

# B. C. PIPERS' NEWSLETTER



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

OCTOBER 1970 No. 106



B.C. PIPERS' NEWSLETTER

Published by the British Columbia Pipers' Association

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B.C. Pipers' Newsletter

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1870

Dear Mother  
I received your letter of the 10th and was  
glad to hear from you. I am well and  
hope these few lines will find you the same.  
I have not much news to write at present.  
The weather here is very warm now.  
I must close for this time. Write soon.  
Your affectionate son,  
John Smith

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Dear Mother  
I received your letter of the 15th and was  
glad to hear from you. I am well and  
hope these few lines will find you the same.  
I have not much news to write at present.  
The weather here is very warm now.  
I must close for this time. Write soon.  
Your affectionate son,  
John Smith

## VANCOUVER KIWANIS BOYS IN SCOTLAND - 1970

The band of nineteen members left on August 4th for Scotland to the parting music of the Burnaby Ladies' Pipe Band which turned out at the airport to see them off. The boys arrived at their destination near Glasgow on the following evening.

After our first competition in Princes Street Gardens in Edinburgh the boys were given a ten day holiday as there was no contest the following Saturday. They took advantage of this time to visit relatives and friends and see places of interest. Some went to the Highlands others to London, Ireland and Paris - getting the thrill of travelling to Calais, France by hovercraft. The boys must have had similar interests there as their groups met without prearrangement. On August 19th all were back "home" and practice resumed.

After the Rothesay Games, where the band played in Grade 3, the boys settled down to prepare for the great day at the Cowal Games in Dunoon. This year there was a record entry of 104 bands and a record attendance. The day was beautiful and calm - the best games weather I have yet enjoyed in Scotland.

The parade of bands to the grounds is closely supervised and stewards carefully time the departure of each band from the beach park for their one mile march to the grounds. The day is declared a civic holiday so almost all citizens turn out. The parade from the competitions back to the beach park becomes a great happy gala affair which rivals anything I have seen.

The boys won first for juvenile bands and the Glasgow News Trophy which has a sixty-three year history and has not been won by a band outside Scotland before.

On the following Saturday was the Shotts Games. This was a bright day but a strong cold wind spoiled the otherwise well organized games. These competitions are classed as the European Championships. Here the boys won the juvenile competition and the Clarkston Sharp Trophy.

On the next day, Sunday, the band competed at Meadowbank, the stadium of the Commonwealth Games this year. Here they were again awarded first for juvenile bands. They competed in Grade 3 against twelve bands and won 3rd place. This stadium will be the future site for the Edinburgh Scottish Championships.

There were three days left before departure time and the boys had time for visiting and shopping - tours to the Trossachs, the Borders and Burns Country were enjoyed by many of the boys.

Mr. and Mrs. Marshall and daughter Laurel who had accompanied the band had journeyed through Scotland and England, had been reunited with relatives and had "discovered" many more - of whom they were not previously aware.

When time allowed my wife and I went to the north - visited Pipe Major and Mrs. Gray at Coalsnaughton, Clackmannanshire, Mr. and Mrs. Neil Angus Macdonald in Inverness, whom we met earlier this year in Vancouver,

and Mr. Angus Macpherson, 93 years, who is the only person to have received his M.B.E. from the Queen in Balmoral Castle. His knowledge of pipers and piping spans four generations and he is the adjudicator at many of the northern piping competitions.

We were also very pleasantly received by Dr. John MacAskill who was later successful in the piping competitions at the Northern Meeting in Inverness.

From Lairg we went by way of Lochinver and Ullapool to Skye where we visited Dunvegan Castle and the MacCrimmon Cairn at Borreraig.

While in Glasgow the boys were visited by Mr. Hector MacFadyen who, the following week, again added the Cowal Piobaireachd Championship to his laurels.

With the Commonwealth, Cowal and European Championships added to the Pacific International Juvenile Aggregate the boys feel that the year has in many ways been an outstanding success.

