



The
Voice

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John Bottomley
EDITOR

john@johnbottomleybagpipes.com

Shawn Hall
ART DIRECTOR

design@shawnhalldesign.com

Editorial Inquiries/Letters
THE VOICE
voiceeditor@euspba.org

ADVERTISING INQUIRIES
John Bottomley
voiceeditor@euspba.org

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submissions, news items, and
photographs. Please send your
submissions to the email above.

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Table of Contents

- 3 President's Message
- 4 Letters To The Editor
- 42 Report for the Executive Secretary

Features

- 10 Mini Workshop Opportunities
- 11 Chamberlain and Mackay Sweep Balmoral Classic
- 14 Kevin McLean Edges Tyler Bridge at Nicol-Brown
- 18 Flamin' Hot Tune
- 26 EUSPBA Premier Professional Contests 2015: Report of Progress
- 30 Continuing Education, Ulster Style
- 31 Ulster Scottish Pipe Band's Pocono Workshop: A snare player's reprise
- 35 Getting Past the Bones
- 37 Confessions Of A Tone-Deaf Piper

Music

- 20 Dr. Bruce S. Grant

Basics

- 21 Getting High? – Piping Competition Practical Experiences

Branch Notes

- 39 Ohio Valley Branch
- 40 Southwest Branch
- 41 Southern Branch
- 42 North East Branch



ON THE COVER:

Derek Cooper winner of both
the MSR and medley at the
premier professional snare
contest held at this year's AGM.

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EUSPBA OFFICERS

Dan Cole
PRESIDENT
president@euspba.org

Jim Dillahey
VICE PRESIDENT
vicepres@euspba.org

Sheldon Hamblin
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
zecsec@euspba.org

Betsy Bethel-McFarland
RECORDING SECRETARY
recsec@euspba.org

Matt Wood
TREASURER
treasurer@euspba.org

Helen Harlow
*MEMBERSHIP
COORDINATOR*
24 Highlander Dr.
Fredricksburg, VA 22406
(540)373-4890
membership@euspba.org

Carole Hackett
OFFICER-AT-LARGE
oalone@euspba.org

Wayne Holscott
OFFICER-AT-LARGE
oaltwo@euspba.org

BRANCH CHAIRS

Metro Branch
Brian O'Kane
metro@euspba.org

Midatlantic Branch
Mary Wallace
midatlantic@euspba.org

Northeast Branch
Brendan O'Reilly
northeast@euspba.org

Southwest Branch
Kenton Adler
southwest@euspba.org

Ohio Valley Branch
Andrew Duncan
ohiovalley@euspba.org

Southern Branch
Bill Caudill
south@euspba.org

President's Message

By Dan Cole



As I write this, another successful year for our association is concluding.

Thank you to everyone who attended the annual meeting in Baltimore. A small number of proposals allowed for lively discussion. I would like to recognize Helen Harlow for her years of service on the executive committee and welcome Carole Hackett. Helen will still be the point of contact for membership and sanctioning.

We have received rave reviews of the new format which included free workshops Saturday afternoon and a professional drumming competition in the evening.

This was the first year of electronic voting. If you haven't heard, voter participation was over 50% which represents a vast increase.

The music board recently met to discuss the AGM proposals and perform the arduous task of upgrading bands and soloists for next season. Congratulations to those that were upgraded.

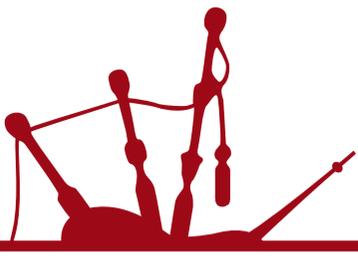
I wish you all a prosperous and healthy new year.

Dan

No Paper Votes Anymore!



All voting is now held online.
Ensure the Association has
your correct email address
to receive your ballots.



Letters To The Editor

Dear Editor,

Wonderful to see the articles on George Moss, one of the great “old men” of pibroch whose wisdom had been neglected for so long and is now, finally, finding a resurgence.

It is to a particular hesitancy, however, reflected by both authors (John Bottomley and James Hamilton), that I want to address.

“After a short period of adjusting my ears, I found the style to be quite attractive...It’s a great listen, although I would not recommend adopting the style on the competition platform, if your goal is prizes.” - JB

There is an inherited wisdom reflected in these words, and yet...

With the availability of both primary source materials, modern forums of instruction, and now even these wonderful recordings of William MacLean and George Moss, it is inevitable that the next generation of pibroch players will begin exploring the idiom’s original breadth.

Just as inevitably, some will take these explorations onto the boards.

It will make a tough time of things for judges, perhaps. But many judges in EUSPBA understand that their job is to secure the future of pibroch. Although careful curation has, in the past, tended to mean the sanctioning of a standard style and canon, this perspective is slowly giving ground to a new awakening that pibroch had been and will be much, much more than what came out of few decades of the mid-20th century.

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It may be realistic today to let students and competitors know that not every judge (here and abroad) understands the tectonic shifts taking place. That's just due diligence. But I think it is just as important to send the message that this change is taking place, and do what we can to prepare both competitors and judges for it.

"In fairness to my pibroch pupils I will always teach them what is taught today, given the requirements of certification and competitive requirements, but will also ensure that they are aware of how it was performed in the 'past'." - JH

I think the excitement lies in the fact that what was 'past' is not only present, but is shaping the future. The less apologetic we are about it, the better prepared our students will be. The insights and styles of the 'past' witness to a musicality simply not reflected in today's competitive performances. The breadth of expression, the variety of structures, settings and movements reflected in the early material are the foundation for an improved pedagogy that gives performers of pibroch improved musical depth and capability.

We need not speak about these primary sources, these other performances and approaches as something like museum pieces of mere historical interest: they are the heart and

foundation of our idiom. We are inheritors and keepers of a vast musical tradition, and if we do *not* expose our students to it, we will be doing both them and our idiom a disservice.

I know both John Bottomley and James Hamilton are deep students of pibroch and are champions of such an exploration. I encourage them both to continue, and assure them that all their work need not be qualified by *any* mitigating statements whatsoever.

The future is here, because the past is now directly available to us.

And pibroch, pibroch students, and pibroch competitors: the musicality and musicianship of our art will be the better off for it.

-J David Hester, PhD
Alt Pibroch Club
www.altpibroch.com

*"I believe the only excuse we have for being musicians and for making music in any fashion is to make it differently."
— Glenn Gould*

Joe Kirk, of Alma, Michigan,

is a huge supporter of piping and pipebands. He also has Williams Syndrome. He posted the following on Facebook and has allowed me to reprint it here along with a description of Williams Syndrome. The spelling may not be perfect but to me, the sentiment soars.

Williams Syndrome (WS) is a genetic condition that is present at birth and can affect anyone. It is characterized by medical problems, including cardiovascular disease, developmental delays, and learning disabilities. These often occur side by side with striking verbal abilities, highly social personalities and an affinity for music.

special shout out to collge marching band pipe band
unbliveable concert way to go you all very special
artists you may not no I have willams srndrome
people with that love music I am blessed to
have you all very very special thank you all make
me cry wounderfull musisc if I may you
don't no how my feeling are but you all push limtes
to unbliveable hights musisc can push bonderys
to do what you do marching band david I want you
band to no what special friend shipe we have band
what can I say to you all if I may my grand pa la
yoder was band teacher alma school started glee
club band choir thank you all I love marching
band pipe band stickers shirts thank you all for
being special

Joe



Dear Editor,

I read your Editorial with interest regarding the Progressive Certification Program being dormant. As you mentioned, Rory O'Moore School of Pipes and Drums invested a lot of time into the program five years ago and I was intimately involved with the effort. I set up the training schedules and did some the teaching and then we organized a Saturday session for the exams for both the pipers and the drummers. We invited the general public. It was our plan to continue this annually; however, the next year, the program became dormant. I'm very interested in the PCP for the same reasons that were mentioned in your article and I have a few ideas about the program I'd like to share with our association that I think would jump start the PCP.

Improve the On-line Materials

I found the PCP requirements on the EUSPBA web site to be informative, but I thought that they could be more than just a short list. I took those requirements and created spreadsheets that we used as training aids and progress reports. I've attached the spreadsheet that we used for the Level 5 Pipers. The Drummers had a similar sheet. Our band instructors would use these sheets to grade the pipers on an ongoing basis so that pipers were ready on exam day. With these spreadsheets, there is no doubt about what is required to pass the exams.

Drop the Essay

I think the essay requirement is a turn-off for most people and has little to do with improving piping skills at Level 5. Perhaps it is appropriate for higher levels as a scholarly exercise, but to get people started, we should remove as many roadblocks as possible. I recall that the only adult piper not to participate in our PCP program gave the essay requirement as the reason.

Allow more People to Evaluate the Level 5 Piper Exam:

Only certified judges can be "examiners". I think that responsibility should be extended to all Pipe Majors of competing Grade 4 and higher bands. Also, I suspect that any competing Grade 2 soloist and higher would be able to examine the skills of a level 5 piping candidate. If this were allowed, candidates would find it easier to find examiners. I believe more bands would adopt the program as part of their curriculum for their new members. Pipe Majors might require members to pass the Level 5 exam before they allow the pipers to play in their competition band. Used this way, passing the PCP becomes more than just a one-dimensional achievement.

Require Level 5 Certification before Grade 4 Solos

Certainly one way to increase PCP participation is to require pipers to pass the Level 5 exam before they compete solo in Grade 4. This won't be popular with several members. I certainly would not want to put forth an idea that might thin out the Grade 4 competition ranks. But if it might improve someone's level of play at Grade 4, then maybe this idea has some merit.

Embrace Technology

In higher education, testing via the Internet is becoming the new model. The PCP would be more available to members if we allowed the Level 5 exam to be taken via Skype or some other interactive means. A second alternative is to have candidates video their efforts and email them to an examiner for evaluation. Again, these ideas attempt to remove the several roadblocks that pipers and drummers face.

Replace the Merit Certificates

I would replace the merit certificate with some sort of wearable lapel pin that boasts the accomplishment, like "PCP-5". If this is worn at the games, people will start asking what it means and the program will pick up interest.

Respect the PCP

Every year, we see the list of pipers and drummers who have achieved an upgrade. The PCP needs the same level of recognition. When someone passes an exam, the achievement should be announced in the next issue of "The Voice".

Improve and Promote One PCP Level at a Time

These ideas are for the beginner, Level 5 piper. I think trying to revive all of the PCP levels at the same time is too big a task. I see this effort as a multi-year plan to put into place part of an official education curriculum for the association. I urge Drummers and Pipers to write to express their ideas about the PCP program. If these ideas revive the introductory level, we can make adjustments and add other levels from there.

Just some thoughts,
Pipe Sergeant Robert Luciano
Rory O'Moore School of Pipes and Drums
EUSPBA Grade 3 Piper
PCP Level 5 Certified
LucianRo@optimum.net



Piper:
 Piping Level 5—Grade 5/Chanter Syllabus & Progress Sheet
 Exam Date: Saturday, Nov 20, 2010

Ready	Written Assignment
	Write 100 words on why you wanted to learn to play the bagpipes. (To be done prior to the exam date and handed to the examiner.)

Ready	Musical Theory
	Name all notes of the scale at random.
	Name and play all notes of the scale at random.
	Write out movements used in bagpipe music.

Ready	Maintenance
	Explain the care of the practice chanter and practice chanter reed.

Ready	Practice Chanter Skills
	Play the scale.
	Two finger scale (notes on the lines).
	G Grace note scale.
	D Grace note scale.
	E Grace note scale.
	GDE Grace note scale.
	Doubling scale. (A to high A, A to high G, A to F, etc.)
	Birl movements.
	Heavy throw on D.
	Open and closed shakes (strikes) on D.
	Grip Scale (A to E, B to E, C to E, etc.)
	Taoraluath scale (A to A, B to A, C to A, etc).
	Tachums
	Reel and jig exercises
	C to two Low-As with G, D and E, grace notes
	B to two Low-Gs with G, D and E, grace notes

Practice Chanter: Play any two tunes from memory:

Ready	Play any two tunes on the Practice Chanter
	Tune 1:
	Tune 2:



Drummer:
Bass-Tenor Level 4—Syllabus & Progress Sheet
Exam Date: Saturday, Nov 20, 2010

This would effectively represent all Bass and Tenor players from Novice (entry grade) through Amateur Solo Grade 3.

