

B. C. PIPERS' NEWSLETTER



#167

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

B. C. PIPERS' NEWSLETTER

Published by the British Columbia's Pipers' Association

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November 1977

No 167

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THE PIOBAIREACHD SOCIETY

1978 Competitions

A. The Gold Medal Competition At The Argyllshire Gathering And The Northern Meeting

Competitors who are eligible to play in these competitions will be required to select and submit four from the following list of eight tunes.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|
| 1. THE BATTLE OF THE BRIDGE OF PERTH | Book 1 and K |
| 2. THE BIG SPREE | Book 1 and K |
| 3. THE END OF THE GREAT BRIDGE | Book 2 and K |
| 4. PATRICK OG MACCRIMMON'S LAMENT | Book 3 and K |
| 5. THE BLUE RIBBON | Book 5 and K |
| 6. THE EARL OF SEAFORTH'S SALUTE | Book 5 and K |
| 7. THE MACDOUGALLS' GATHERING | Book 5 and K |
| 8. THE VAUNTING | Book 7 and K |

B. The Argyllshire Gathering Senior Competition And The Gold Clasp Competition At The Northern Meeting

Competitors will be required to select and submit five of the following list of ten tunes.

- | | |
|--|--------------|
| 1. THE PRIDE OF BARRA | Book 5 and K |
| 2. MACDONALD OF KINLOCHMOIDART'S LAMENT
(Tune No 2) | Book 6 and K |
| 3. The STEWART'S WHITE BANNER | Book 7 |
| 4. MACLEOD OF COLBECK'S LAMENT | Book 10 |
| 5. MACKENZIE OF GAIRLOCH'S LAMENT | Book 10 |
| 6. THE MACLEAN'S MARCH | Book 10 |
| 7. RORY MACLEOD'S LAMENT | Book 11 |
| 8. MRS. MACLEOD OF TALLISKER'S SALUTE | Book 11 |
| 9. PORT URLAR | Book 12 |
| 10. MACLEOD OF MACLEOD'S LAMENT | k. |

C. The Silver Medal Competition At The Northern Meeting

Competitors will submit six tunes of their own choice.

D. The Piobaireachd Society's Gold Medal Competition To Be Held By The City Of Ottawa

Competitors will select and submit four tunes from the list at A above.

The tunes listed under A and B are published with editorial notes in the Piobaireachd Society's books as indicated, and as well in the Kilberry Book of Ceol Mor, where marked "K", with the exception of MACLEOD OF MACLEOD'S LAMENT, which is only in the latter publication. Competitors are not restricted to these settings and any other setting may be played, although the judges may take into consideration the merits of the setting as well as authenticity and authority for them.

Altogether different tunes known by the same or similar names will not be accepted as alternative settings.

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Nothing in this advertisement relates to any conditions that The Argyllshire Gathering and The Northern Meeting may make for these competitions. Intending competitors are advised that they themselves are responsible for checking their eligibility for entry into the competitions listed at A and B.

For the Music Committee
J.A. MacLellan (Hon. Secy.)

THE VANCOUVER SUN, JANUARY 6, 1934

FAMOUS BALLAD

"ROAD TO THE ISLES"
ORIGINATED IN OLDER AIR

Curiosity has been evinced as to the origin of the popular song, "The Road to the Isles," which is so frequently sung in Vancouver over the air by, Ernest Colton.

The name of the composer is not actually known, but a number of musical authorities have given the credit to different writers.

Sir Harold Boulton, editor of "The Songs of the North" and writer of "The Skye Boat Song," claims that it is a native tune derived from the Hebrides, and that it was first popularized by a Highland Piper on his practice chanter.

Sir Harold, in a lecture in Edinburgh recently, stated in addition that the name of the pipe major who invented the tune, or elaborated it, was Pipe Major John McLellan, H.L.I.

Inquiries sent to McLellan resulted in the substantiation of this claim, McLellan writing that he remembered quite well the circumstances under which he wrote the air for this song in the year 1890.