- MALCOLM NICHOLSON

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#### THINK IT OVER

Pipe Major Iain McLeod of the Edinburgh City Police Pipers Band recorded four bagpipe tunes on tape. The tape was sent to London where a record company produced and distributed 1,000 LP's -- of which 400 were sold. A record was duly sent to the Pipe Major, who was instantly humiliated. Reason: It had been recorded backward and not one of the 400 English buyers had complained.

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#### SCOTS DIRK GANGS AWA!

The sgian dubh - pronounced skean doo - is an ornamental dagger that Scotsmen traditionally tuck into the top of a stocking on the right leg when they wear a kilt.

In this age it's a suspect weapon for Scots flying into the wild blue yonder.

Hugh MacDonald, a Glasgow journalist, was about to board a plane from Mexico City to the Bahamas when a guard spotted the sgian dubh.

MacDonald had to give up his dress dagger - but was allowed to keep his kilt.

Hugh MacPherson, a Glasgow city councilman, was headed for Paris at London's Heathrow Airport. A guard made him pack away his sgian dubh with his bagpipes.

MacPherson said, "I asked if I looked the sort of person who would attempt to hijack an aircraft, but the policeman was adamant."

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JOHN A. MACLEOD IN SCOTLAND

In last month's issue of the Newsletter we made brief mention of John A. MacLeod's success in the Gold Medal Piobaireachd Competition at Oban. Many of our readers have enquired about John's trip to Scotland and we promised to provide more details. On talking with John he provided the Newsletter with the following account of his travels.

Winning the Banner Competition in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho in July was the event that made John's trip to Scotland possible, since the first prize was free air fare with the intent he play in the Gold Medal Competition. Although somewhat worried about the short period of time in which to acquire a passport and the required inoculations there proved to be no problems.

John was aware that the Kiwanis Pipe Band was also planning a trip to the Old Country so he contacted Malcolm Nicholson concerning the possibility of obtaining a seat on the same plane. As it turned out there happened to be one seat vacant and John was on his way to London on August 4, 1970.

On arriving in London John boarded a train for Glasgow where he stayed with friends for several days. His next stop was Glenshiel where he stayed for five days with relatives who showed him the local spots of interest.

While in Coeur d'Alene John had met Dr. John MacAskill whom accompanied Seumas MacNeill to judge the events. Dr. MacAskill had returned to Scotland by this time and John made a point of visiting with him in Lairg. Dr. MacAskill was pleased that John had dropped by and surprised our Canadian visitor by taking a week out of his busy schedule to accompany John to Portree, in Skye, where the duo spent several days with Dr. MacAskill's friends. While in Portree John attended the Portree Games as a spectator. However, after listening to the Piobaireachd competition he met Donald Lindsay, a former U.S. Airforce band member, who convinced John he should compete in the 6/8 March, and Hornpipe and Jig competition. John surprised many at the event by winning 3rd prize in the Hornpipe and Jig in a field of 20 pipers. Dignitaries at the competition included Dame Flora MacLeod and our own Minister of Manpower, Allan MacEachern. The judges for the day were Angus MacPherson and D.R. MacLennan.

After the Games John motored with Dr. MacAskill and 93 year old Angus MacPherson to Kylerhea. During the 2 hour wait for the ferry to Glenelg, John received many pointers from Mr. MacPherson on the subject of Piobaireachd. He also had the opportunity to meet and discuss piping with Duncan MacFadyen and John Garroway.

From Glenelg John returned to Glensheil. The next day he bade farewell to relatives and set out for Glasgow. On arriving in the industrial city John met Iain MacCrimmon from Edmonton who had come to Scotland with his parents with the intent of playing in the Amateur competition. John and Iain journeyed to Oban together travelling through Glencoe and Glenorkie and arrived the night before the competition on August 25th. Unfortunately there was no accommodation and John spent a somewhat uncomfortable night sleeping on two chairs in the lobby of the Glenshiel House. The next morning he went to Corran Hall, the sight of the Gold Medal Competition.