Ready	Music Theory
	Recognition of time signatures and their meanings.
	Counting beats in simple time.
	Reading and playing simple rhythm beatings.
	Be familiar with and demonstrate a knowledge of the EUSPBA flourish symbols.
	The four primary flourishes.
	Recognition of note values and rests.
	The parts of the bass and tenor drum and a beginning knowledge of tuning.

Ready	Performances
	Bass and rhythm tenor will play a march set of their choice: Either: a. One four-parted 4/4 Or b. Two, two-parted, 2/4's.
	Traditional tenors will perform a four-part 4/4 demonstrating an understanding of Piano/Forte and flourish development.



Drummer:
Snare Level 4—Syllabus & Progress Sheet
Exam Date: Saturday, Nov 20, 2010

Ready	Written Assignment
	Write 100 words on how you got started in drumming and who are your influences. (To be done prior to the exam date and handed to the examiner.)

Ready	Musical Theory
	Demonstrate knowledge of Comparative table of note values.
	Demonstrate basic Knowledge of bar composition.
	Demonstrate Knowledge of dotted and cut notes have on note duration.
	Explain the difference between simple and compound time.
	Be able to read simple 2 bar phrases and pick out notes and their values and how they relate to the time signature.
	Be able to explain accents and how they are written.
	Explain how time signatures are composed.

Ready	Practical Skills
	Use correct hand and stick position using traditional or matched grip.
	Count in simple and compound time.
	Play rudiment sheets provided and explain each rudiment.
	Be able to play 2 bar phrasing sheets provided in class.
	Be able to explain all parts of the drum and its uses.
	Play scores you have provided up to grade 4 level.



Mini Workshop Opportunities

By Norm McLeod

Oftentimes at the games there are only a few drummers who actually compete so the result is that I have more time available prior to judging the band contest than do the piping judges. In the early 90s at the Stone Mountain Games I decided to offer the possibility of a mini drumming workshop before massed bands sometime in the morning. Over the years I've found that the games organizers usually love the idea as it was another attraction at the games. Other drumming judges certainly have picked up on this idea and likewise offer their expertise whenever possible.

I usually ask the games people to tell the P/M's at the draw that there would be a drumming workshop and that they should let their drummers know about it. The response has varied from one or two to eight or nine drummers showing up. It simply depends on the size of the contest and the number of bands and individuals who are available who wish to learn a new technique or approach that might help them play better. Usually it's the non-competitive or lower grade corps and either beginners or senior individuals who attend these sessions and seemingly benefit the most from these mini workshops.

I tend to focus on the basics such as correcting the stick grip and demonstrating ways to improve rolls and singles. Honestly there isn't much time available prior to massed bands in the morning to work on much more than those basics. However, by the end of the short session the snare drummers are usually playing tighter rolls and singles and

beginning and ending together. Of course they need to maintain their new abilities by practicing them! I also give some basic pointers to the mid sections in terms of tone and tuning and suggest some variations in what patterns they're playing as a corps and everyone seems to be appreciative.

It should be noted that often these impromptu mini sessions are the first contact that drummers in non-competitive bands have with an instructor and a judge. Because of this many drummers don't show up at all because they may feel a little intimidated or they feel they're not "good enough" yet. They do warm up after they see that we drumming judges don't bite after all and we're not there to show off or to make them feel foolish. On the contrary we really want to help others improve their skill level which may simply require them to get back to basics. In some cases they were never taught those basics properly, misinterpreted them, or just developed bad habits along the way.

So that's the story on mini workshops on the day of the games from my perspective. But I cannot emphasize enough the importance of drummers from all grade levels entering individual competitions. Even if your band doesn't compete you as an individual should. By doing so you will practice more and you will sharpen your skill set which you will then bring back to your band. No matter how you feel about your playing you will benefit from feedback from the judge which will help you improve your

playing. Don't feel shy or embarrassed about your playing! We all started from scratch so don't be afraid of approaching the judge at a contest for feedback. Many times at a small contest where there is more time available the judge will be more than willing to give you immediate verbal feedback on the spot which can be far more valuable than the relatively few words written on the score sheet. And finally, in my opinion all drumming instructors should insist that their students enter individual competitions. It can only help.

So I hope all of the drummers who read this will get going and get out there so that next season we will have the largest number of drummers ever in individual competition!





Chamberlain and Mackay Sweep Balmoral Classic

By George Balderose

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania - November 20-22, 2015:

The Ninth Annual Balmoral Classic US Junior Solo Junior Bagpiping and Solo Snare Drumming Championships were won by Piper Gavin Mackay of Kitchener, Ontario, and drummer MacKenzie Chamberlain of Sarnia, Ontario.

Mackay and Chamberlain each won both events in piping and drumming. Kathleen Brown of Gaithersburg, Maryland placed 2nd in the piobaireachd event and Steven MacDonald of Pittsburgh (via Florida and Dundee, Scotland) won 2nd in the MSR. Twelve pipers from five states and Ontario and four drummers from New York, Maryland, Ontario, and Scotland competed in the double event contest.

The competition is produced by the Balmoral School of Piping and Drumming and was held in the McGonigle Theatre, Central Catholic High School, in the university district of Pittsburgh. Arthur McAra was the emcee. Piping judges were Duncan Bell, Bill Livingstone, Dr. Bill Wotherspoon, and drumming judges were Gordon and Donald Bell.

Major sponsors for prizes included McCallum Bagpipes, David Nail Bagpipes, & Henderson Imports. Additional prize sponsors were MacLellan Bagpipes, Pipers Croft, Pipers Hut, Scott's Highland Services, Duncan's Highland Supply, Temple Records, Greentrax, Ceol Sean, Sandy St. James, and the Balmoral School.

PIPING RESULTS: Piobaireachd

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| 1. Gavin Mackay | <i>Clan Campbell's Gathering</i> |
| 2. Kathleen Brown | <i>MacGregor's Salute</i> |
| 3. Stanton Man | <i>Park Piobaireachd #2</i> |
| 4. Steven MacDonald | <i>The Battle O' The Pass of Crief</i> |
| 5. Colin Tait | <i>The Big Spree</i>
<i>(C.S. Thompson setting)</i> |

PIPING RESULTS: March, Strathspey, Reel

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 1. Gavin Mackay | <i>Dr. E.G. MacKinnon,</i>
<i>Islay Ball, Kalabakan</i> |
| 2. Steven MacDonald | <i>The Duchess of Edinburgh,</i>
<i>Ewe with the Crooked Horn,</i>
<i>The Cockerel in the Creel</i> |
| 3. Stanton Man | <i>Leaving Lunga,</i>
<i>John Roy Stewart,</i>
<i>The Rejected Suitor</i> |
| 4. Kathleen Brown | <i>The Stirlingshire Militia,</i>
<i>The Doune of Invernochty,</i>
<i>Alick C. MacGregor</i> |
| 5. Jack O'Connell | <i>Major Manson's Farewell</i>
<i>to Clachanstrusal,</i>
<i>The Ewe With the Crooked</i>
<i>Horn, Major Manson</i> |

PIPING RESULTS: Overall

1. Gavin Mackay
2. Kathleen Brown
3. Stanton Man
4. Steven MacDonald
5. Colin Tait





14 year old Gavin Mackay won the E.W. Littlefield Jr Trophy for the MSR and the Balmoral Trophy for Piobaireachd, and a presentation set of celtic engraved alloy-mounted blackwood bagpipes w/case donated by McCallum Bagpipes

Kathleen Brown with a 2nd in Piobaireachd won a presentation set of runic-design aged imitation ivory blackwood bagpipes, donated by David Naill Bagpipes. Kathleen received the David Naill set because of a rule that says should the same contestant win both events, the set assigned to the winner of the piobaireachd event set goes to the 2nd place contestant in that contest.

Prizes for 2nd to 5th place pipers included blackwood chanters donated by MacLellan Bagpipes and Pipers Hut, a set of kitchen pipes donated by Scott' Highland services, a white and black Rabbit Fur Sporrán donated by Celtic Croft, and additional prizes donated by Jim McGillivray, Duncans Highland Supply, Temple Records, Greentrax, Ceol Sean, Sandy St. James, and the Balmoral School.

DRUMMING RESULTS: March, Strathspey, and Reel

- 1. MacKenzie Chamberlain *Brigadier Ronald Cheape of Tiroron, Dora MacLeod, John Morrison of Assynt House*
- 2. Cameron McCall *John McDonald of Glencoe, Maggie Cameron, Loch Carron*
- 3. Jeremiah Whitney *Lord Alexander Kennedy, Maggie Cameron, Mrs. MacPherson of Inveran*
- 4. Dan Evans *William Grey's Farewell to Cowal, Dora MacLeod, The Brown Haired Maid*

DRUMMING RESULTS: Hornpipe and Jig

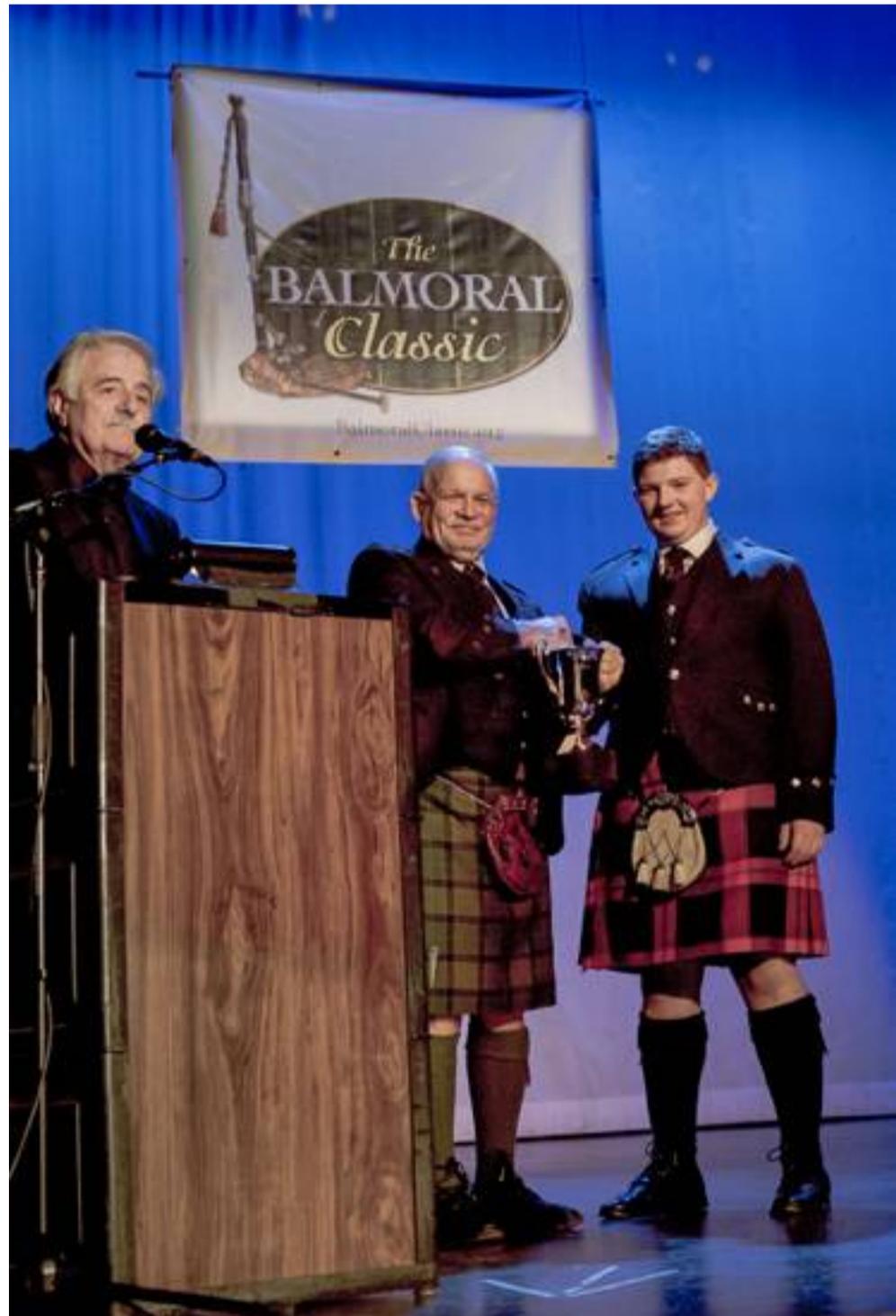
- 1. MacKenzie Chamberlain *Train Journey North, The Boys of the Lough*
- 2. Cameron McCall *Crossing the Minch, The Old Wife of the Mill Dust*
- 3. Jeremiah Whitney *Tam Bain's Lum, Hen's March*
- 4. Dan Evans *The Tourist, Donald Cameron's Powder Horn*

DRUMMING RESULTS: Overall

- 1. MacKenzie Chamberlain
- 2. Cameron McCall
- 3. Jeremiah Whitney
- 4. Dan Evans

PIPERS FOR THE DRUMMERS: Marshall Chamberlain for MacKenzie Chamberlain

Ben Peterson for Cameron McCall
Nick Hudson for Jeremiah Whitney
Liz Cheery for Dan Evans



MacKenzie Chamberlain won both firsts and first overall, entitling him to take home a Premier HTS-800 snare drum donated by Henderson Imports of Traverse City, Michigan. Also donated by Henderson for the 2nd to 4th place drummers were a Kirkpatrick Snare Drum Carrier with articulating back support for the 2nd, and generous gift certificates for the 3rd and 4th place contestants.