He had been visiting his home village in Jura, and, at his mother's request, played a snatch of a melody known to students of the pipes as "The Bens of Jura," and from this elaborated the song we now know as "The Road to the Isles." Other compositions which have been based upon it include "The Burning Sands of Egypt," "The Highland Brigade's March" and the "Stewart March".
by Seb Nellies

VANCOUVER LADIES PIPE BAND

BURNS SUPPER

JANUARY 28th, ST. MARY'S HALL, JOYCE RD.

Tickets- \$10.00

Phone 526-6353

BIRLS AND BLOBS

by Seumas MacNeill

Away back in May, 1965, D. R. MacLennan wrote an article entitled "Where have all the birles gone?" His worry was that the modern professional pipers were careless in their playing of many of the important doublings, and particularly in playing the birles. He pointed out that at the start of "Bonnie Ann" the first birl "...is mused with no G gracenote and the low G is struck first from the B. It sounds Atrocious."

After years of observing this phenomenon I have reached the inescapable conclusion--and D.R. will probably not like this--that the fault lies with our soldiery. The source of the rotten birles is the Scots Guards book.

The explanation is quite simple. It goes in three stages like this:--

1. The birl from low A, as at the end of many marches for example is written as follows:--



2. When the writers of the tunes came to a birl, sometimes they got it right, but very often they apparently said to themselves, "Oh, a birl--that's that thing in the last bar of a march." And so they stuck down the three gracenotes tied together.

3. For years now young people have been accurate readers of music--more accurate than those responsible for the S.G. book. When these young learners saw



they played exactly what is there--from the B note, they played first of all a low G, then lifted the little finger for a low A, and finally hit it again once on the chanter.

Now just to keep the record straight, a birl consists of four gracenotes--low A, low G, low A, low G--followed by a low A note. IN EVERY CASE this has to be produced by sounding a low A and then striking the low A hole twice quickly with the little finger.

The movement, no matter which is the starting note, should be played



Of course some people prefer to play a G gracenote on the birl, which simply means that their birl is written



Again the starting note is not important--the birl is always written the same way.

The ONLY occasion when a birl is written with three gracenotes is when it is played from low A--and that is only because the low A gracenote is absorbed in the starting low A note.

It might be a much better plan always to write the birl with the four gracenotes (or five if you make a G gracenote on it) no matter what the starting note is.

Then from low A the birl would be written as



The fact that we do nothing to produce the first low A gracenote need not cause any confusion. It can be looked on as a tied note.

As a matter of fact when Tommy Pearston and I were writing Tutor Part 1 we debated this matter in connection with the throw on D which appears in the fourth bar of "The High Road to Cairloch." There the throw on D comes from a low G note, but we decided to leave in the low G gracenote of the throw, because otherwise it would cause confusion to the learner.

And that is another place where the Scots Guards book goes wrong--leaving out the low G gracenote in such circumstances produces another ghastly error. But that is material for another article.

A glance at the Scots Guards book shows very clearly the many traps into which pipers are falling. "The Highland Wedding" in the very first bar of the first part gives us the blob from E instead of the proper birl. Strangely enough by the time the writer got to bar five, which is the same as bar one, he had discovered how to write a birl properly.

In the third part however bar one again gives us the same blob.

Worse in many cases is the start to "Norman Orr Ewing," because this is a tune usually learned at a very early stage by many people. In bar one of the first part we get F followed by a blob and the same in bar five.

Many of the tunes which follow have no problem because the birl does not appear except from low A. In the second part of "Donald Cameron" however we find the blob appearing again in bars one, three and five. The third part has the birl correctly written, but we rather suspect that it is only because this time a G gracenote is being put on it.

When we pass to strathspeys the situation becomes even worse. The second part of "Arniston Castle" is an absolute disaster. "Atholl Cummers" is almost as bad and "Blair Drummond" gives us a startling example of the blob in the second bar of the first part. "Delvinside" and "Tulloch Gorm" continue the devilish work of instructing the piper to do blobs from B and C.

