

B.C. PIPERS' NEWSLETTER



MAY 1983
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MAY 1983

THE B.C. PIPERS' NEWSLETTER IS PUBLISHED BY THE BRITISH COLUMBIA'S PIPERS ASSOCIATION AND IS DISTRIBUTED TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE B.C. PIPERS' ASSOCIATION.

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B.C. PIPERS' 51ST ANNUAL GATHERING

It was my great pleasure and honor to be the invited judge from Scotland for this years 51st Annual Gathering and competition run by the B.C. Pipers' Association. From the moment that I was met at the airport by Mr. and Mrs. Duncan Fraser until the time of departure when saying good bye to Mary and Ian MacKinnon my stay in Vancouver was made so very pleasant by the kindness shown to me by everyone.

The competitions took place over two days, the first day being taken over solely by the Piobaireachd events as far as my judging duties were concerned. The Junior and Amateur events were at very high standard and special mention can be made of the very high degree of finger accuracy displayed especially by many of the girl competitors - indeed when making up the points and critic sheets for these competitors it occurred to me how little I had to say in this department. These events started about 9:30 a.m. and carried through until 3:30 and after a short break I was joined by Ed Neigh (who had been judging the light music) and we sat down to judge the Professional Piobaireachd Competition.

Many fine performances were heard and both Ed and myself were very much impressed by the musical talents of all the competitors. The winner was Ian Whitelaw who gave a very fine performance of the Lament for Donald Duaghal MacKay, the highlight of which was the playing of the beautiful 1st variation which could only have been heard better on a very few occasions. Probably realising that the tune had gone well at this stage, Ian proceeded to play the remainder of the piece in very careful fashion as if as it were not to spoil anything that had gone before. It was therefore a performance of two halves.

Placed 2nd was Helen Niven with a very smooth rendering of the Lament for Captain MacDougall which was marred only by some slight chirps at times when making the F gracenote - one impressive thing here was that she wasted no time in tuning and started to play more or less after striking up. An object lesson perhaps for all of us.

Hal Senyk was placed 3rd with Mary's Praise which is a tune containing many variations, the hard task being to meld them all together to give continuity through the piece. Hal to my ear failed to do this even though there were many individual passages of high musical content. He chose also to omit the a mach variation which many would consider to be mandatory in a tune of this type.

Jas Hardie despite playing a C for B in the final variation of Battle at Auldearn was placed 4th. His excellent bagpipe and finger technique being one of the features of the competition.

James Barrie's MacLeod of Raasays Salute played in a now seldom heard style was very much appreciated by the judges but unfortunately his drones started going out of tune after the thumb variation and this seemed to affect him as he started rushing the tune from then on losing much of his earlier control and presentation. He also had a note mistake in the thumb variation.

It was obvious that the Unjust Incarceration was well suited to Bruce Gandy who handled this testing piece with comparative ease despite having one of his tenor drones pop off. He also played bar 6 of line 2

through twice.

The best sounding bagpipe in the competition was produced by Jas Troy and his King's Taxes was going well until the bass drone stopped. Dan Diesnners Nameless Tune was full of music, good fingers and good bagpipe but he wandered off the tune on two or three occasions as did Alison Palmer. After making a good job of the groundwork of the difficult Battle of Park - Colin Gemmil seemed unhappy with the Bicker even after interpreting the ground in great fashion. He had some difficulty in makin the throuws to high G and this seemed to unsettle him in his crunluath variation

The seldom heard but beautiful "Cave of Gold" was played by Jill Laurie but she mixed up the notes in the 2nd line of var 2 at the middle variations. A musical performance none the less.

Jas Macdonald from Regina was playing the Lament for Macdonalds Tutor in good style until he broke down. This is a demanding tune and we had the impression his bagpipe was on the strong side and this was not helped by the fact that he took a long time tuning.

Bill Hawes played the testing and demanding Lament for the Children and got through it even despite being handicapped by a sharp F and flat high A which notes are dominant throughout this piece. His strong fingers handled the difficult technique without problem although the judges felt that he had "jumped into the deep end" with this tune.