The weekend began on Friday evening with a Gathering / Reception for the out of town contestants, supporters of the Balmoral Classic, and the public, which featured music by the ensemble Road to the Isles and the Pittsburgh Scottish Country Dancers. Bill Livingstone, Dr. Bill Wotherspoon, and Gordon Bell also entertained guests with musical selections..

During the evening after the Saturday contest, there was a concert in the same hall with the internationally acclaimed duo Alasdair Fraser (Scottish fiddle) and Natalie Haas (cello) to an audience of approximately five hundred that also featured dancers from the Pittsburgh Celtic Spirit School of Highland Dance and Burke-Conroy School of Irish Dance. The Friday and Saturday events featured separate silent auctions and raffles each day.

Sunday morning from 10 am to noon Dr. Bill Wotherspoon gave a talk on piobaireachd and some of the set tunes for 2016 in the Scottish Room of The University of Pittsburgh's Cathedral of Learning.

The event was made possible by grants from the Sage Foundation, the Heinz Endowment, The Laurel Foundation, the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, The Pittsburgh Firefighters Memorial Pipe Band, the St. Andrews Society of Pittsburgh, and individual donations.

Silent Auction donors included: Nemaocolin Woodlands Resort, Ligonier Golf Club, Birdsfoot Golf Club, the Boys of the Lough, Caliban Bookstore, Calliope the Pittsburgh Folk Arts Society, Caraldean Crafts, The Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh, the Hillman Center for the Performing Arts, The Irish Design Center, Kathleen Cleaver, Joan Green, Max's Allegheny Tavern, Pittsburgh Concert Chorale, Dawn McBride, Mullaney's Harp and Fiddle, Riley's Pour House, the Priory Inn, The Scottish Banner, St. Brendan's Crossing, Senator John Heinz History Center.

PIPING CONTESTANTS:

Jacob Abbott	Montgomery Village, MD
Joshua Ackerman	Fountain Hill, PA
Kathleen Brown	Gaithersburg, MD
Alex Burlew	Bethlehem, PA
Evan Burlew	Bethlehem, PA
Tyler Destremps	Bethlehem, PA
Steven MacDonald	Pittsburgh, PA
Gavin Mackay	Kitchener, ONT
Stanton Man	Pittsburgh, PA
Jack O'Connell	Croton-on-Hudson, NY
Colin Tait	Milford, MI
Laureano Thomas-Sanchez	Parma, OH

DRUMMING CONTESTANTS

MacKenzie Chamberlain	Sarnia, ONT
Dan Evans	Rochester, NY
Cameron McCall	Stirling, SCT
Jeremiah Whitney	Rockville, MD



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Kevin McLean Edges Tyler Bridge at Nicol-Brown

By Author

Judge Callum Beaumont writes, “Having been invited to judge ten of North America’s best amateur pipers at the Nicol-Brown competition, I was more than delighted to accept. The 30 performances that I listened to were of a very high standard, in particular the winners of each of the events. Of course, there were the odd little mishaps along the way, purely down to nerves I imagine. However, Kevin McLean’s rendition of “The Red Speckled Bull” was a performance that I reckon would not have looked out of place in any of the world’s top competitions.

This was an exceptionally well-run competition by Paula Glendinning, Donald Lindsay, Barb McCarthy, Maureen Connor, and team, with hospitality of the highest standard. It was a fantastic weekend all round.”

RESULTS

2015 Overall Nicol-Brown Championship

1. KEVIN McLEAN (18 points)

Prizes: airfare to compete in London in November 2016, sponsored by the New Hampshire Highland Games & Festival, and by Steve Porter; and an McC2 pipe chanter with a custom-designed sole, donated by McCallum Bagpipes.

2. TYLER BRIDGE (17 points)

Prize: Peter Henderson Blackwood Pipe Chanter donated by Henderson’s Ltd.

3. CHRISTIAN RHOADS (11 points)

Prize: \$200 piping scholarship sponsored by Doreen Forney in memory of P/M Angus Macdonald, 1st Battalion Scots Guards.

4. MAEGHAN BIELSKI (10 points)

Prize: \$150 piping scholarship sponsored by Ben Bhraggie House Ltd.

Robert Nicol-Robert Brown Chalice for Piobaireachd

1. KEVIN McLEAN (9 points)

(“The Red Speckled Bull”)

Prize: A bound Piobaireachd Society Collection donated by Jon Maffett from The Piper’s Hut.

2. TYLER BRIDGE (7 points)

(“The Big Spree”)

Prize: Binneas is Boreraig and Donald MacDonald’s Collection of Piobaireachd sponsored by Bonnie Rideout.

Kevin McLean’s world-class Red Speckled Bull.





3. LAUREANO THOMAS-SANCHEZ (6 points) (“The Battle of Auldearn” No. 1) Prize: \$75 gift certificate for The Piper’s Hut sponsored by Joseph Stewart and family.

4. CHRISTIAN RHOADS (5 points) (“MacLeod’s Controversy”) Prize: Piobaireachd Fingerwork by Jim McGillivray and A.G. Kenneth’s Collection, Book 5 donated by Duncan’s Highland Supply.

5. MAEGHAN BIELSKI (4 points) (“Lament for the Departure of King James”) Prize: Sight Readable Ceol Mor by Dugald MacNeill and The Piobaireachd Society’s Collection of Ceòl Mór Composed during the 20th Century donated by Duncan’s Highland Supply.



Callum Beaumont conducted a master class at the contest, one of the great features of this event every year.

William Ross Challenge Targe MSR Competition

1. JAMES DYSON (8 points) (“Leaving Lunga,” “Loch Loskin,” and “The Sound of Sleat”) Prize: A McCallum long blackwood practice chanter with engraved sole, bowl, and presentation ferrule donated by The Piper’s Dojo.

2. MAEGHAN BIELSKI (6 points) (“Royal Scottish Pipers’ Society,” “The Islay Ball,” and “The Brown Haired Maid”) Prize: A McCallum long plastic practice chanter with Zoomorphic engraved ferrule sponsored by Barb, Erin, and Dan McCarthy.

3. KEVIN McLEAN (5 points) (“Miss Elspeth Campbell,” “The Ewe wi’ the Crookit Horn,” and “The Smith of Chilliechassie”) Prize: Scots Guards Standard Settings of Pipe Music, Volume 2 and The Bagpipe Music of John McLellan 1875-1949 sponsored by Doreen Forney in memory of P/M Angus Macdonald.

4. TYLER BRIDGE (4 points) (“Donald MacLellan of Rothesay,” “Highland Harry,” and “Thomson’s Dirk”) Prize: Scots Guards Standard Settings of Pipe Music, Volume 1 sponsored by Doreen Forney in memory of P/M Angus Macdonald.

5. CHRISTIAN RHOADS (3 points) (“Colin Thompson,” “John Roy Stewart,” and “Alick C. MacGregor”) Prize: The Bagpipe Music of John MacColl 1860-1943 sponsored by JoAnn Scott.

Donald MacLeod Memorial 6/8 March Competition

1. TYLER BRIDGE (6 points) (“The Bonawe Highlanders” and “Dundee City Police Pipe Band”) Prize: The Donald MacLeod Memorial Silver Buckle created and donated by Stephen Walker of Walker Metalsmiths.

2. KEVIN McLEAN (4 points) (“Cameron MadFadyen” and “Jean Mauchline”) Prize: \$75 gift card for Henderson’s Ltd. sponsored by Joseph Stewart and family.

3. CHRISTIAN RHOADS (3 points) (“Jean Mauchline” and “Capt. C.R. Lumsden”) Prize: \$60 gift card for The Piper’s Dojo sponsored by Betsy and Bruce Douglas.

4. LAUREANO THOMAS-SANCHEZ (2 points) (“P/M Charles Timmers” and “George Sherriff”) Prize: The Gordon Highlanders Pipe Music Collection, Vol. 1 sponsored by Betsy and Bruce Douglas.



5. JAMES DYSON (1 point)

(“The MacNeils of Ugadale” and “All the Blue Bonnets are Over the Border”) Prize: Standard Settings of Pipe Music of The Seaforth Highlanders sponsored by Nancy Tunncliffe.

Dress and Deportment

This prize is a special recognition for the effort and thought put into the presentation of performances, showing respect for the contest and bringing dignity to the music.

(Judged by Donald F. Lindsay)

1. MAEGHAN BIELSKI

Prize: The men’s or women’s piping vest of the competitor’s choice from Henderson’s Ltd., sponsored by the Spicer family.

Each competitor this year received an Airstream Blowpipe donated by Scott’s Highland Services, a Nicol-Brown towel, a framed group photo, and a new edition of the coveted Nicol-Brown lapel pin designed by Charlie Glendinning and sponsored by Steve Porter.

2015 Competitors

Invitations to the Nicol-Brown Competition each year are based on overall rankings and competitive results in the pipers’ home associations, as well as in national and international contests that show the highest standards of amateur piping for Piobaireachd and Light Music. An invitation is held each year for the Grade 1 Piper of the Day at The New Hampshire Highland Games & Festival, provided that piper competed in the Piobaireachd event that day. Nicol-Brown competitors pay their own way to the contest in Albany, or are helped with their travel expenses by their own sponsors and patrons.

MAEGHAN BIELSKI (Middleboro, Massachusetts)
3rd Place out of 81 pipers in the 2015 EUSPBA Grade 1 Overall and Piobaireachd Season Standings as of September 6, 2015.

TYLER BRIDGE (Guelph, Ontario)
1st Place in combined PPBSO Champion Supreme standings for Grade 1 Light Music and Senior Amateur Piobaireachd for 2014 and 2015; Donald MacLeod 6/8 March Champion





at the 2014 Nicol-Brown; 2015 Amateur Piper of the Day at Georgetown, Embro, Cambridge, Durham, Maxville, Fergus, and Almonte.

ALLYSON CROWLEY-DUNCAN (Latham, New York)
2nd Place out of 81 pipers in the 2015 EUSPBA Grade 1 Overall and Piobaireachd Season Standings as of September 6, 2015.

JAMES DYSON (Dartmouth, Nova Scotia)
2014 Nicol-Brown Piobaireachd Champion; 1st Place in combined Grade 1 Light Music and Piobaireachd standings for Atlantic Canada for 2013 and 2014, and 3rd Place for 2015.

ANDREW HUTTON (Brantford, Ontario)
2nd Place in combined PPBSO Champion Supreme standings for Grade 1 Light Music and Senior Amateur Piobaireachd for 2015; Amateur Piper of the Day at the 2015 Kingston, Cobourg, and Edinboro, PA Highland Games.

KEVIN McLEAN (Maple Ridge, British Columbia)
Winner of the BC Pipers' Association Grade 1 Grand Aggregate for 2015; Grade 1 Aggregate winner at the BCPA Mini Gatherings, the Annual Gathering, Victoria, Bellingham, Kamloops, Portland, and the Pacific Northwest Scottish Highland Games.

CHRISTIAN RHOADS (St. Louis, Missouri)
2015 MWPBA Grade 1 Champion Supreme for Light Music and Piobaireachd; Grade 1 Piper of the Day at the Alma Highland Festival.

BLAISE THERIAULT (Halifax, Nova Scotia)
1st Place in combined Grade 1 Light Music and Piobaireachd standings for Atlantic Canada for 2015.