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The reels show no improvement. "The Grey Bob" has blobs from B and E every time---except in one case where the birl is written properly from E, but the low A note following the birl has been missed out.

The fourth part of "Pretty Marion" continues the bad work, but the recital of mistakes becomes monotonous.

D.R. MacLennan recognised and drew attention to the problem over a decade ago. Since then the situation has become worse-- in my opinion for the reasons given above. What then can be done about it? Well, for a start I think all teachers should check carefully the score before teaching a new tune to a pupil, and ensure that the blobs are amended to birls on every occasion. Thereafter it is largely a matter of eternal vigilance to ensure that there is no back-sliding.

Judges can let it be known that even the authority of the Scots Guard book is not enough to save a blob from condemnation, and in most cases the loss of a prize. Competitions are so close nowadays that it would be fair to count the blob as a major error.

Reprinted by the kind permission from the June issue of the Piping Times.

As a person who has done a fair amount of Judging and casual listening I can heartily agree with this fine article. If there is one movement that receives abuse at the hands (Fingers) of a piper the birl is remarkably to the fore. All young pipers please take note and study how the movement is written and played.

Ed.

DECEMBER GENERAL MEETING
KNOCKOUT & TRIO COMPETITION

The next General meeting will be held in the Scottish Auditorium Friday evening 8 p.m. 2nd of December 1977.

After the General meeting there will be a short interlude for the usual refreshments, followed by the Trio Competition and the individual competition. Dec. 2nd the Trio's will be from Haney Legion vs Abbotsford Legion and my guess is that it will be a close competition.

The Solo event will feature Hal Senyk vs David Wilson and Gordon MacDonald vs Ian Whitelaw

As our readers can see we should be in for a very pleasant evening of piping again.

Ed.

RESULTS OF KNOCKOUT & TRIO COMPETITION HELD NOV. 4th, 1977

There was quite a large and enthusiastic audience to greet the competitors at the individual knockout and trio competition, held in the Scottish Auditorium 12 and Fir on the 4th of Nov. First to play, were the Trio's with Triumph St. Emerging the winners, over Victoria. Both trio's were very well received indeed. Next came the individual 10-12 min. medley with Graham Davidson getting the nod over Bill Mossie, and Steve Geddes the winner over Jimmie Watt. This Competition went over very well with the audience treating the pipers with the utmost courtesy (as it should be) I got the feeling that "old devil" nerves played a few hands in that first knockout Round, but as it was the first round, perhaps it can be expected, and I am sure that we haven't heard the best from these lads yet, All in all it turned out a very good night indeed with fine selections from Hal Senyk, and various other notable Pipers, not forgetting wee Pauline Alakija who was our lead off piper in the impromptu piping.

RESULTS OF BI-MONTHLY COMPETITION

HELD SAT. 10.30 a.m. NOV 5th AT THE SCOTTISH AUDITORIUM

Once again there was a very gratifying turnout on Saturday morning, both from a competitors point of view and as a spectator. As I stated in the last newsletter, it is a very enjoyable way to spend a Saturday morning, between 10.30 a.m. and 12.30 p.m.

Eventual Winners Were:

Chanter Class

Judge Jack Lee

1. Roy Alakija

Novice

Judge Graham Davidson

1. Cameron Alakija
2. Charlene Ogilvie
3. Barbara MacKinnon
4. Elizabeth MacKinnon

Juvenile

Judge Angus McPherson

1. Brenda Lowden
2. Gordon Pollock
3. Gordon Redmond
4. Darlene Miharija

Junior

Judge Graham Davidson

1. Geordie Mck Young
2. Pauline Alakija

Sen. Amateur

Judge Angus McPherson

1. Bruce Gandy
2. Peter Aumonier
3. Jack Eckersley

Our thanks go out to our two young judges who once again did a splendid job dressed in the traditional manner, and to the various members who helped to run off the competition.

NOTICE

There will be no bi-monthly Competition in December.