It was quite a surprise when the cpmposed Peter Aumonier lost his way early on in the Lament for Donald Duaghal MacKay as up until then he was presenting the tune in fine style on a sweet bagpipe. To my ear he was also pausing too long at the end of phrases thereby bringing the tune to a halt every few bars especially in the later variations.

Mike Grey also lost his way at an early stage in Tulloch Ard and both Jas Stewart and Bernie Rudsit has similar problems with their presentation of MacLeod of Paasaye Salute and Black Donald's March respectively although they both battled on to the end of their pieces displaying much musical talent in the pieces.

Scott MacAuley showed much promise with the Wee Spree but lost the place somewhat when he entered and played the GDE variation much too quickly.

I had the task of judging the proffesional MSR on my own on the Saturday morning and placed the meticulous Bruce Gandy 1st with Kilbowie Cottage, Cameronian Rant and Charles Welcome followed closely by the flamboyant Kelly Todd and the powerful and accurate Steve Geddes. This was a competition of the highest quality with all competitors playing to a very high standard both technically and musically. So much so that making up the prize list for this event was the hardest part of my judging duties over the two days.

The most popular event according to the audience numbers was the mini-band competition on the Saturday evening. I had last heard many of these bands a few years ago and much progress has been made throughout the grades since then.

The prowess of Triumph Street and the City of Victoria is of course very well known in Scotland and added to this now is the very formidable band from Simon Fraser University who I understand are going to play in Scotland this summer and would certainly make their mark.

I have always been a traditionalist as far as pipe band music is concerned but on this occasion I was deeply moved by the renditions of All Through the Night and the Welsh National Anthem played by the Fraser and Victoria Bands.

After two days of judging through all events both Ed and I were tired when we put the pencil down for the last time at the end of the last performance but we were both of the opinion that judging the Vancouver Indoor Meet was a very fine musical experience.

Andrew Wright

WINTER SCHOOL, APRIL 4-8, 1983

This year's winter school should be considered a successful one. Our chief instructor was Andrew Wright of Scotland, and he was assisted by Hal Senyk, Jim Troy, and some "new faces", Steve Geddes, Allison Palmer, and Duncan Fraser, who did their jobs admirably. The format was the same as last year's, with the instructors teaching the students during the day and receiving a piobaireachd "session" themselves at the end of the day with Andrew.

This format is a successful one, and I think should be followed in the future, depending of course on the chief instructor being chosen on the basis of attracting experienced professionals to assist. I feel more instructors is an asset, giving smaller class sizes and a chance for more individual attention.

The day was divided into a morning and afternoon class as opposed to last year's, when we had two classes morning and afternoon each. We had felt last year that we spent too much time changing classes and didn't have enough time to get too deeply into a given subject - hence the change this year. Perhaps a compromise is in order, especially with the younger classes, where a three-hour class can be a very long one; Andrew Wright recommended the same at the end of the school, and also recommended more practice time allotted between classes.

I feel quite happy with the high work rate and with the curriculum that was taught; there was a session on maintenance, drone reeds, and musical theory taught school-wide, and some more advanced work on chanter reeds with the senior pupils. There was strong emphasis on tuning and blowing, even with the novices, and I think they benefitted from the exposure.

It was refreshing to have the school after the Annual Gathering rather than before; there was far less pressure to brush up the pupils' individual tunes, and more time to learn new ones and new ideas to work on. The school was more relaxed than previous, and I prefer the dates selected

this year.

Financially, I think the school was within reasonable bounds. Our total receipts from tuition were \$1,862.50 (unfortunately slightly lower than anticipated due to three last-minute cancellations). Disbursements were as follows: school rental, \$189.69, lunch expenses \$53.85, teachers' fees \$1,900. (\$600. for Andrew Wright, \$300. each for Hal, Jim and Steve, and \$200. each for Allison and Duncan), for a net loss to the Association of \$281.04.

The location of the school, Stride Avenue Community School, was more than adequate, and the staff there very cooperative; a special thanks should go to Mary McKinnon for her assistance during the school, and for helping us find a good location.

And a special thanks to Peter McNeil for his support for the school, both during the planning stages and with such a large turnout of his students; without the students there can be no school.