LAUREANO THOMAS-SANCHEZ (Cleveland, Ohio)
Grade 1 Piper of the Day at the 2015 New Hampshire Highland Games & Festival and the Ohio Scottish Games; Grade 1 winner of the 2015 MWPBA Solo Championship; 1st Place MSR at the 2015 Sandy Jones Invitational.

JACK TOOHEY (Newberg, Oregon)
2nd Place in 2015 BC Pipers' Association Grade 1 Grand Aggregate standings.

Invited but unable to attend:

DYLAN CHRISMER (Alta Loma, California)
1st Place in the combined 2015 WUSPBA Grade 1 Aggregate standings for Piobaireachd and Light Music as of September 16, 2015.

SEAN REGAN (Woodstock, Virginia)
1st Place out of 81 pipers in the 2015 EUSPBA Grade 1 Overall and Piobaireachd Season Standings as of September 6, 2015.



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Flamin' Hot Tune

By John Bottomley

Surely the Flame of Wrath for Squinting Patrick will be one of the most popular tunes on this year's set tune list for the Silver Medal. It is well known, and a fine piece of music. The corollary to this is that, if you play this, you will really have to do something good with it to make it stand out.

We are all aware of the importance of singing our tunes to discover the subtle melodic flow required. I've found that in addition to using canntaireachd and canntaireachd-like syllables, that using actual words that convey the meaning of the tune helps as well. When I first went through this tune, one of my classmates, now a respected judge (who shall remain nameless for obvious reasons*), created the following lyrics for this tune: "I'm really mad, oh I'm really mad, oh I'm so mad...I'm so mad...." The lyrics don't improve after that, but they do serve a purpose here.*

First, and most obvious, they demonstrate the mood this tune needs to express. This is no time for gentility! The ground is primeval, all about the E's and A's. If you use the words while singing the tune, you will be forced to hold the

opening E then move sharply through the D and B down to the low A: I'M really MAD!

The next thing these words do is give an idea of how notes CONNECT in the phrases. We don't say "I'm really..... mad oh." We connect the "Oh" to the following "really." That's how the low G functions in the tune. Practice that connection, low G to E by itself, then add it back into the tune. Phrasing is important, but phrasing doesn't work unless you know precisely HOW you are connecting the phrases. Otherwise all you have are random bits of melody.

As always, when you have a repeated figure, such as the hiharins or double echoes on B, make sure they are phrased as well. For the hiharins you might say "I'M so mad, I'm so MAD." Do this by holding the first E just a fraction, make it feel louder/crescendoeed in your mind, and do the same with the final low A. These are small differences in length; they should not disrupt the flow of the melody. In the double echoes, the accents would be on the first long B and the last B.

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My own approach to the ground is here: Ground.

The first variation is unique among piobaireachd, as in fact is the crunluath. The first variation, with its unusual gracenoting, can be tricky to catch on to, but once you get the pattern down it makes perfect sense.

There are two generally accepted ways to play this. One way is to cut the connective notes quite sharply, as shown in Figure 1, and this clip. This creates a vigorous and fiery effect if done right. It becomes easy to overcut when you do this, and especially to lose the low Gs. If that happens the effect is herky-jerky or clipped. The second way to play this is with smoother, rolling connectives, as shown in Figure 2 and here. The danger here is that the tune can lose its drive if you get too smooth, or fail to maintain your tempos in the singling and doubling.

Figure 1



Figure 2



The crunluath looks mostly like a standard breabach, except the two connective notes are written as 16th notes. This changes the rhythm used in the playing.

Most crunluath breabachs are played in either five or six pulses. Note this is NOT a metronomically, mathematically precise pulse, but there is a clear feeling of five or six underlying the group. In Flame of Wrath, these are played in eight pulses. Again there are two ways to accomplish this.

The first way would be to extend the melody note considerably, while keeping the E and the two low Gs quite short, as here. In this case, the E-G-G would FEEL like the 6-7-8 of an eight-count. The melody note takes up the first four-plus counts, the crunluath happens about count five, and the E-G-G finish it off.

The second way is to extend the E in front of the two low Gs, as shown here. In this case the E takes up counts five and six (Figure 4), with the low Gs taking seven and eight, creating a smoother rhythm throughout.

One thing to remember when playing piobaireachd is that, if you establish something early on in the tune, you want to carry it through to create a consistent and coherent piece of music. In this tune, given the two styles accepted in the variations, I would not try to play the first, more angular style of variation 1 with the smoother style of crunluath, and vice-versa. Have a vision of what you want to accomplish, and make sure everything you play supports that vision.

**You're welcome, Sir.*

***If you sing them out loud as you board a bus they also elp you get a seat. Often more than one.*



Sandy Jones was Bill's mentor and an old friend, and Bill was Charlie Glendenning's roommate in college and picked up composing pipe music from him. Bill and I played together in the old Strath James band for many years, many years ago. Bill would be pleased if you passed it around. Thanks.

20 July 2015



Getting High? – Piping Competition Practical Experiences

By Lou Henningsen

Opening an article with a weak reference to John Denver’s phrase “Rocky Mountain High in Colorado” may conjure up a myriad of images. Let’s narrow it down a bit. Piping competitors may feel a euphoric high playing for an auspicious judge and several piping aficionados, but this article attempts to promote thought about preparing to compete at Highland Games in various climate conditions, which are always different from your favorite practice location.

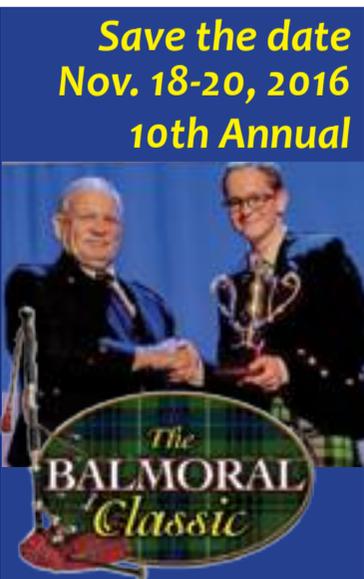
Pipers must be conversant in diverse areas: music, technique, engineering, woodworking, and perhaps a bit of meteorology. One hurdle to consistent performance has been lack of preparation regarding the effects of *Temperature, Relative Humidity, and Altitude* on both the piper and on their pipes.

These three factors influence reed performance independently. Combined, we could look at effects in several categories with enough variables in each to make the solutions almost infinite. Meteorologists classify six

basic climate regions, each with variations of temperature and moisture. Most of us in EUSPBA play in a climate range called “Moist Mid-latitude Climates with Mild Winters.” We experience playing in temperatures from 40°F - 85°F, though mid to high 90°F has not been uncommon by the time band events are played in the afternoon sun. Within this classification, we may see relative humidity from 10% to 90%. We have all played in the rain, possibly the worst condition for pipes. I speculate most pipers in our association have played in altitudes from Sea Level to 4,300 feet (MacRae Meadows, Grandfather Mountain) and have likely experienced reed performance dilemmas related to altitude changes. Other meteorological region classifications describe varying conditions within Tropical Moist Climates, Dry Climates, and Highland Climates (Highlands are up to 20% of the earth’s land mass per studies by Khlebnikova). North American regions most similar to Scotland, in case you plan to compete there, include parts of Washington State, Vancouver Island, Western British Columbia, and Southeast Alaska.

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Moving from one region to another, or even having temporary storm or drought conditions within our usual playing location, requires pipers to understand the forecast conditions and prepare accordingly.

A year-long study of 15 Highland Games locations included events above 6,500 feet, with a brief test above 9,400 feet. With the change in altitude, early morning temperatures ranged from tune-up low 40s to nearly 100°F for performance time. As the temperature changed, the effect of moisture also affected reed performance. Remember, at higher altitudes and colder temperatures, the moisture in our breath will have more effect than our favorite living room practice spot. We have all heard that we need to maintain a steady state for our pipes to behave, and maybe we should even expect pipes to act up for no reason at all – after all, they’re BAGPIPES. There ARE reasons, with corresponding solutions. We just need to look closely.

Below are some personal observations, along with what to expect in some common meteorological conditions, and some possible solutions to performance issues in those different conditions. Surely, every reader is familiar with the Dunsire Forum (make sure the advice comes from a knowledgeable , Andrew Lenz’s website, videos/books from Jim McGillivray, John Cairns, the College of Piping, and a myriad of other resources. Use these! Use them BEFORE going to your events. Try ALL of their solutions as you prepare in as many environments as you might find yourself performing. Then, expect that you will still need to improvise some combined solutions as you expand your knowledge of what has been published into the reality in which you find yourself at the moment. Add your own observations to the following discussion as you expand your piping horizons.

Temperature

Expect your fingers to respond with reduced feeling and increased stiffness in cold conditions. Let’s say cold means below 50°F. Lack of feeling in the fingers can result in low hand holes partly uncovered resulting in incomplete D-throws & B-shakes, missed grace notes, even squeals in taorluath and crunluath movements. Gloves, pepper packs, and pocket warmers might be handy. Bring a thermos of warm water and a large zip-lock bag to your warm-up area. Just before performing, immerse both hands in warm water, dry them, and return the warm water to the thermos to repeat this for your next event.

In hot conditions, say over 85°F, expect fingers to slip off of chanter holes as a result of perspiration. Tuning tape will

get gooey or even shift position, and you might feel a sticky feeling when lifting fingers off holes. The bag may slip farther and farther down until resting on the inner left forearm – where tendons and nerves for the upper hand become numb. Solutions might include washing the hands just before playing, installing new tuning tape 2-3 days before the event, a light application of talcum powder between fingers, and adding rubber non-slip patches to the bag cover.

Dress for the weather. Core temperature drops will result in blood flow reduction to the extremities. Discomfort from both low and high temperature will distract your attention from the tune.

Moisture

Relative Humidity is the amount of moisture that can be held in the air at the current temperature. Cooler air holds less moisture, so condensation begins at much lower temperatures, and to a greater extent – especially as your warm, moist air reaches the cooler reeds and bore of the pipes. Some of this impact is discussed in the next section on Altitude. However, surrounding geographic features affect moisture in the air, as do prevailing wind conditions and variance in air temperature during the day. Some articles suggest 43% relative humidity is ideal for bagpipes. The “ideal” relative humidity for pipes will change based on moisture content in your breath (as in wet or dry blower) and whatever state of moisture your reeds are usually played at home. Changing the outside conditions will change the impact on the pipes. Understanding how a moisture control system reacts in various weather conditions will be your key to keeping the inside-the-bag conditions the same for your reeds.

Even in higher temperatures, piping in very high relative humidity, perhaps above 75%, will cause drones to fill up with condensation and tend to sharpen just before they actually cut out during playing due to droplets of water on the tongue and inside the reed body. Chanter reeds will tend to sharpen as they initially absorb moisture during warm-up. Too much moisture makes the timbre dull, and the pipe may sound noticeably flatter in pitch. It’s possible a wet chanter reed will soften with more moisture and choke or squeal.

Conversely, very low relative humidity, below 25%, or an over-active moisture control system, could actually dry reeds during play. Synthetic drone reeds don’t seem to be impacted by dry air. Your chanter, however, may sound flatter and become increasingly hard to blow. You may fatigue earlier, evidenced by chokes and squeals. A solution used in desert climates is to put an ice cube or two in the bag. The Kinnaird system and



John Bottomley

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others like it can be effective in adding moisture if you pour a small amount of water over the beads and shake the excess from the bottle.

Repeated later in the section on Altitude, be sure to drink plenty of water in dryer climates. Even though beer is made from water, avoid alcohol before your performance as it tends to remove moisture.

Altitude

An increase in altitude is accompanied by a decrease of atmospheric pressure and air density (Khlebnikova). Gary Moody, music professor at Colorado State University, describes his experience with oboe and bassoon reeds. He reports the reeds vibrate differently in less dense high altitude air, and suggests higher notes will be thinner and sharper. He modifies his reeds by making the inner gouge cut deeper, giving thinner material near the lips. Pipe chanter reed maker Stephen Megarity has a high altitude chanter reed which incorporates his experience in the slightly longer design. Expect to move tape on your upper hand notes as temperature changes.

The same principles that cause water to boil at lower temperatures and baking a cake to take longer at high altitude also apply to your body. Lower pressure at high altitude can cause more of your body moisture to be exchanged in the lungs. Coupled with the lower temperatures that usually accompany an increase in altitude, you may expect more moisture inside the pipes. Besides exhaling more moisture, the lower temperatures can increase the condensation effect on reeds and inside the drone bore. Expect to dry your reeds and/or use a moisture control system. This is similar to the cooler season shift from the simple bottle that comes with the Bannatyne bag, to using a more robust Kinnaird Kanister.