The first piobaireachd was played at 9:30 A.M. and the last at 6:00 P.M. Of the 39 competitors John was to play 36th. He tried to relax during the long wait by listening to the open competition and keeping his pipes tuned. At 5:00 P.M. John played his piobaireachd. Immediately following the competition Seumas MacNeill taped an interview with John for his B.B.C. radio program, "Chanter". The results of the competition were announced at 7:00 P.M.

To say the least, John was ecstatic. He had not given a thought to placing in the event. He enjoyed his victory in the company of John McEwing of Spokane, Iain MacCrimmon and family and Ann his cousin. This was the first time a North American had been in the prize list during the history of the event.

John's next stop was Dunoon where he competed at Cowal but failed to repeat his prize winning performance. He enjoyed the rest of the day visiting with the Kiwanis Boys and listening to the Band Competition.

The next day he took the ferry to Gourock and then the train to Glasgow where he visited a cousin. He visited more relatives in North Uist where he celebrated his 21st birthday on September 4th. Several days later he took the train to London where once again he encountered accommodation problems but finally after many unsuccessful attempts found a sleeping room. He spent his last evening in Great Britain in a typical English Pub before boarding a plane for Vancouver the next morning.

John's experience will most certainly be a highlight in his life for many years to come and we offer our congratulations for his excellent piping efforts and representing Vancouver and the Spokane Piobaireachd Society so admirably.

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#### GENERAL MEETING AND KNOCK-OUT COMPETITION

Last year's General Meetings and Knock-Out Competitions were an unprecedented success. If the size of the knock-out competition class is any indication, this year's meetings should be twice as successful. Last year eight professional pipers entered the event, this year we have sixteen. In order to complete the competing by June, 1971 we are having two competitions each meeting night and a fine night of piping is guaranteed.

Be sure to make a note of the competition nights:

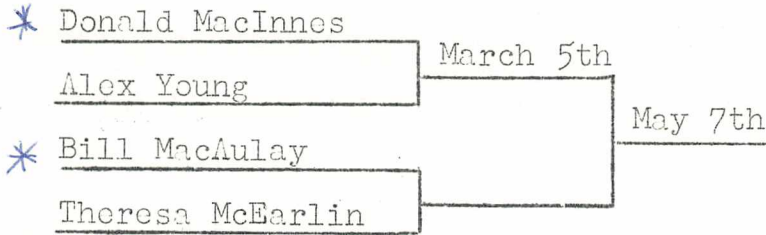
November 6th	March 5th
December 4th	April 2nd
January 8th	May 7th
February 5th	June 4th

The draw for the 1970 - 1971 Professional Knock-Out Competition is shown on the following page. Hope to see you all at the first meeting on November 6th.