For next year, should we decide to hold the school in conjunction with the Annual Gathering, I would recommend a similar type of school with the changes noted above. An alternative would be to hold a separate school in the summer, where we would not be constrained in any way by our choice of judges for the gathering - one possible advantage to running the school separately would be to ensure a continuity of instructors where we feel a quality chief instructor such as Andrew Wright should be asked to return. This, however, is a subject that should be addressed by the Board in the future.

Hal Senyk

ANNUAL DINNER AND KNOCKOUT FINAL

Saturday, April 30th saw the resurrection of the B.C. Pipers' Annual Dinner. The Gizeh Shrine Temple in Burnaby provided a most pleasant setting for the dinner and knockout.

The pre-dinner cocktail hour provided an opportunity for members and guests to mingle and discuss the evening's competition. The dinner provided hearty fare for those partaking. The G. Davidson Music Corporation provided a most enjoyable selection of background music. Dinner was followed by a short break to allow for a stretching of legs (and belts!) and a refilling of glasses.

The knockout final began with a fine performance by Peter Aumonier. Next up was Robbie MacNeil who gave the crowd an entertaining selection of tunes. Angus MacPherson was the third of five finalists and gave a most enjoyable medley. Rob Menzies, (newly crowned Pipe Major of the Triumph Street Pipe Band) played well and there is no way I could say anything else about him because he gives me my pipe chanter reeds and I am not keen on pulled stomach muscles. The last to play was Jack Lee who ended the evening's contest with a stirring, crowd-pleasing selection.

The task of the three judges, Terry Lee, Jamie Troy, and Hal Senyk was not an easy one. Perhaps that is why they adjourned to the kitchen for a half an hour to reach a decision, (either that or they found the leftover Twinkies from dinner). The final decision was:

- 1st Jack Lee
- 2nd Peter Aumonier
- 3rd Angus MacPherson

In closing I would like to thank all those who helped make it an enjoyable evening. In future, however it would be nice to see a better turnout of Association members as these, theoretically, are the backbone of the Association.

Duncan Fraser

FOR SALE

BLACK WOOL DINNER JACKET AND VEST. SIZE 14-15. \$50. PHONE 463-6066.

SILVER AND IVORY PIPES, SILVER-SOLED HARDIE CHANTER AND PIPE BOX INCLUDED. PHONE GRAHAM DAVIDSON AT 687-8802.

11 PLASTIC TUCK PIPE CHANTERS. \$45. EACH, OR BEST OFFER.

2 TENOR DRUMS, GOOD CONDITION. \$100. EACH.

1 SET OF SILVER AND IVORY MOUNTED PIPES. BEST OFFER. FOR ANY OF THESE ITEMS, PHONE MIKE EVANS AT 942-4286 OR JOHN NICHOL AT 980-1294.

PIPE CHANTER REEDS

JAMES McCOLL - Well finished reeds with a high pitch, excellent for individual competitors who want a quality medium to easy reed.

JOCK SPIER - Also well finished but with a lower pitch than McColl's, excellent on the new Sinclair chanters. Dependable enough for bands, quality high enough for the individual piper.

WARNOCK - Warnock reeds have been the rave of pipe bands this year. The reeds should be kept dry as moisture will change the tone. Also the top of the reed, or tip, is quite fragile and should be handled carefully. The pitch is high and gives off considerable volume for the amount of blowing required. Continued on pg. 8

NEW TREASURE OF PIPE MUSIC ON THE WAY

Headquarters
Ulster Defence Regiment
British Forces Post Office 825

The collection described in the enclosed leaflet, was compiled by Pipe Major Brian MacRae, Her Majesty The Queen's Piper, and myself over the last few years.

Yours faithfully,
Brigadier P.W. Graham CBE
Commander Ulster Defence Regiment

One of the most comprehensive collections of pipe music ever to be published will come on the market this summer when the Gordon Highlanders produce Volume I of their Pipe Music Collection.

