthusiasts, to subscribe to "The Pipe Band", the official organ of the Scottish Pipe Band Association. This magazine, which is produced bi-monthly, contains a great deal of interesting and useful material concerning band events in Britain and abroad, including contest results. If you are interested in obtaining "The Pipe Band", subscriptions are 7/- per six issues post free, or 14/- per twelve issues. Address your orders to:

R. McCreath,  
General Secretary,  
The Scottish Pipe Band Association,  
216 Ledard Road,  
Glasgow, S2, Scotland.

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BRANCH 15, CANADIAN LEGION PIPE BAND:

A new pipe band is being formed in Abbotsford under the sponsorship of Branch 15, Canadian Legion. We recently obtained a copy of the April issue of "The Grapevine", produced by this Branch, in which the endeavours of the band instructor, Dave Steele, of Vedder Crossing, were amusingly described in a poem entitled "The Chanters".

Oor Davy Steele the deil did play,  
When pipes he came tae teach us,  
And ilka wife began tae pray,  
The deil himsel' wad reach us.

On chanters we blew nicht and day,  
Wi' muckle squawk and feeble toot,  
They'd run as wet as Rothesay Bay,  
Tae start again we'd wring them oot.

Some women said it made them sick,  
Tae live tae see such capers,  
Tae see grown men blaw on a stick,  
And stare at scraps o' papers.

The cats in toon were a' struck dumb,  
The dogs a' left their maisters,  
Tae dig in middens for a crumb,  
Praise be that men are wasters.

The weans a' cried for peace and quiet,  
And milk that wasna curdled,  
But that, alas, maun be their diet,  
'til we have grace notes hurdled.

We give our best wishes to this new band, and it is our hope that they will rapidly improve so that the above described reception will no longer exist.

VANCOUVER ISLAND PIPERS' SOCIETY ANNUAL BANQUET.

The spirit of Auld Scotland was fully captured at Lougheed's Banquet Club in Victoria when the Vancouver Island Pipers' Society held its annual banquet on April 15. There was a satisfactory turnout; Dave Ross piped "Brose and Butter", and after a good dinner the company settled back to enjoy the pipers, each man of whom no doubt felt that, like the Deil in Tam o' Shanter, "To gie them music was his charge".

Participating were the following units:- Canadian Scottish, under P.M. F.E. Knight; The Orange Pipe Band, David Carley; quartette trained by P.M. Ian Duncan, and a juvenile quartette - quite astonishing - brought from Seattle by Jack Ironside. In the solo events President Peter George won the Graham cup for Old Highland Airs, and J.A. MacKay carried off the Colonel Donald McGugan trophy in the 60 and over class. Good fingering and well tuned pipes throughout - a pleasure to listen to.

The programme was varied by spirited Scottish songs by Bill Thomson, and heartwarming exhibitions of Highland dancing by pupils of Adeline Duncan, to Jamie Troy's pipes.

Guests of honor with their ladies were the Rev. A.I. Avery, Major J.L. Gallagher, and J.N. Ironside.

To anyone inclined to express a dim view of the piping situation in the Victoria area a fitting admonition would simply be, - Ye needna fash!

James A. Berry  
Secretary Treasurer  
Vancouver Island Pipers' Society

TUNES OF GLORY:

You should not miss the current movie "Tunes of Glory", a tale about a dramatic internecine struggle within a Highland Battalion. Although the rather unusual and controversial plot of this picture, which stars Alec Guinness and John Mills, may not be completely to your liking, you will undoubtedly enjoy the piping, which is very evident throughout.

Vancouver audiences who saw Duncan Macrae in the 1960 White Heather Concert will especially enjoy his portrayal of a wise and gentle Pipe Major. "Tunes of Glory" is well worth seeing, and is unusual in its wide use of the pipes.

PIPER FINDLATER, V.C.

Because of the recent interest shown in the exploits of Piper Findlater, V.C., in this publication and in others, we thought that you might be interested in reading a detailed account of his valour at Dargai. We have therefore taken the liberty of reproducing the relevant passage in "The Piper in Peace and War", by C. A. Malcolm.