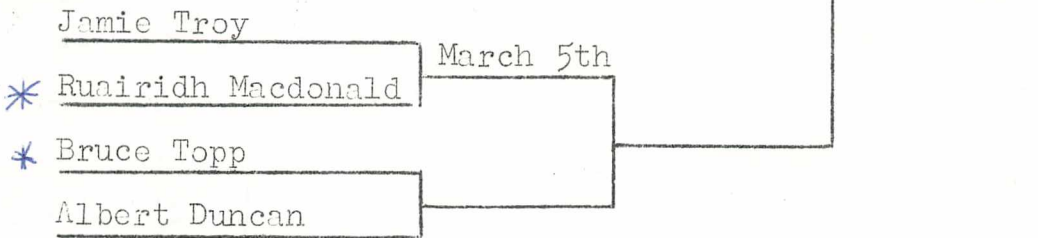


PROFESSIONAL KNOCK-OUT COMPETITION SCHEDULE

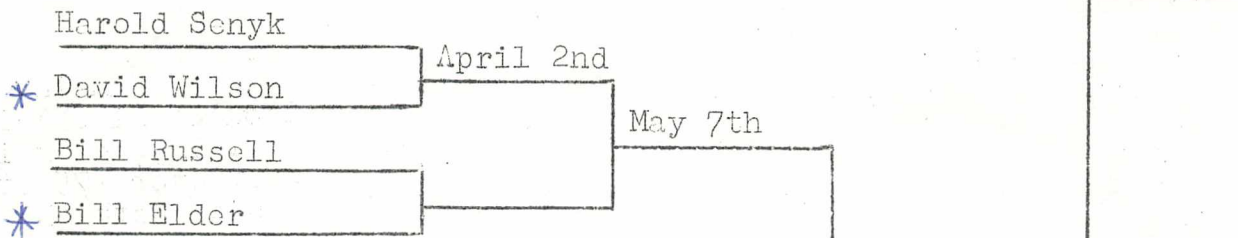
November 6th, 1970



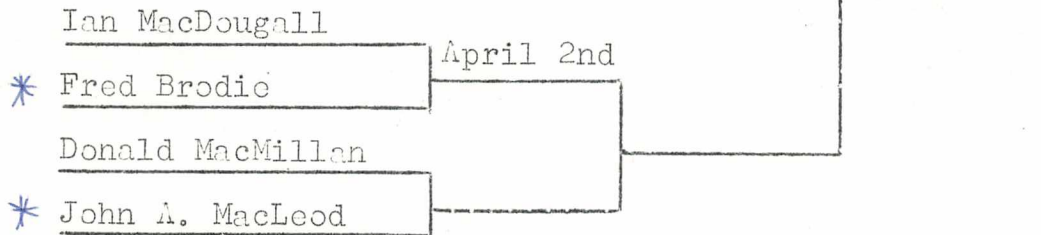
December 4th, 1970



January 8th, 1971



February 5th, 1971



KNOCK-OUT COMPETITION RULES

1. Each competitor will be required to play the tune or tunes of his choice.
2. Each competitor's performance must not be less than 10 minutes and no more than 15 minutes.
3. Three judges are to hold up a card to show the winner's name after both competitors have played.
4. In the case of a tie a competitor should be prepared to give a five minute tie-breaking performance. These must be different tunes from those already played.
5. First prize - \$100.00, second prize - \$50.00.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

2767 Mountview Place  
Burnaby 3, B.C.  
September 10, 1970

Dear Sirs:

It would be most appreciated if you could print this letter to advise the availability of the long awaited pipe music for the Scottish National dances. This music, all arranged some composed by P.M. Archie Cairns is designed to accompany his recording "Pipes for Dancing" which includes ten of these lesser known Highland dances. The Music is complete with notes on tempo, number of steps, repeats, etc. and will be enjoyed by most pipers I feel sure.

The set is available for \$3.00 plus tax at the above address on the mainland and from Mrs. Ian Duncan, 2506 Wootton Crescent, Victoria, B.C.

Your readers perhaps will be interested to know that B.C. was well represented amongst the "staff" at the Saskatchewan Summer School of the Arts held in Fort Qu'Appelle, Sask. in August. George Pryde of Powell River was Director of Drumming; Fred MacLeod of Powell River was teaching the advanced pipers and I was Director of the Highland Dancing. The Principal of the Piping School is P.M. Bill MacLeod of Pine Falls, Manitoba and his guest instructor is Donald MacLeod. The piping, drumming and dancing enrollment for the two week period was well over 175 students aged ten through twenty-three - they all appeared to enjoy both the facilities and the instruction.

At this time I would like to thank the newsletter staff who have faithfully forwarded the magazine to me during the past six years I have been away from B.C. It has been most welcome and through its pages I have been able to follow the news of many of my piping and dancing friends. After four years in Montreal and two in Winnipeg it is nice to be back in Vancouver - the green grass in January will be a treat no matter how wet it may be!

Yours very truly,

Heather A. Jolley

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Some of our members will remember the late Pipe Major William Bain. He was most active in our Association during its early years and was an accomplished piper. P.M. Bain's wife, Ann, passed away in Victoria on October 6, 1970 after a full life of 102 years. The B.C. Pipers' Association offers its sympathy to the Bain family.

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THE ARGYLLSHIRE GATHERING

Results at Oban were as follows:

Wednesday, August 26th

Open Piobaireachd - 1. John MacFadyon, Glasgow; 2. Donald Macpherson, Exmouth; 3. John Wilson, Campbeltown; 4. Cpl. Iain M. Morrison, Q.O. Hldrs.