The theme for the Collection is attractive, musical, unpublished tunes and the book lives up to this with previously unpublished music by such piping greats as Pipe Majors G.S. McLennan, Donald MacLeod, James Robertson of Banff and more modern composers such as Donald MacPherson, A.G. Kenneth and Pipe Major Jimmy MacGregor.

The book has been compiled by two serving Gordon Highlanders, Brigadier Peter Graham and his co-author Pipe Major Brian MacRae, the Queen's personal piper.

There is a personal foreword by the Prince of Wales, Colonel in Chief The Gordon Highlanders, in which he says that pipe music has meant something very special to him since the days when, as a small boy at Balmoral, he was allowed to stay up as a special treat to watch the eight pipers who used to play round the dinner table in the evenings. From all Prince Charles says in the foreword it is clear that Balmoral is a favourite place of his.

The book is certain to make a major impact on the piping world because it includes a selection of unpublished compositions by the late Pipe Major McLennan, widely regarded as perhaps the greatest piper and pipe music composer of the century.

Although the emphasis is on pipe tunes either played by the Gordon Highlanders or composed by members of the Regiment, the authors have recognised no regimental boundaries in their search. Former Seaforth Highlander Pipe Major Donald MacLeod has contributed some of his own unpublished compositions. This is quite a coup and should go a long way towards ensuring the success of the venture.

An excellent history of the Drums and Pipes of the Regiment, illustrated with many fine photographs, traces their story from February 1794 when the regiment was raised to the present day. Brief notes on why the tunes were composed also make fascinating reading.

The need for a regimental pipe music book was first discussed by the authors when they served together with the 1st Battalion in 1976. "We

got down to researching pipe tunes and piping history", said Brigadier Graham, "and the more we discovered the more fascinating it became."

"We have written to pipers and affiliated regiments in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United States and South Africa in our search for original, unpublished material and for little-known details of the Gordon Highlanders' piping history. I believe the results were well worthwhile."

The Gordon Highlanders Pipe Music Collection, Volume I, is published by Paterson's Publications Ltd, 38 Wigmore Street, London, and printed in Great Britian, and will be on sale in June 1983.

NEIL DICKIE'S "FIRST BOOK"

Neil Dickie's "First Book" of tunes, newly released -- and not available at your local newsstands -- is an unabashed pitch to the "kitchenpiper" in us all. It has no pretensions to orthodoxy, but its levity at times undercuts Neil's own mission to make "kitchenpiping" a serious form of piping. And Neil isn't even concerned.

What's in the book? Compositions (and comments) by Neil himself (many of which we have already heard on his own kitchenpipe) including "The Kitchenpiper", "Patti", "The Clumsy Lover", and "Nancy Lee", and some tunes by Robbie MacNeil, David Saul, Michael Grey, Scott MacAuley, Robert Mathieson, and others -- mostly Canadian. The quality of tunes varies greatly, in my opinion, some full of bounce and/or melody (I'd even try some of them myself, in private to preserve my conservative image), and some in the classic "desert island" mode (you'd play them if you were stuck on a desert island with nothing else to play and one of them floated by in a bottle).

To avoid lawsuits and physical abuse, I will refrain from specifying which tunes are which.

Many of the tunes I have to admit I thoroughly enjoyed going through, and with luck, some will endure in the mainstream of piping. Congratulations to Neil for publishing these ones. Many are a direct challenge to the orthodox Scottish style, and although I do not fear that they will supplant the more traditional tunes, there is always they will distract the younger players from proper practice technique and emphasis -- and there are enough distractions for them as it is. These tunes are fun to play, especially to a 16-year old with machinegun fingers, whereas a John MacColl march may not be quite as glamorous at first sight.

But it is not often we see a serious book of "fun" tunes, and therein lies the parasox. Neil, to his credit, has gone on record emphasizing the importance of proper grounding in technique, music, and tone. And he has promised a second book of more traditional tunes. In the meantime this book is for fun. Enjoy it.