"Of all the campaigns in which the Gordons have borne a distinguished part, none outshines the Dargai war of 1897. The eyes of the world were drawn to it; the successful ascent by the 1st Battalion of the steep hill, dominated by the tribesmen who had till then been masters of the situation, provided one of the dramatic thrills. The Gurkhas and the Dorsets had attempted to storm the enemy's entrenchments but had to give up; and their commanding officer reported it impossible, owing to the great numbers of the enemy lining the edge of the plateau. It was then that the general officer commanding the 2nd Division ordered the brigadier-general to move up the Gordon Highlanders and the 3rd Sikhs. The task was great and the odds seemed all against the successful achievement. The general, however, had deputed it to the Gordon Highlanders and the pride of the regiment was touched. The words of Colonel Matthias to his battalion, "The General says this hill must be taken at all costs - the Gordon Highlanders will take it," sounded like a clarion and rang in the ears of all who heard them. In his despatch, General Sir W. Lockhart wrote: "The dash of the Gordons - headed by their pipers, and led by Lieut. Col. Matthias, C.B., with Major Macbean on his right and Lieut. A.F. Gordon on his left - through a murderous fire, had, in forty minutes, won the heights". Up the precipitous path leading to the crest they went, "the men cheering like mad"; it was then, during this dash, that Piper Findlater won his world-wide fame. Wounded and unable to move, he continued, amidst all the heavy firing, to play the regimental march. So, too, did Piper Milne, in spite of a bullet wound in the chest. The hill was won; the enemy did not wait for the last of our reinforcements, but fled.

It was rightly deemed a brilliant affair in which several officers and men had been preeminent in valour. Pipers Findlater and Milne were singled out for particular praise, but a discrimination was exercised between the respective claims of each for a suitable decoration, Findlater being awarded the V.C., while Milne got the D.C.M. Never before had there been so much enthusiasm expressed upon a feat for which the bronze cross "For Valour" had been given. In the words of Colonel Gardyne, "The incident of the wounded piper continuing to play, being telegraphed home, took the British public by storm, and when Findlater arrived in England he found himself famous.

Reporters rushed to interview him; managers offered him fabulous sums to play at their theatres; the streets of London and all the country towns were placarded with his portrait; when, after his discharge, he was brought to play at the military tournament, royal personages and distinguished generals shook him by the hand; his photograph was sold by thousands; the Scotsmen in London would have let him swim in champagne, and the daily cheers of the multitude were enough to turn an older head than that of this young soldier."

Piper Milne, too, had a most enthusiastic reception on rejoining his battalion, and the honour of a telegram addressed to the O.C. from Her Majesty Queen Victoria in which she inquired for the health of Milne.

Findlater had to "weather" many trying storms of adverse criticism. To play his pipes on the stage was deemed derogatory to the distinction of a V.C. holder, but, then, man cannot live on a mere bronze cross and a title alone. And so it arose out of all the discussions in the newspaper Press and in Parliament, that the authorities decided to grant, along with the Cross, an annual payment of a sum that might range, according to the needs of the recipient, from 10 to 50 pounds. The piper's V.C. was thus a landmark in the history of the most coveted distinction in the British army."

#### THE HIGHLAND DANCER:

We recently received issue No. 1 of the Highland Dancer, published by Heather Duncan Jolley, formerly of Victoria, and now of Vancouver. This attractive magazine, which will be published bi-monthly, is surprizingly the only magazine dealing exclusively with highland dancing. It is intended to include in "The Highland Dancer" biographical material, competition results, news concerning recitals, socials, etc. and matters of a controversial nature. The magazine will be circulated in Canada, the United States, Scotland, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and all other countries where highland dancing is done.

If any of you are interested in obtaining a subscription to "The Highland Dancer", the subscription rate is \$2.00 for six bi-monthly issues. Contact Heather Duncan Jolley, 2250 York Avenue, Vancouver 9, B.C.

HIGHLAND GAMES:

We would like to announce the dates of the Highland Gatherings to be held this summer:

May 27th	-	Bellingham
July 8th	-	Nanaimo
July 22nd	-	Vancouver
July 29th	-	Victoria
August 5th	-	Seattle
August 19th	-	Astoria-Portland

Highland Games are being held in Bellingham for the first time, and are to be conducted as a part of the Bellingham Blossom Time Festival. It is the hope of those organizing these games that they will become an annual event, and that they will form a regular member of our Pacific International Highland Games Association. There will be a full slate of piping, pipe band and dancing events, and we would heartily recommend that you take part in or attend these Games. All inquiries can be made to: The Games Secretary, Isla Paterson, 2296 Chuckanut Drive, Bellingham, Wash.

The Games, normally conducted at Portland, will be held this year at Astoria, in conjunction with the city's sesqui-centennial celebrations.

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DON'T FORGET:

EVENING OF PIPING:	MAY 19th
BELLINGHAM GAMES:	MAY 26th

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