THE TRIUMPH STREET PIPE BAND

presents

THE WESTCOAST INDOOR PIPE BAND CHAMPIONSHIPS

(THE 6th ANNUAL T.S.P.B. CONTEST)

saturday, december 10
Scottish Auditorium
12th Avenue and Fir St.
Vancouver
11 am

Ceilidh Following
Grandview Legion
6th Ave. and Commercial
Vancouver
Dancing 9-1

EVENTS: (to take place in the order listed)

1. Novice Drumming - March
2. Amateur Drumming - March, Strathspey and Reel
3. Senior Amateur Drumming - Musical Selection (medley)
4. Professional Drumming - Musical Selection (medley)
5. Junior Trios (18 and under) - 2/4 March (2 part) Slow March, JIG
6. Senior Trios - 6/8 March, Slow March, Hornpipe
7. Novice Juvenile Miniature Bands - 4-6 minute medley
8. Grade 3 Miniature Bands - 5-7 minute medley
9. Grade 2 Miniature Bands - 5-7 minute medley
10. Grade 1 Miniature Bands - 5-7 minute medley
11. Open Miniature Bands - Slow Air, 6/8 March

Drum Corps, Bass Drumming, Tenor Drumming, and Marching and Deportment will be judged during the band contest.

Draw for order of play of bands will take place at 12:30.
Time of play will be announced at this time.

RULES: A miniature band shall consist of 6 pipers, 2 side drummers, 1 tenor and 1 bass. Bands fielding less than the required number will be penalized 2 points per members short.

The contest will be governed by WPBA Rules.

PRIZES: Drumming and trio events will be awarded first, second and third prizes unless there are fewer than 4 entries in which case there will be one less prize than the number of competitors.

PRIZE MONEY:

Open Slow Air 6/8 - \$100

Professional Drumming: 1st \$50 2nd \$25 3rd \$15

Bands:	<u>Grade 1</u>	<u>Grade 2</u>	<u>Grade 3</u>	<u>Juv. Nov.</u>
1st.	\$400	\$300	\$200	\$100
2nd.	\$300	\$150	\$100	\$ 50
3rd.	\$200	\$ 75	\$ 50	\$ 25

Note: In the event of fewer than 4 entries, one less prize than the number of entries will be awarded.

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ENTRY FEE: (make all cheques payable to the Triumph Street Pipe Band)

Amateur Drumming (all classes) \$1.00

Professional Drumming \$2.00

Trios \$2.00

Bands: Grades 1 and 2 \$10.00, Grade 3 and Juv. Nov. \$5.00.

(note: band entry entitles band to play both medley and Slow Air - 6/8)

ENTRY FORM: All entries must be received by the competition secretary no later than December 1. In order to facilitate scheduling we would appreciate no field entries.

Mail Entries to : Hal Senyk (253-1743)
2771 Adanac Street
Vancouver, B.C. V5K 2M1

(It is not necessary to enter on an official entry form.)

Please Enter: Name of Band: _____ Event# _____
Address: _____

The band will _____ will not _____ be playing in Slow Air- 6/8 Contest,

Please Enter: Solo Drummer _____ Event # _____
Address _____

Please Enter: Trio, Name _____ Event # _____
Address _____

Entry Fee Enclosed \$ _____

LOST * BAND EQUIPMENT

Any person with pipe band uniforms and side Drums belonging to the British Ex-Servicemen's Pipe Band or knowing anyone with these items, please contact:

M. Wilson 939-4502 or

M. Parsons 526-7228.

WANTED

Two Piper's Plaids, Ancient Murray of Atholl Tartan, and Two Crossbelts.

Contact Charles Irvine Phone-522-3389

WANTED!!!!

Pipers & Drummers for the Vancouver Ladies Pipe Band. Anyone interested phone 526-6353 or 526-9166



Mr. W. Elder,
Baden Senior School,
CFPO- 5056,
Belleville,
Ontario, K0K-3R0.