Solutions for your body to acclimate to higher altitudes include drinking more water and doing some exercise similar to piping over a period of at least 48 hours before performing. The 48-hour rule may prove handy for your pipes to settle as you adjust your reed, shift some tape around, and get your moisture system to a state of homeostasis for a couple of days before your performance.

Conclusion

Use a combination of techniques depending on the combination of conditions. Expect the conditions to change throughout the day, requiring you to adapt the tricks you apply. Keep track of what works for you. Research the expected conditions for the week before and the day of each event. Bring a range of appropriate tools-of-the-trade to the event based on the forecast. Be alert to your instinct – if you think the drone is acting oddly, take the time to check for moisture. If you are slightly chilled, take time to warm your hands. If you think the high hand is a bit sharp, adjust tape (use a meter if unsure). The science of meteorology also includes forecast pollen counts. If you are sensitive to changes in seasons, then expect the different regions to have element of seasonal changes. Bring your antihistamine.

Further Reading:

- Khlebnikova. High Altitude Climate Zones and Climate Types. <http://www.eolss.net/Sample-Chapters/C01/E4-03-06-04.pdf>
- Köppen Climate Classification System. Highland Climates - H Climate Type. <http://www.eoearth.org/view/article/162312/>
- Moody, G. "How I Get Bassoon Reeds to Work at High Altitudes."
- Megarity. High altitude bagpipe chanter reeds. megarityreeds@yahoo.co.uk
- High-altitude adaptation in humans. https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/High-altitude_adaptation_in_humans



Temperature

Below 50°F

Potential Issues

Fingers stiff, Less feeling
Holes not covered
Squeals in low hand movements

Solutions

Gloves, pepper packs, pocket warmers
Immerse hands in warm water
Stay in warm area

Above 85°F

Fingers slip due to perspiration
Tuning tape sticky or shift position
Sticky feeling when lifting fingers
Bag slips down on arm

Wash/dry hands just before playing
Replace tuning tape 2-3 days before event
Light talcum powder between fingers
Add rubber non-slip patches to bag cover

Moisture

Above 75%

Potential Issues

Drones fill up with condensation
Drones sharpen
Drones cut out
Chanter sharpens or flattens
Chanter timbre dull
Chanter choke or squeal

Solutions

Use moisture control system
Remove reeds and dry out
Swab bore of drones/chanter
Adjust tape

Below 25%

Chanter flattens
Chanter increasingly hard to blow
Fatigue

Ice cube in bag
Put water in moisture system
Drink more water

Altitude

Below 1,500 feet

Potential Issues

NOTE: Consider Sea Level to 1,500 ft “Normal” Altitude. Most of us learn in lower altitudes. If your home is normally above 3,000 ft, then expect the opposite of the issues and solutions for High Altitude below

Solutions

Above 3,000 feet

Higher notes thinner & sharper
Drones fill up with condensation
Drones sharpen
Drones cut out
Chanter timbre dull
Chanter choke or squeal
Chanter increasingly hard to blow
Fatigue

Thinner reed material near lips
Slightly longer reed
Adjust tape on upper hand
Use moisture control system
Remove reeds and dry out
Swab bore of drones/chanter
Adjust tape
Drink more water
Arrive 48 hours before event
Practice a couple of days in climate

Altitudes for Highland Games: *(compare experiences where you have played to your new destination)*

Sonora Pass, California State Route 108 - 9,624 ft / 2,933 m
Estes Park, Colorado - 7,522 ft / 2,293 m
Elizabeth, Colorado - 6,476 ft / 1,974 m
Reno, Nevada - 4,505.6 ft / 1,373 m [steppe climate
(Köppen: BSk) due to its low evapotranspiration]
MacRae Meadows, Grandfather Mountain,
North Carolina - 4,300 ft / 1,311 m
Glen Urquhart, Scotland – 2,420 ft / 738 m

Dunoon, Scotland - 1570 ft / 479 m
Braemar Scotland - 1,112 ft / 339 m
Stone Mountain Park, Georgia – 870 ft / 265 m
Batesville, Arkansas - 465 ft / 1412 m
Edinburgh, Scotland - 154 ft / 47 m
Inverness, Scotland – 60 ft / 18 m
Seaside Park, Ventura, California - 36 ft / 11 m
[Mediterranean climate, watch for Santa Ana winds]
Glasgow, Scotland - 20 ft / 6 m

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EUSPBA Premier Professional Contests 2015: Report of Progress

By June Hanley

Background

As a result of motions at the 2013 and 2014 AGM requesting that the EUSPBA look into providing more contests for top level players, the Executive Committee authorized the creation and funding of four premier professional contests to be held during the 2015 competition season. At the February Friday night Executive Committee meeting, June Hanley was appointed as organizer of these contests, with Dan Cole, Matt Wood and Jim Dillahey as the contest committee for the Executive Committee.

It is important to note that this pilot program was requested by our top-level players, and we wanted to not simply give them more of the same sort of contest they were already used to, but to push them forward and inspire them to get better, just as we try to push and inspire our lower grade players to reach the next level. And as with any pilot program, our goal was to try new ideas, to get feedback along the way and at the end for what worked well and what could be improved, and to inspire our players.

Original Goals for the program were:

- Provide more venues for professional players, in different geographical areas, providing both a challenge and good prize money.
- Partner with games that either had no professional contest or had one but was struggling to keep it going, using the judges they had hired already if possible, putting the money into the players rather than the judges.
- Have the event at a time when it could be featured: no amateur events at the same time so that the amateurs could watch and listen.

Requirements:

It seemed logical that, since the EUSPBA was organizing and funding these contests, they should be sanctioned with points awarded toward year-end standings. In an effort to work within the rules and at the same time meet the goal of stimulating players to work harder, for each contest, players had to submit the same number of tunes they normally do, but play more from within their lists at each contest. Prize money was established at \$500, \$300, \$200 and \$100 for each of two contests at each venue. Piobaireachd requirements were submit four, play one. Light music requirements were submit four of each tune required, and the actual playing requirements varied for each of the three contests.

Budgeting:

The executive committee decided to fund this project as a special project. Games that agreed to partner with the EUSPBA would not have to spend more money than they had in previous years. They would put up the same amount of money they had in the past, including the judges. Judging would be by a panel of two. While it is acknowledged that a panel of three is preferable to a panel of two, the panel of two required less fee and expenses. Judges would be used that were already hired by the games, with expenses being paid by the games when possible. If the premier contests required an extra day of judges' time, the additional fee and any additional expenses would be paid by the EUSPBA. June developed a preliminary budget for each contest and submitted it to the premier contest committee, based on previous funding by the games, anticipated entries and anticipated expenses. Once entries, time frame and judges were finalized, the final budget was tallied and Treasurer Matt Wood sent a check to the games for the EUSPBA's portion of the contest expenses.

The fact of their being required to play more has led to comment from some that the contests are not, in fact, within the rules. However, the players have without exception enjoyed the extra challenge, as can be seen from the feedback forms they submitted. Also in this feedback is that they do not, in fact, care whether the contests are sanctioned and points awarded. ...at least, this is a very low priority in comparison with others.

Contest One:

Woodberry Forest Indoor, April 2015

The first premier professional contest was held at Woodberry Forest School in April, 2015. Woodberry is a private school with excellent music facilities, and the contest is an indoor contest with solos only. It had already been set as the site for the judges' test to be given on the Sunday, and ten candidates would be taking the exam. Having the first premier contest there gave them a chance to work toward winning some prize money to help offset their expenses for getting to the exam.

Woodberry had held a professional contest in the past, and were amenable to the premier contests although they were clear that they could not contribute more money than they had in the past. They were extremely hospitable for both the premier contests and the judges' test. Since the contest



here had been solos only and had traditionally finished in early afternoon, the premier contests were held on Saturday afternoon in the theater and the music room. Judges were James McIntosh and John Bottomley for piobaireachd, and Paula Glendinning and June Hanley for light music. (*note: it was my intention NOT to judge any of these contests since I was organizing them and working with players. However, at Woodberry it ended up that Scot Walker could not judge since his son was playing, and Duncan Bell wanted to play, so there were no other judges available.*) Format for the light music was MSRHI. Players had submitted four of each, and were notified of the judges' tune selections on Wednesday prior to the contest. There were 13 players at Woodberry.

Total Cost: \$2500. Woodberry Contribution: \$1050. EUSPBA Contribution: \$1450. Since Woodberry had collected players' entry fees in the past to offset their expenses, players' entry fees were kept by the school.

Contest Two: Rhode Island Highland Games, June, 2015

At the request of the committee, June contacted James Dickerson, piping and drumming director of the Rhode Island games about holding the second premier contest. RI had previously had a professional contest, but the games committee had decided to discontinue it as a money-saving decision. When June approached James, he went back to the committee with the offer, and they agreed to fund the contest at its previous level, with the EUSPBA contributing the balance required. In addition, James found a venue to have it on Friday night at a local school and raised the funds the school required, so no additional expense was required for the venue.

Judges for light music were Chuck Murdoch and Adam Holdaway. Format for this light music contest was submit four of each, and play one march, one strathspey and one reel twice over (MMSSRR). This format is consistent with (Oban? Inverness? Other?) Judges for the piobaireachd were Nancy Tunnicliffe and June Hanley. (*note: again, James Stack had originally agreed to judge, but had to withdraw the week prior to the contest due to work responsibilities on Friday.*) There were fourteen players in this contest. Since Rhode Island had a full Saturday already, this contest was held on Friday night, so extra judges fees were required. However, since all judges were hired by the games, no additional travel expenses were required. Since entry fees had previously been collected by the games, they were kept by the games.

Total Cost: \$3300. RIHG contribution: \$420, Venue and Judges expenses. EUSPBA Contribution: \$2880

Contest Three: Scotland County, NC October, 2015

The plan had been to locate the final piping contest somewhere in the South. Scotland County, under Bill Caudill's direction, brings in a gold medallist each year to play a concert on Friday night and judge solos and bands on Saturday. This year's guest was to be Willie McCallum. June approached Bill about the possibility of holding the premier contest there. Since they had not previously had a professional contest there, the premier contest committee said that if the games could put up \$500 and the venue, the EUSPBA would fund the rest. Bill took this to the games committee, but their budget was already allocated and stretched for 2015. However, Bill was excited about this idea, approached some donors, and raised \$1500. St. Andrews University was the venue, with no additional charge. The players were excited at the opportunity to play for Willie McCallum.

Judges for the piobaireachd were Willie McCallum and James McIntosh. Judges for the light music were Sandy Jones and Peter Kent. Format for the light music was submit four, play two different marches, two different strathspeys and two different reels (MMSSRR). There were ten players in this contest. They were told of the judges' tune selections on the Wednesday prior to the contest. Since Friday night was the concert and Saturday was a full day of solos and bands, the premier contest was held on Sunday morning. Notable was the fact that this contest occurred during the weekend of historic rains and the worst flooding in NC and SC history.

Since the event was held on Sunday, additional judges' fees were required. There were no additional travel costs and no venue cost. In addition, since Scotland County had not had a professional contest previously, entry fees of \$30 each helped to offset the costs of the contest.

Total Cost: \$3200 Scotland County Contribution: \$1500, judges travel, and venue. EUSPBA Contribution: \$1460 (entry fees: \$240)



Premier Contest Four:

The fourth and final premier contest was a snare drumming contest held on the Saturday night of the AGM, November 7, 2015. There were eight contestants, and adjudicators were Hugh Cameron, Reid Maxwell and Stephen McWhirter. Events were MSR and medley. The medley was an opportunity for contestants' creativity to shine; requirements were a 3-5 minute medley, no "big" MSR tunes, no slow airs, and up to one minute could be a drum salute. Prize money was the same as for the premier piping contests: \$500, \$300, \$200 and \$100 for each contest. In appreciation of the amount of music to be prepared, the pipers for these drummers were given an honorarium as well.