The judges for this event were - Dr. K.A. Mackay, Major G. B. Murray, Pipe-Major Nicol MacCallum.

Piobaireachd - The Highland Society of London's Gold Medal - 1. Andrew Wright, Paisley; 2. K.J. MacLean, Barrhead; 3. John A. MacLeod, Canada; 4. Hugh A. MacCallum, Bridge of Allan; 5. John Garroway, Glasgow.

Judges were - Capt. J.A. MacLellan, M.B.E., Pipe-Major R. MacCallum, M.B.E., Pipe-Major A. MacDonald.

Thursday, August 27th

Marches - The Argyllshire Gathering Silver Medal - 1. James MacGregor, Glonalmond; 2. Angus J. MacLellan, City of Glasgow Police; 3. Arthur G. Gillies, Kilchrenan; 4. L/Cpl. J. Banks, Scots Guards; 5. Wm Connell, Hairmyres.

The judges were - Dr. K.A. Mackay, Pipe-Major Ronald MacCallum, M.B.E.

Strathspeys and Reels - The Royal Scottish Pipers' Society Star and the Angus John MacNeil, Barra, Memorial Cup - 1. Arthur G. Gillies, Kilchrenan; 2. Iain MacLellan, City of Glasgow Police; 3. William J. Morrison, Bornish; 4. Andrew Wright, Paisley; 5. James Young, Cumbernauld.

Judges were - Major G.B. Murray, Pipe-Major A. MacDonald.

March, Strathspey and Reel (Former Winners) - 1. Hugh A. MacCallum, Bridge of Allan; 2. John MacDougall, Arbroath; 3. John Wilson, Campbeltown.

Judges were - Capt. J.A. MacLellan, M.B.E., Pipe-Major Nicol MacCallum.

Marches (Local) - 1. Hamish G. Ross, Lochgilphead.

Strathspeys and Reels (Local) - 1. Hamish G. Ross, Lochgilphead.

Judges for the local events were - Pipe Major R. MacCallum, M.B.E., Pipe-Major A. MacDonald.

Reprinted from

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October, 1970

### PIPER OF THE MONTH

The Association Pipe Major and one of our more senior members is this month's Piper of the Month, Sebastian Nellies. Seb was born in 1888 in the Parish of Dunfermline, County of Fife where he resided for twenty-four years. Seb enrolled in the local dancing class at the age of ten together with some of the neighbourhood children, one of whom was later to become his wife. Coming from a very musical family, he gave up his dancing class after four years in favor of the violin. Three years later Seb started lessons on the bagpipes, following in the footsteps of his two older brothers. Seb's first band was the local Dunfermline Scottish Pipers Society Band in which he and his two brothers played. The band competed in the local games and won a few medals. Seb's tutor at this time was a previous pipe major of the band Alexander Wishart. After playing in this band for two years Seb suffered a hand injury at his work in the coal mines causing him to set aside his pipes for a time.

In 1912 Seb decided to join his brother in Canada. He landed in Halifax and quickly made his way to Hosmer, B.C., a small coal mining community near Fernie. This not being a Scottish community Seb seldom played his pipes. Later, Seb joined the crew of the C.P.R. which was constructing the Connaught Tunnel. He found among his fellow workers several pipers and they spent many happy hours piping. After the completion of the tunnel he moved to Merritt where he married Margaret, his childhood sweetheart, from the dancing class. Through his activities in the local St. Andrews and Caledonian Society Seb met Campbell Wallace and together they played in the local pipe band. Seb and his wife Margaret lived in Merritt from 1916 until 1939. The family then moved to Port Alberni and in 1942 Seb was asked to join the Wallace Pipe Band under the direction of Alex MacLean. This meant a further move to Vancouver and a job with Wallace Shipyard. After the war Seb played with the Spencer Remnant Pipe Band and later the Irish Fusiliers, both bands under the direction of Pipe Major George Allan.

Seb retired in 1958 to be with his seriously ill wife. Mrs. Nellies passed away shortly thereafter.