Hal Senyk

CONTEST CALENDAR FOR 1983

- May 22 - Victoria, B.C.
June 4 - Bellingham Games
June 11 - New Westminster
 Caledonian Club, Sacramento
June 25 - Fifth Ottawa Festival , Carleton University, Ottawa
July 9 - Penficton, B.C.
 Nanaimo, B.C.
July 30 - Scottish Society of Monterey, Peninsula College, Monterey
August 6 - Alaskan Scottish Highland Games, Anchorage, Alaska
August 7 - Scottish Highland Games Inc., San Diego
September 3 and 4 - Nelson's Annual Highland Games
 Caledonian Club of San Francisco at Santa Rosa
September 17 - Fresno Highland Games
September 24 and 25 - Irish Faire, Devonshire Downs, L.A.
October 22 and 23 - Clans of the Highlands, Chino

PIPING TIPS FROM ROY GRAHAM

When cutting holes in your pipe bag for the stocks, make a star instead of a round hole, using the resulting triangular pieces of leather to facilitate tying-in. Also when making the cut, use a block of wood for backing rather than the stock, since use of the stock can put nicks into it which will later form cracks.

For protection of the inside of drones, a light wax like Johnson's floor wax is recommended. Use only a light application. For the outside of your drones, try using a heavy wax like Simoniz car wax for protection. Roy uses wax instead of oil, reasoning that if the drones have any cracks on the inside, oil can seep in and expand the cracks.

from Bagpipes, Etc.

REEDS, cont'd.

M&H - Designed for individual competitors, this reed does not put out a lot of volume but rather is fairly easy to blow and gives out a high pitched sound. Excellent with recently produced chanters.

from Bagpipes, Etc.

SUMMER SCHOOLS

July 3rd - July 15th - North Idaho College 13th Annual Summer School for Piping, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Contact James R. McLeod, North Idaho College, 1000 W. Garden Ave., Coeur d'Alene, Idaho 83814. (208) 667-7422, ext 292 or Evenings (208) 667-4041.

August 7 - August 21st - Western Academy of Pipe Music Summer School, Vernon, B.C. Contact Shelagh Keyes, 12, 15875 - 20th Ave. Surrey, B.C. V4A 2B1 or phone 536-0718.

August 21st - September 2nd - GLENTRUIM SCHOOL OF PIPING 1983

Pipe Major Donald MacLeod M.B.E. achieved the distinction in the piping world of becoming a legend in his own time; as master player, composer, and teacher. Donald founded the Glentruim School of Piping in 1969 and was principal until his health failed and he could no longer make the trip from Scotland. His death in 1982 saddened us all and spurred us on to continue in the tradition he taught; to offer the highest calibre of piping instruction to students of all levels.

This year we are fortunate to have as instructors René Cusson, Judy Morrison, Robert Rief, Allison Farver, and Rolf Korteguard. The practical side of piping will be taught along with a sound basis in theory and bagpipe maintenance. Classes are held at the David Thompson University Centre which overlooks beautiful Kootenay Lake and is surrounded by the majestic Selkirk Mountains. The dormitory accomodation is excellent and the food, good and wholesome. The school will run from Sunday, August 21st to Friday, September 2nd, 1983, with the graduation coinciding with Nelson's 41st Annual Highland Games to be held as usual on Labor Day Weekend September 3rd and 4th. In keeping with our policy of quality rather than quantity, early registration is advised. Cost of tuition and accomodation (Canadian funds) is as follows: 2 weeks - \$350.00, 1 week - \$230.00. Tuition only: 2 weeks - \$175.00, 1 week - \$100.00.

Next year the possibility of including drumming instruction is being considered and we would like to get some feedback on that idea from all of you drummers out there.

For applications to the Glentruim Piping School please contact: Glentruim School of Piping, P.O. Box 804, Nelson, B.C. V1L 5S9, or phone Tina Shields (604) 352-3042.

For more information about the Highland Games and/or competition forms please write Kootenay Kiltie Pipe Band Association, P.O. Box 6, Nelson, B.C., V1L 5P7 or phone Jean Hale (604) 352-7155.

WELCOME TO THE BELLINGHAM GAMES

The trailer space used in former years for the "overniters" has regrettably been converted to a discus field and is no longer available. You are welcome to park your trailers and vans on either side of the adjoining road or in the parking lot. Thankyou.

Bill Paterson, Bellingham.

B.C. Pipers' Newsletter
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