Since this contest was held on Saturday night of the AGM, it provided easily available entertainment and was the most well-attended of any of the premier contests. The judges stated that the list represents the highest level of talent in the EUSPBA



Comments from Competitors

Throughout the season, the competitors have expressed their thanks and gratitude to the EUSPBA for holding these contests. After the third contest, all those who participated were sent a feedback form. Here are some of their comments:

- *I would like to see a similar circuit next year. I liked the variety of options offered for the light music.*
- *A big draw for me was playing against CPA graded competitors, so it would be helpful for my CPA standing if this was somehow on their radar. Maybe seek their sanctioning, invite their judges, and get on their calendar?*
- *How about holding a premier competition in conjunction with a judges seminar – you could then make each judge take notes and then discuss the performances afterward or on the Sunday or something?*

The double MSR and repeated MSR is a good test for the competitor and should stay.

I would like to see more tune requirements in the future (submit 6 or even 8 piobaireachd and then submit 6 MSRs).

Perhaps have a competition where you have to submit 4 tunes from the clasp, gold or silver lists – this would help the competitors that are accepted for Oban and Inverness. This would need to be in the Spring to benefit the competitors.

The MSRHFJ thing in one blow isn't worth pursuing.

- *I think anything that can encourage high-level piping is important. I like the more stringent requirements for the light music, although I doubt they are a huge factor for people when deciding whether to play or not. I think that we should continue to strive to not only get high quality judges, but also vary those judges from one contest to the next. I acknowledge that this is probably one of the hardest parts of organizing these types of events, but as a player it can be frustrating playing in front of the same judges over and over, many of who give very similar results each time. That being said, I think the contests overall were very well run, and I think that everyone enjoyed playing in them. It would be great to find a way to get more people to watch though!*



I certainly would like to see them continue. I think it got us out more often, and got us up against the people we wanted to play against more often: those of us who are going to Scotland and trying to move on up the ladder there. The prize money is an effective incentive because you really only need to take a couple prizes to offset a plane ticket.

Summary and Going Forward

This series of contests, by its nature, pushed the envelope for the professional players. While undoubtedly there were significant costs involved, every effort was made to work with the games to minimize the costs and still meet our objectives. The Executive Committee decided to fund this venture in response to the plea to stimulate competition at the professional level and to help prepare them for contests at a world standard. It is important to note that this was a pilot program, and overall I am proud of the way it worked out.

In prioritizing what the competitors felt was important, the prize money and the quality of judging were top priority, with sanctioning being the low priority. Overall, they liked the stiffer light music requirements, especially the double MSR formats. There was criticism by some (one competitor and others not involved) since although the number of tunes submitted was according to the rules, the playing requirements were greater than normal. Going forward, some players suggested that the tune submissions should be greater than usual, so I recommend that, if these continue, we standardize the submission requirements as “premier contest requirements”, differ the actual playing requirements from contest to contest, and bring in some CPA judges for at least some of the contests. Having a panel of two was preferable to a single judge; a panel of three might be considered.

Grandfather Mountain Highland Games has expressed interest in holding a premier contest in 2016, and a tentative Piobaireachd Workshop with Colin McLellan in February is another strong possibility. Partnering with games has proved to bolster the professional contests and perhaps next year other venues could be considered.

No Paper Votes Anymore!

All voting is now held online. Ensure the Association has your correct email address to receive your ballots.





Continuing Education, Ulster Style

By Ulster PB – Lynn Warner, Linda Hall, Thompson McConnell, Brendan O'Reilly

Ulster Scottish Pipe Band held their 2nd annual “Pocono Workshop” November 21-22 (the weekend before Thanksgiving). By all accounts, it was a huge success! Sixty-four pipers and drummers participated in educational sessions throughout Saturday and Sunday. The venue was a great location in the Pocono Mountains called “The Inn at Pocono Manor” in Pennsylvania. (Also, just as a side note, it is a great family place. There is a movie room, game room, swimming pool, and lots of activities. The breakfast buffet alone is worth the trip!)

The special guest instructors were Christina Hanks, Derek Midgley and Steven McWhirter.

Guest Midsection Instructor: Christina Hanks

Christina is a prize-winning professional bass and tenor drummer from Connecticut. She spent many years as the bass drummer of the Grade One Oran Mor Pipe Band, and currently competes as a tenor drummer with the Grade One 78th Fraser Highlanders from Ontario, Canada.

Guest Piping Instructor: Derek Midgley

Derek has played with City of Washington and Toronto Police and currently plays with the Grade 1 Scottish Power Pipe Band from Glasgow, Scotland. He is one of only five Americans ever to have won the Northern Meeting Silver Medal and the only American to have won all the A grade events at the Scottish Piping Society of London.

Guest Snare Drumming Instructor: Steven McWhirter

Steven is one of the top pipe band snare drummers in the world and is a six-time winner of the World Solo Drumming Championships. He is currently the lead drummer of the Grade One Inveraray & District Pipe Band from Inveraray, Scotland.

Additional instructors were Derek Cooper, Dave Hall, Linda Hall, June Hanley, Jensen McConnell, Andrew Walker, Scot Walker and Leslie Young.

The class schedule is shown below and the great thing was you weren't locked into specific classes. If you sat in on a session, and felt you may have bitten off more than you could chew, you were encouraged to switch classes. The conference rooms were conveniently close together, so one could quickly and easily walk into another session. The instructors were very accessible and open to answering questions ranging from minor technique issues to personal band or solo experiences.

At the ceilidh Saturday night, instructors and students alike took to the floor to entertain. In addition, there was a raffle of amazing prizes, which were donated by our generous sponsors,

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Richard Baughman
The Piper's Hut
Tom Kee
TyFry**

The band is planning on expanding its course outline again next year and was eager to get feedback from all of its participants. At the end of Sunday's sessions, customer satisfaction questionnaires were filled out and collected. The band is taking a very serious approach to continuing Pipe Band music education to all ages and the workshop will only get better each year. So, mark the weekend before Thanksgiving in 2016 (November 19-20) and come on up the mountain to participate in one of the most exciting workshops around!



Ulster Scottish Pipe Band's Pocono Workshop: A snare player's reprise *By Brendan O'Reilly*

On the weekend of November 21st & 22nd, two of the top pipe band snare drummers around led classroom sessions on topics ranging from 'Beginner Drum Scores' to 'Advanced Technique'... to 'Dynamics and Phrasing' to 'The Psychology of Competing.'

(In case you don't know them...here's some quick background on the instructors: Steven McWhirter is one of the best pipe band snare competitors in the world. He is a six-time winner of the World Solo Drumming Championship and lead drummer for the Grade One Inveraray & District Pipe Band in Scotland. Derek Cooper is a three-time Winter Storm Gold Medalist and he is the only American to make the World Solo Finals, on several occasions. Recently, he won both EUSPBA Premier Professional contests on November 15 and was the 2014 North America Professional Champion at the Glengarry Highland Games in Maxville, Ontario. In addition, he plays in Steven's drum corp and is the instructor/lead drummer for Ulster Scottish PB.)

Throughout the weekend, Derek and Steven went to great lengths to ensure every participant had their questions asked and answered. It was a quite informal setting, where anything and everything could be addressed. And with these two high caliber drummers under one roof, it was a great learning opportunity for snare players. There were zingers, funny stories, humility, and self-deprecation. In the final 'Question & Answer' session, Steven and Derek ended up playing the straight guy for each other's jokes and hilarious stories.

For me, personally, it's great to attend these types of workshops because it gets me inspired to play more again. Life is funny. The thing I enjoy the most, is the one I struggle to find time to do. Between work and family, finding time to practice is usually a challenge. With a set of pad / sticks in the kitchen, living room, and my office, I fit in as much playing time

as I can. To have a weekend to immerse myself in nothing but drumming was a great treat. And you know it's a really good workshop when you want to attend the majority of the sessions. However, this just isn't possible because some are scheduled at the same time. This was a common struggle for me right through Saturday and Sunday.

For those who compete solo or were thinking about it, "The Psychology of Competing: Bands vs Solos" class by Steven was very well attended. It essentially spoke to the nerves and fears which were a concern for many. This, too, was a topic of discussion in the final Q&A session.

For my solo playing, I've always grappled with my mind wandering, despite any amount of practice. What I learned from Derek and Steven is even the best of the best, have had similar experiences. One of the funniest stories of the weekend was during the "psychology" class when Steven talked about playing at Glasgow Green with SFU in 2004. The corp was playing very, very well and his mind wandered for a moment. He noticed the 'spike' structure at Glasgow Green and thought... "Is that new? When did they build that? I've never seen that before." And at that moment, he played an extra two notes in a triplet, which were not part of the chips. Clearly, words on paper won't do justice to the visual cues and body contortions Steven relayed at the time. It was very funny. Derek, too, had a very funny example. One time he was competing and someone walked by with a 'sandwich'. His mind wandered





and he thought to himself, "Boy, that looks really good..." Needless to say, Steven and Derek drew huge laughs to each of these stories and more.

I could go on and on. But, in an effort to keep this short, here are some random nuggets from the weekend:

- **Steven** – The only thing you can control is how well you play. It's about the performance. Try to play better than the last time you competed. No such thing as perfection.

- **Derek** – Practice so much it becomes muscle memory so you don't have to think about it. Have confidence in yourself.

- **Steven** – Don't play on pads that are too easy. Find your natural weight of playing and practice rudiments/phrases louder and softer.

- **Derek** - Professional Players make more mistakes than people realize. It's how you react and recover. If you play something, which was not written in the score, the judge most likely will not know. Or if the piper goes off, the snare player should have put in enough practice so it doesn't derail the performance.

Both Derek and Steven emphasized the following:

- Regarding nerves, the message was "the more prepared you are, the less nervous you'll be"

- Get as much time on the drum as possible

- It's about preparation and routine: Get your piper and tunes early

- It's the Quality of the Performance and not Quantity (four parted vs six parted tunes)

For next year, Steven and Derek talked about their vision for the drumming portion of the workshop. Essentially, they would like to get a third instructor to allow for 'Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced' sessions. This would allow them to get into very, specific intricacies with students in each class.

Hence ... Save the Date! November 19-20, 2016 ... It is bound to be another huge success next year. And to make it easy to remember... it's the weekend before Thanksgiving.

Derek Midgley teaching.





Saturday 9:00 am to 10:30 am – Piping

June Hanley: Ways to Attack New Tunes: Sightreading, Rhythms, Nailing the Fingering

Derek Midgley: What Is "On the Beat" Really?

Andrew Walker: Musical Expression in Marches: Simple and Compound Time

Saturday 10:45 am to 12:15 pm – Drumming

Derek Cooper: Advanced Technique Building

Linda Hall: Fundamentals of Flourishing

Christina Hanks: Bass Drumming Fundamentals

Steven McWhirter: Applying Rudiments and Two-Bar Phrasing

Saturday 10:45 am to 12:15 pm – Piping

Dave Hall: Bagpipe Set-Up and Reed Manipulation

Derek Midgley: Writing and Playing Harmony

Scot Walker: Two-Part Strathspeys and Reels for Band Medleys

Saturday 2:00 pm to 3:30 pm – Drumming

Derek Cooper: Effective Practice Methods

Linda Hall: Flourishing Development

Christina Hanks: Bass Drumming Development

Steven McWhirter: Dynamics and Phrasing

Saturday 2:00 pm to 3:30 pm – Piping

Dave Hall: Pipe Band Session

June Hanley: Introduction to and Appreciation for Piobaireachd

Derek Midgley: How to Tune Your Bagpipe

Saturday 3:45 pm to 5:15 pm – Drumming

Derek Cooper: Drum Set Up, Tuning and Maintenance

Linda Hall: Exploring Bass Scores

Christina Hanks: Exploring Tenor Scores

Steven McWhirter: Psychology of Competing: Bands vs. Solos

Saturday 3:45 pm to 5:15 pm – Piping

June Hanley: Figuring out Unison

Derek Midgley: Tackling Piobaireachd Structure: Primary and Secondary Piobaireachds

Andrew Walker: Musical Expression in Strathspeys and Reels

Saturday 7:00 pm to 11:00 pm

CEILIDH

Sunday 9:00 am to 10:30 am – Drumming

Derek Cooper: Beginner Drum Scores

Linda Hall: Midsection Score Writing (for solo or band)

Christina Hanks: Midsection Drum Maintenance & Get Your Drum Fixed! A Hands-On Clinic

Steven McWhirter: Advanced Drum Scores

Sunday 9:00 am to 10:30 am – Piping

Dave Hall: Working Order: Bagpipe Fundamentals

Derek Midgley: Mastering Hornpipes and Jigs

Scot Walker: Pipe Band Basics

Sunday 10:45 am to 12:15 pm – Drumming

Derek Cooper: Tips for a Better Performance

Christina Hanks & Linda Hall: Midsection Open Forum: Ask Us Anything! (We'll Start With Tuning, Both For Solos and For Multiple Tenor Tones)

Steven McWhirter: Selecting Appropriate Material for the Grade Level

Steven McWhirter & Derek Cooper: Q & A and Wrap Up

Sunday 10:45 am to 12:15 pm – Piping

Derek Midgley: How to Construct a Medley: Tips for Grades 5, 4 and 3 Bands

Andrew Walker: Fundamentals of Good Technique

Scot Walker: Balancing Tone, Technique and Expression in Solo Playing

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Getting Past the Bones

By Thom Moore

For 12 years of my (so far) 28-year career in medical and life science book and journal publishing, I was required to travel to Chicago the moment my Thanksgiving Day family celebration concluded in order to attend a giant, week-long medical meeting, “RSNA,” or the Radiological Society of North America annual meeting. This massive medical meeting always begins the weekend after US Thanksgiving, and frankly it was always rather sad for me to have to leave the bosom of the family to run off to Chicago for it, as much as I love Chicago. But one does what one must do to put bread on the table, and besides, RSNA was always fascinating: The variety of techniques and equipment that radiologists use to look inside the human body and diagnose diseases is just mind-boggling. Some radiology equipment companies spend upwards of 50% of their entire yearly marketing budget just to exhibit at RSNA, the result being fascinating displays of whizz-bang medical physics and engineering, and some of the best and brightest medical industry and clinical folks in attendance.