Seb has over the past years competed in the Annual Gathering in the Over 60 Class and his name appears on the trophy many times.

During 1960 Seb played with the Legion 83 Pipe Band under Pipe Major Tom Binnie. In rehearsals for the 1961 Tattoo in Vancouver Seb had his pipes stolen. This brought about an abrupt end to his piping.

Seb has been a member of the B.C. Pipers' Association since he arrived in Vancouver and has for the last few years been a member of the Board of Directors. In January of 1970 he was appointed Association Pipe Major and in May the Association presented him with a set of pipes. Seb manages to play his pipes at least once a week. Everyone at the General Meetings enjoys Seb's fine performances and all members appreciate his devotion to the Association.

Seb now lives with one of his two daughters and proudly boasts of 8 grandchildren and 10 great grandchildren. We of the B.C. Pipers' Association sincerely wish Seb many more happy piping years.

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP, 1970

by Seumas MacNeill

There seems to be some kind of doubt as to what kind of day we had for the World Championship at Aberdeen this year. Most of us felt that the weather was perfect for piping -- warm and dry, with only a spat of rain in the forenoon which came to nothing. The S.P.B.A. officials were delighted with the conditions, because hot sun would have lured the locals and holiday-makers to the beach. But it seems that some of our trans-atlantic visitors thought the day was dull, wet and even cold.

In order that the record may be kept right, this was one of our best days of the summer. If you come to Scotland for the games or the band contests, about the best you can expect is what we got.

The venue this time was as suitable as any, and a lot better than most in recent years. Ample tuning space is what the bands need, plus not too big an arena -- so that the spectators can also hear what goes on.

As usual, things took a while to warm up, for the juveniles and grade fours do not generally arouse tremendous enthusiasm except among their own supporters. There was however some excitement early on in the performance by the City of Dublin Boys. This group of very young boys had travelled overnight, but in spite of that they gave a very creditable performance. After the contest they left to travel overnight again to get back home sometime on Sunday. Such enthusiasm deserves to be rewarded, especially as they were the only band without branch membership of the S.P.B.A. to attend this year's world championship. Without them we would just have been having an inter-branch contest.

Predictably, the performances in Grade 4 were not world-shattering, or even Aberdeen-shattering, but all piping (for some people) is good piping, and it's fine that pipers at all stages play in competition.

Grades 3 and 2 were much more interesting, with some very good tunes from the winning bands in both of these sections. The fact that first and second prizes in Grade 2 were won by bands from outside Scotland is rather significant, in several ways. Are bands which are further away from the centres of piping making a bigger effort to succeed? Or is the grading system not too accurate outside of Scotland? Or are these bands just less likely to suffer from "poaching" -- because they are not near any Grade 1 bands?

This last is probably the most likely explanation, but of course grading is a real problem in England and Northern Ireland. In the latter case especially, the elevation of Armstrong Memorial and St. Patrick's to the top grade would cause some embarrassment, in that you can hardly hold a contest for two bands only. And this problem may well arise, for these bands are certainly better than some that have masqueraded as Grade 1 in Scotland this summer, even although St. Patrick's have not fulfilled the promise they showed when they came to the fore by winning the All-Ireland in 1968.

Audoubtedly however, the interest of everybody -- bands and spectators alike -- was concentrated mainly in the Grade 1 event. After all, the heavyweight championship is the one that really counts.

The year of grace, 1970, will go down in band history as the year of the free-for-all or go-as-you-please, when the top bands played instead of the traditional march, strathspey and reel - a selection of anything they liked, for not more than seven minutes.

It is important to stress that this was "instead of", and not "as well as", because there has been some misconception abroad as to what actually happened.

On a snap poll being taken before the event started, it was apparent that most people were in favour of the idea - as an experiment, if nothing else. Some, of course, were strongly against it, for convincing reasons - as for example, Bob MacCreath, who pointed out that we are experts at playing and judging marches, strathspeys and reels, but what do any of us know of these other things?

It turned out, in fact, that the competition was interesting and exciting to begin with, but gey dreich later on. This was partly due to the fact that the two best bands, Muirheads and Shotts, played first and fourth respectively, and after that anything was an anticlimax.

At this stage it is maybe worth-while interpolating an opinion which is often asked for in North America -- how would Canadian and American pipe bands fare in contests over here? Well, to some extent the answer is unnecessary, because a few have in fact tried their luck here, but in my opinion and from what I have heard this summer, four Canadian bands would make about the lower half of our Grade 1. These are (not necessarily in order) the Clan Macfarlane, City of Toronto, St. Thomas and 48th Highlanders. One other, the City of Port Moody from British Columbia is certainly better than the worst of Grade 1. Of course if they could spend a summer competing here they would no doubt improve on this rating.

But to return to Aberdeen. The challenge of the two police bands faded out disappointingly. The Edinburgh lot had not reached top form yet and the Glasgow contingent were going great guns till one piper lost the place. Rod Hackle made a valiant effort (their drum arrangement for the "Skye Boat Song" was particularly impressive) but it seems they don't have the weight for the big two. None of the others looked like upsetting the book, so it was really a two-horse race.

When the result was announced everyone was very pleased that Tom MacAllister had become the third of this talented family to lead Shotts and Dykehead Caledonia to the top honour. To follow the outstanding achievements of a father and elder brother are always difficult, and if I were John MacAllister's younger brother (which the Lord forbid) I would feel it particularly incumbent on me to keep up the good name. Tom did this exceptionally well and at the earliest possible moment.

It is only right also, at this stage, to pay tribute to the contribution of Alex Duthart and his corps of drummers. It seems to be generally accepted that Alex Duthart is the greatest drummer in the world, and I do not confine this statement to the pipe band world. Some day he will be "discovered" and Ringo will be out of a job. So it was inevitable that he would receive the world championship drumming trophy once again.

To some extent, the Shotts performance was built round Alex Duthart, for a free selection gives great opportunities for changes of tempo, time and rhythm -- all of which were brilliantly exploited by Shotts.

Nevertheless -- and without detracting from the Shotts performance -- I must say I preferred the contribution of Muirhead and Sons. From a piping point of view it was the best performance by a pipe band that I have ever heard. In saying this I do not carp at the result, because the piping judge is only one of three and each must have his say.

As always (in Grade 1 especially) the result was received with the pleasure and sportsmanship we have come to expect as part of the piping scene. Some may have been disappointed a little, but all were pleased with the result -- and that's a very wonderful thing. The victorious bands played themselves off the field, with none so proud and none so heartily congratulated as the World Champions of 1970, Shotts and Dykehead Caledonia.

Reprinted from

Piping Times  
October, 1970

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#### PAST PRESIDENT LENDS HAND TUNE

During the past summer the B.C. Government ferry Queen of Sidney went aground at the eastern entrance of Active Pass. One of the passengers aboard the vessel was Past President and present member of our Board of Directors, Rod MacVicar. Rod was on his way to his summer home on Pender Island when the Sidney went "on the rocks" and decided he could help the rescue manoeuvres by playing a few tunes. The Province had this to say: "There's a guy in the men's washroom playing the bagpipes". "Vancouver city licence inspector Roderick MacVicar, a past president of the B.C. Pipers' Association, emerged from the washroom. ("You know how it is with pipes, you can't play them right off, you have to tune them").

He marched around the lounge to the strains of "Scotland the Brave" and "Skye Boat Song" (remember the words -- "Speed bonnie boat like a bird on the wing, Over the sea to Skye.")?

"I don't go anywhere without my pipes," said MacVicar. "I always take them to Pender Island for the weekend."

One passenger grinned: "It's bad enough to be shipwrecked."

When all was over, the ship refloated, her engines tested and the decision made to proceed on her own to Village Bay on Mayne Island, to unload all passengers, there was special word from the bridge for the piper.

Capt. Walton thanked all passengers: "You appreciated the situation, thank you and good night."

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Golfing? Sewing Circle? - POKER - Bridge? Curling?