So, what does THIS have to do with piping?! Well, first of all, it is certainly a bit of a cliché to compare musical notes on a page with the skeleton of a living being. And yet, this is very much the case with our beloved piobaireachd repertoire: After more than three decades of studying and playing this music, after untold hours of personal tutelage and listening to and comparing reliable recordings of lessons by the old masters such as the Bobs of Balmoral and “Wee” Donald MacLeod, I continue to consider myself a mere beginner. Sometimes all that I think I can see are the skeletons of the tunes, no matter how hard and carefully I look and listen. To this day, I appreciate and know that I can learn from a great master. Just as a master radiologist can look at a radiograph and see not only bone but interpret from the light and shade the diagnostic story of a living being, so can a great teacher of piobaireachd tell the story of a ceol mor tune and show its living, breathing essence.

Donald Lindsay is one such great master teacher and performer. Lifelong a devoted student and insightful



Donald and president Dan Cole listen to Jerry Anne Dickel presenting her tune.

interpreter of ceol mor, Donald always brings every shred of his passion and deep respect for this music not only to his private teaching, but – and perhaps especially so – to his group workshops. The latest of the Invermark workshops was held the Friday, Saturday, and Sunday after the US Thanksgiving holiday, November 27-29, 2015, at Albany’s nicely situated and appropriately decorated Celtic Hall. I for one was very happy to trade radiologists for Donald, though, again, my fellow students and I were engaged in looking not only at the “skeletons,” but also very much the flesh, light, and shadow of some of piobaireachd’s greatest tunes.

The focus of this Invermark workshop was the 2016 Piobaireachd Society Set Tunes – the ceol mor tunes selected by the Piobaireachd Society Music Committee for all 2016 competitions sanctioned by the Society. This is a grand annual tradition that allows for rotation and exposure of a wide variety of tunes at three different levels, from Silver Medal to Gold Medal to Senior Competitions. Each group features 8 tunes, and effort is made to select tunes of increasing import, length, and / or interpretive challenge from one level to the next. Competitors in each group are required to submit “only” 4 tunes for competition, but of course competitors must first decide exactly which 4 tunes of each 8 they would like to study, learn, and play, and as anyone who enjoys playing piobaireachd can tell the uninitiated, 4 tunes is still quite a formidable repertoire to “have off.”

Donald Lindsay has long viewed the annual Set Tunes



lists as fantastic opportunities for pipers of all levels of accomplishment in ceol mor to study as many of the tunes in every group as possible – so, a grand total of 24 tunes, which is an absolutely huge task! Starting on Friday evening, our intrepid group started out to try to study as many of the 2016 Set Tunes as possible. Here is the list, from Silver Medal and up:

SILVER MEDAL COMPETITIONS

Lament for the Castle of Dunyveg PS 1
Hector MacLean's Warning (#) PS 2
The Rout of the MacPhees (#) PS 4
A Flame of Wrath for Patrick Caogach PS 5, K
I am Proud to play a Pipe PS 6, K
Castle Menzies PS 8
The MacDonalds are Simple (#) PS 9
The Piper's Warning to his Master PS 12, K

GOLD MEDAL COMPETITIONS

Lament for MacSwan of Roaig PS 1, K
The Battle of Waternish PS 2, K
The Gathering of Clan Chattan PS 2, K
Mary's Praise PS 5, K
My King has landed in Moidart PS 5, K
Isabel Mackay PS 6, K
I got a Kiss of the King's Hand PS 7, K
The Stewarts' White Banner PS 7

SENIOR COMPETITIONS

The Bells of Perth PS 2, K
Scarce of Fishing PS 3, K
The Earl of Ross's March PS 10
The MacDonalds' Salute (Corrected version) (*) PS 11
Lament for Hugh PS 13
MacLeod of MacLeod's Lament PS 15, K
A Son's Salute to his Parents Donald MacLeod Book
The Phantom Piper of Corrieyairack (*) PS 20th Century Book

In the event, our group made it through “only” the Silver Medal and Gold Medal tunes, but to our – and Donald's – credit, we really did devote a solid, respectful amount of time to each of the scores that we did study. I for one came away with a wealth of notes and recordings that I know I will draw upon for as long as I will be able to play ceol mor.

A review article like this surely cannot entertain readers by going into the minute details of what was covered from score to score, though undoubtedly some of you might actually enjoy that – you, and you know who you are, will just have to attend the next Invermark workshop in February! But I can state that you will not find a more congenial and knowledgeable tutor than Donald Lindsay, who tries hard not only to provide a solid

Eastern United States Pipe Band Association

musical basis for analyzing and playing piobaireachd tunes, but considers it also essential to develop in each prospective player a way to think about the tunes in a particular context – that is, to study and / or imagine stories about each tune that will set the emotional and artistic stage for its reproduction on the bagpipe. It is well known that some stories behind ceol mor tunes are as much legend and myth as actual fact, but, after all, we are talking about an art form here. I would argue that it is every bit as important for the performer to create a mood, a feeling, or overall ambiance for a tune as it is to play it with correct technique. Donald is a supreme master in this approach, and he offers not only written histories of the tunes, but also – and this is where he slips easily into the role of raconteur – his own stories of great players of the past, taken from his many years as a devoted student and teacher.

I came away from this workshop delighted, excited, and energized to return to several of the tunes that we studied intensely over that weekend and perhaps commit two or three of them to my own repertoire. This workshop also served as a reminder to me about how important it is to receive in-person learning, especially where artistic interpretation is at stake. It's wonderful to have so many great recordings and tutorial packages available now, not to mention Skype lessons! But nothing can replace actually sitting at a master's knee, soaking up the history and stories that are as much a part of the flesh and sinew of our beloved music as are the bare bones of the notes on the page.



Master teacher Donald Lindsay demonstrates the art behind the notes.



Confessions Of A Tone-Deaf Piper

By James Thompson

It was the morning of my first Grade III solo competition, and I was spiraling into an adrenaline- and caffeine-induced haze, wondering how much longer the gallons of partially digested java sloshing around in my stomach would stay put. I had made it through the Piobaireachd and the 2/4 March, but somewhere in the second part of “Betty from Sligo” I broke down. I said something apologetic and self-deprecating to the judge. He smirked in feigned sympathy.

He said, “You do realize, don’t you, that your D and your High G are extremely sharp?”

“My D and my High G?” I repeated. Like most other gormlessly obvious things I’ve ever said, it was all I could think of at the time.

“Your whole upper hand, actually.” His face disappeared under the brim of his sun helmet, and his pen flew over my critique sheet like a seismometer needle during an asteroid strike.

Not just sharp but *extremely* sharp. If you had asked me before I walked up onto the platform, I probably would have told you my chanter might be a little flat. I had noticed that I was getting some weird glances as I was tuning. So I thought maybe it was *really* flat. I sank the reed in deeper.

Weird looks are imprecise that way.

I hurried back to the tuning area, pulled my chanter out, yanked the reed out of the seat, wound some hemp around the end, and stuck it back in. I slapped some electrical tape on the D and the High G. I re-tuned my drones and headed off to the Strathspey and Reel platform.

I took first place.

Needless to say, this was in the days before electronic tuners. My Achilles’ ear-drum had put an end to my brief, inglorious competitive career by the time they arrived on the scene.

I had attended numerous piping workshops over the years, so I knew the conventional wisdom about tuning. That was the problem: I knew what everybody said about tuning, but I couldn’t hear what they were hearing.

So how *do* you tell the difference between sharp and flat?

How do you tell the difference between red and green?

That’s the best analogy I could ever come with. If you’re color blind, no amount of diligence and perseverance is going to enable you to tell the difference between red and green.

I sometimes wonder how good a piper I could have been had circumstances been optimal. What if I’d started chanter lessons at age five instead of at eleven? What if I’d gone to a piping summer school when I was ten or eleven, rather than waiting until I was seventeen? And the Big One: What if I’d had a halfway decent tuning ear? Or, better yet-- what if I’d had perfect pitch? But that raises an ontological problem (as well as an opportunity to use a big word), doesn’t it? Isn’t pining for a better tuning ear like wishing I were seven-foot-two, or that I had blonde hair and blue eyes? The genes I’ve got wouldn’t have given me any of that, obviously.

Which is the sort of thing people don’t want to think about, because we live, after all, in a power-of-positive-thinking, law-of-attraction kind of culture. We want to believe we can conquer any adversity through sheer force of attitudinal readjustment. I’ll get up at four o’clock each morning, go for my five-mile run, do my yoga, eat my granola and my Greek yogurt, drink my ginkgo tea, and then sit down and stare at those red and green squares until I can tell the difference between them.

Sorry. Probably not gonna happen.



Whenever I listened to professional-level players playing a slow air, and they'd sit on one note for a long time, I'd tell myself, "Hear that? That's what F is supposed to sound like. Remember that. Write it down."

But you can't take notes on tones, can you? Surely hearing is the most mysterious of our senses, the most difficult to articulate. How can you verbalize a tone?

I know a guy who claims he can see auras. People with blue auras are altruistic and compassionate, people with red auras are selfish and aggressive, people with green auras ate the gorditas. I think he's full of it. I don't see anything. But then perhaps I'm not so sure. If other people can experience tones, which are beyond me, perhaps there are other realms beyond my ability to experience as well?

You do realize, don't you, that you're surrounded by the spirit of your dead grandmother?

You do realize, don't you, that Zeta Reticulians are trying to communicate telepathically with you?

Once I was in a band that hired a professional-level piper to coach us and help us tune. All of us pipers would play "The Heights of Dargai" over and over again, while he stalked around the inside of the circle, the expression of a hemorrhoid-addled bloodhound plastered across his visage. If something were off, his nose would twitch, his eyes would bulge, and a purplish vein would throb in fortissimo on his temple. He'd pull out the offending chanter, but unlike one of us mere mortals, he wouldn't have to move the reed. He'd just lay hands on it and it would be healed. Or he'd give it the Vulcan nerve pinch. Or he'd hypnotize it, like Crocodile Dundee subduing a recalcitrant water buffalo. Sometimes he wouldn't even have to touch it at all. He'd just give it a look and put it right back in the stock.

That's the super power I want.



Andy White

By John Bottomley

Editor's note: Andy White holds a special distinction among EUSPBA members in that he may well be our only member honored by Rolling Stone magazine and CNN, among others, for his part in music history. He also holds a distinction unique among Beatles: He is the only one I ever slept with.

But on a serious note, Andy began his drumming career in the Boy Scouts at the age of 12, then joined the Grade 1 Rutherglen Pipe band when he was 17 or 18. At that time he met two other pipe band drummers who introduced him to the jazz world. In the late 40s he became friends with Alex Duthart, and although he got away from pipe band drumming in the early 1950s, he kept his hand (both of them in fact) in drumming by touring with Vic Lewis in shows that included Chuck Berry and Bill Haley.

It was that experience that led to him eventually being called in by George Martin to take Ringo's place on the Beatles' Love Me Do and PS I Love You, recorded in 1962. Ringo had only been with the group for three weeks at the time.

During this period, Andy remained close with Alex Duthart, and followed his career in Shotts with interest. In the 1970s, he rejoined the piping world, playing with the British Caledonian Airways pipe band.

While touring with Marlene Dietrich he met his wife, Thea, in Dallas. Eventually they moved to Caldwell, New Jersey, Thea's home town. There he reconnected with Joe Morello and began teaching. He spent many years judging and teaching in the EUSPBA; known for his wonderful sense of humor and his humility, he was easily one of the most popular gentlemen in our association.

In 2011, at the ripe young age of 81, Andy performed Love Me Do with the Smithereens:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NiajRpcei-U>



Branch Notes

When the Ohio Valley first

established a Branch Championship, it was done so that bands could qualify for the EUSPBA Championship held later in the same year. The Ohio Scottish Games was designated as the Branch Championship as it was held in June. With the EUSPBA Championship contest no longer being held, we thought it was appropriate to award the Ohio Valley Championship to the band/ player who accumulated the most points by Ohio Valley members attending Ohio Valley events. This year, the qualifying competitions included Edinboro Indoor, Scottish Festival and Celtic Gathering in Bridgeport, WV, Ohio Scottish Games, Presque Isle Solo Competition, Edinboro Highland games and Ligonier Highland Games. The Champions are listed to the right. Congratulations on your success this season!

There are workshops planned in our region.

Alma Highland Workshop, April 2nd

Edinboro Indoor Competition and Workshop, March 19th
Cincinnati Caledonian Competition and Workshop, April 9th

Also, congratulations to Ohio Valley piper Laureano Thomas-Sanchez for being invited to the 2015 Nicol-Brown Competition. He finished 3rd in the Piobaireachd and 4th in the 6/8 competition. As the Ohio Valley Gr 1 Champion, he will also receive an invitation to the 2016 George M. Bell Amateur Solo Championship in February, 2016. Congratulations Laureano!

Finally, Congratulations to Ohio Valley piper Ryan Praskovich for being invited to the 2015 George Sherriff Memorial Invitational competition. Good Luck Ryan!

Submitted by:
Barry Conway
Ohio Valley Branch Treasurer

Grade B Pipe Band
Veterans Memorial
Pipe Band
Irish American East Side
Pipes and Drums

Grade IV Pipe Band
MacDonald Pipe Band
Grade IV

Grade II Pipe Band
The Great Lakes Pipe Band

Professional Piping
Nick Hudson

Grade I Piping
Laureano Thomas-Sanchez

Grade II Piping
David Flaherty

Grade III Piping
Josh Whitson

Grade IV Piping, Sr.
George Smith

Grade IV Piping, Jr.
Aedan Conway

Professional Snare
None

Grade I Snare
Miles Bennington

Grade II Snare
None

Grade III Snare
Isabella Jackson

Grade IV Snare, Sr.
Maria Gallo

Grade IV Snare, Jr.
Helen Gall

Grade V Snare
Liam Conway

Tenor Professional
None

Amateur Tenor
Fiona Conway
Anne Roby

Novice Tenor
Catherine Parker

Professional Bass
None

Amateur Bass
None

**Professional Drum
Major**
Alec Brown

Amateur Drum Major
None



Southwest Looks to Expand Numbers

Autumn is a bit of a slow time in the Southwest Branch in terms of sanctioned competition. The Baton Rouge Caledonian Society Pipe Band fared very well in the Grade 5 contest at Stone Mountain in the Southern Branch in October, but not too much has gone on in our branch since the Red Stick Regional solo contests last summer in Baton Rouge, LA. Tulsa, OK, held a Highland games and competition in September but did not request sanctioning this year. Salado, TX, held a contest in November, but they also do not sanction their events. This underscores a question a number of people have asked of late, "Why should we belong to an association?"

The Southwest Branch is HUGE geographically. It is an average drive of four-six hours to the closest competition from any given point and it can take nearly two full days of driving to get to the furthest points of West Texas for people from Arkansas or Louisiana, and vice-versa. There are few sanctioned band contests in the branch at this time (Arkansas Scottish Festival being the only one that comes immediately to mind this year) and a handful of stand-alone solo contests. That means accrued points are not really that big a draw. Even if a band wins at ASF, or a soloist does very well and gathers points, if they attend only one or two other contests in a season those points do not even put a dent in the overall leaders' cumulative points won by players and bands in the Northeast or Mid-Atlantic branches who can travel much shorter distances and compete more regularly. It has an effect on consideration for competitors from our region who apply for upgrades as well, even though they play in front of the same judges as everyone else in the association. Quite often a soloist in Grade 3 or 2 piping has only one or two competitors to play against on a given day unless they travel a great distance to a larger contest further east. As a result they are not always considered, "ready," even with strong score sheets.

It is often said by others in the association that we here in the Southwest are, "outliers," and that we don't understand how the association works. I just want to take this opportunity to assure the rest of the EUSPBA that we know exactly how things work. Our members pay the same dues, and work just as hard to improve our solo and band piping and drumming as everyone else does. We play by the same rules and are judged by the same standards. I would also point out that a lot of great ideas have come out of the Southwest over the last ten years. Things like the two-parted Strathspey/Reel in Grade 4, which the first time it was proposed was poo-pooed quite soundly and now

appears to be very successful; it is popular with the Grade 4 players and has yet to cause a single contest to collapse or a judge's head to explode. We have also demonstrated on numerous occasions how successful stand-alone solo contests can be. The previously mentioned Red Stick Regional, solo contests in Austin and San Antonio, the now unfortunately defunct Oklahoma Solo Piping Debate as well as some other contests that were warmly received and only ceased being held because the organizers themselves moved on. All serve as examples that the model works. The contest held in association with the Louisiana Renaissance Festival is another perfect example of the stand-alone model success story. Many pipers turn up their noses at the Renaissance Faire folks, but in Louisiana, Steve Brownlee worked with the existing Renaissance Festival to arrange a piping contest on the Saturday of their "Celtic Weekend" and everyone benefits. Festival goers get additional entertainment and hear high-quality piping and drumming, and the competitors have an additional venue at which to engage in sanctioned competitive events. And it's FUN.

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More of these types of contests need to be considered and organized in our area, and hopefully expanded to include band contests.

So, why DO we continue to belong to the EUSPBA? We want the infrastructure and quality of judging that the EUSPBA ensures. Contest organizers in our area would quite often prefer to hire an EUSPBA judge in favor of someone from another association, even though there are some judges who might be closer and less expensive to bring in for the weekend. We appreciate the association-affiliated educational opportunities that sometimes arise, and we are thankful for association support for those educational opportunities we create for ourselves in the form of local workshops. The Southwest Branch is thankful for the services and benefits the association offers. As the newly elected Branch Chair I do want to emphasize that we are no more outliers than anyone else in the association.

We have a different set of needs at times with regard to what the association supplies. I feel it is the responsibility of the association to consider those needs when planning for the future and not always assume that what is good for one branch is best for all branches. And do not assume that because we are geographically distant that we are somehow, “less,” than full members of the association as has been implied on occasion in the past.

As Southwest Chair I plan to do all I can to bring back into the fold bands, soloists and competition venues that have strayed over the past years in our area. I ask that the larger body of the EUSPBA remembers that we are equal members of the association and consider our differences when going into the decision making processes that occur throughout the year.

Thank you - Kenton Adler

The Southern Branch had a good

finish to 2015, and congratulations to all who were upgraded recently by the Music Board. The Branch was represented at the recent AGM in Baltimore by members Jim Dillahey (V.P., and Judge), Bill Caudill (Southern Chair and Judge), Sandy Jones (M.B. member and Judge), Sally Warburton (Judge), Jim Nisbet (Judge), Eric MacNeill (new member of our branch, Judge), and Steve McClure (Judge). Also attending the annual Judge’s Meeting on the Sunday morning following the AGM were Branch Judges Ed Krintz and Jerry Finegan. We eagerly await news from the Music Board and Executive Committee on the various proposals discussed.

Following the end of the competition season in our Branch at Stone Mountain, Georgia, several Branch bands have been involved in a number of notable engagements. The Dunedin Florida bands have been involved in a large Celtic and Craft Beer Festival in November, the Knoxville Pipes and Drums played with the University of Tennessee Marching Band at a football game for a huge audience, and the Wake and District band played for the opening of the Carolina Hurricanes home season. Many other of our bands have been active during the lead-up to the Holidays.

The Branch will follow with interest the appeals being made by the Rural Hill Farms, home of the Loch Norman Highland Games. It seems that they have incurred a debt

of over \$100K this past year with several site events being either cancelled or impacted by rain (including a full wash-out on the Games Weekend’s Sunday event). We will look to see what will happen with this great event. Scotland County, and the scheduled Branch Championship did go on despite the weather, and also took a loss, however that organization is not in debt and is looking forward to 2016. Thankfully no other of our Branch events were impacted that significantly by the weather.....but, as always (and as was echoed by many at the recent AGM), we wouldn’t have contests to appear at if it weren’t for the Games. We need to support them!! There’s no reason for any bands within 150 miles or so of an event not to be there! Our relationship is symbiotic.....SUPPORT OUR BRANCH GAMES!

Fairly soon in the new year, our Branch events will start taking the stage once again. The Central Florida Games are up first in January. I’m certain that the date of the Charleston Indoor will be announced soon, Northeast Florida will be in late February, and the Cary Indoor has scheduled April 2 as their date. Again.....we hope branch members will support these fine events – and to those from further afield.....y’all come on down to the South!

Bill Caudill



Northeast Branch Notes

The NE Branch AGM was held in Albany, NY on October 3rd. A great afternoon was had discussing some of the proposals and we sent a few to the Main Body AGM.

Election Results:

Brendan O'Reilly (former Secretary) was voted in as the new Branch Chair, replacing Maureen Connor, who had been the previous Branch Chair for the last five years. Many thanks to her for her years committed to helping run the Branch.

Andrew Adams (former Treasurer) was voted in as the new Secretary, replacing Brendan O'Reilly.

The Treasurer position is currently vacant. If someone is interested in filling the position until an election next year, please contact Andrew at andrew.adams.drums@gmail.com

The NE Branch was also pleased to see that the 2nd and 3rd place finishers in the Professional Drumming event were both from the NE Branch. Congratulations to both Scott Fletcher (2nd Medley, 3rd MSR) and Eric MacNeill (2nd MSR, 3rd Medley) on their placings.

The NE Branch has now created a Facebook Page. Head over and "like" us. Look for us at [Eastern United States Pipe Band Association - Northeast Branch](#)



Report for the Executive Secretary

By Sheldon Hamblin

From the Executive Secretary:

Our Annual General Meeting was held on Saturday November 13 and 14th, 2015 at the Holiday Inn, Inner Harbor, Baltimore, Maryland. Attendance was around 50, average for our AGMs. However, this AGM was much more interesting. Friday night we covered the annual reports (available on the website); Saturday morning we covered the proposals (also available on the website). That left us the entire afternoon to attend the workshops, a new program at the AGM, which we hope to continue. We had Reid Maxwell, Matt Welch, and Hugh Cameron speaking on ensemble, Donald Lindsay on Piobaireachd, and Bruce Gandy on Piobaireachd.

Our voting this year was done by electronic ballots, as many of the branches had been doing for a few years now. We found this very well received and had FAR more people voting than ever.

The Voice has been available on the website now for almost a year. We are moving toward a "members only" page so that shortly, only dues paying members will be able to obtain this (as was requested in one of the proposals).

The results of the elections were that Matt Wood was re-elected as treasurer, Sheldon Hamblin was re-elected

as executive secretary, and Carole Hackett (past executive secretary) was elected to the Officer at Large position #1.

On the Proposals see the posting on the home page of the website. As we work on these proposals they will be updated on the website.

Regarding mailings from my office: we have moved on to a new emailing program that I am still getting acquainted with. I hope to notify all members of each issue of *The Voice* as it becomes available, as well as using this format for the annual mailing. In combination with moving *The Voice* to the web, and electronic balloting, we are reaching our goal of spending less on publications/printing/ mailing and more on our adjudicators' training and branch events, helping our organization improve the level of play for more members.

Upgrades have been posted on the webpage as soon as they were available. We notified people who requested email notification that way; others received snail mail.

Respectfully submitted
Sheldon C. Hamblin
Executive Secretary
Tada Gan Iarracht



Keep up with the latest!

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