

# Welcome to Begg Bagpipes

-----Est 1980 Glasgow city centre's oldest bagpipe shop-----

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Piping on the web<sup>©</sup>

## Newsletter - December

Dear Piping Enthusiast,

Welcome to December's newsletter. Since I wrote in the last newsletter about the increasing trend towards sheepskin bags, we've had some interesting emails from pipers around the world. Here's a selection:

1. Our grade 2 band is playing your sheepskin bags exclusively and just started using them this past year. Our sound is far and away the BEST it's ever been and I believe it has everything to do with the bag changes.  
P/M Adam Holdaway, Stuart Highlanders, Boston, Mass., U.S.A.
2. After briefly playing a sheepskin bag when I first started in 1985, I am eventually making the journey back there! - after a long and colourful journey through the world of synthetic bags.....  
Andy Aitken, New Zealand.
3. I used to play a sheepskin bag in my younger days in the 60's in Scotland, but now I've lived in Canada for the past 39 years and got fed up with the new bag materials. I recently bought one of your sheepskin bags and there is no sound or feel like a sheepskin bag. I especially like the vibration emanating through my pipes.... drones, chanter and of course the sheepskin bag. When everything is in tune and working at peak performance, it is a pleasure to play. This is the sensation I used to get, and have missed these past few years with synthetic bags.  
Alex Gallacher, Canada

Thanks Gents, for taking the time to let us know your views.

Yours Aye,

James C Begg

[www.beggbagpipes.com](http://www.beggbagpipes.com)

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## News

The 36th Glenfiddich Solo Piping competition at Blair Castle resulted in further success for two of Begg Bagpipes most famous customers playing sheepskin bags. Overall winner was Stuart Liddell of Inveraray, with Roderick MacLeod MBE, Principal of the National Piping Centre, winning the piobaireachd. James Murray of Fife Police, whose band recently converted to Begg sheepskin, took 5th place in the piobaireachd and was really delighted. Congratulations to all of them.



(Photo taken by Derek Maxwell, is of Stuart Liddell with his Glenfiddich Trophy, courtesy of W. Grant and Sons)

At the annual solo piping competition in London run by the Scottish Piping Society of London, Stuart Liddell won the biggest prize, the Bratach Gorm for piobaireachd and this caps an outstanding year for Stuart. Well done!

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## Top Tip - Seasoning.

I have enjoyed various tips of the day on the [www.pipesdrums.com](http://www.pipesdrums.com) web site, which is one of the most viewed piping sites. It is worth checking out if you haven't done so already. I have taken most of the tips from our newsletter and forwarded the crucial parts to [www.pipesdrums.com](http://www.pipesdrums.com)

The tip that I have felt most important was -don't over-season your bag - a little at a time is good. Don't expect a new bag to be totally tight straight away. You need to work on it for over a month or so to achieve an optimum bag performance. You can of course use it straight away but bear in mind that it will take some time to bed in properly. So the best advice is use a little seasoning at a time, say 1/4 tin, and play your pipes regularly.

You would expect to use 2 tins over a 2-3 month period, depending on the skin in question.

To finish off this session on Top Tips, remember to get your reeds etc sorted out for the new year - now is the time to act to give yourself time to achieve a perfect set-up.

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**The Top  
Tunes  
Selection  
- by P/M  
Robert  
Russell**

P/M Robert Russell, of the Central Scotland Police Pipe Band, popped into the shop recently and when I asked him if he could contribute to the Top Tunes Selection, he gave an immediate and spontaneous response. Well done for that!

1. The Hebridean Polka - a polka by Alex M MacIver.
2. An ancient and unusual piobaireachd of which little is known -MacGregors' Salute.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, the MacGregor Piping School flourished near Glenlyon. One of the Clan's many eminent pipers was John MacGregor of Fortingall who became personal piper and attendant to Prince Charles Edward Stuart. He survived Culloden and in 1781, at the age of 73, won third prize at the Falkirk Tryst which claims to be the forerunner of modern piping competitions. He also is reputed to have had 9 sons, all of whom became pipers and thus established a piping dynasty.

Rab Russell, as he is generally known, adopts a consultative approach within the Band and works closely with his lead drummer, Peter Anderson, on music selection and execution, to try and ensure they achieve a harmonious result. Not all bands follow this model and as we know, it is far from "sweetness and light" in some bands. Rab's family is very much involved in the pipe band scene, with his twin sons playing the pipes under his direction and his daughter playing as a drummer with Lothian and Borders Police. Rab is currently considering another MacGregor for part of his next MSR selection for the Band - a very fine march called The Young MacGregor.

Rab, thanks for your selection. Watch out in future issues for other leading

figures in the world of piping and pipe bands making their Top Tunes selections.

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### **Special Report**

Since we started this newsletter, you will have seen many famous pipers featured and I consider many of them as friends as well as loyal customers. My longest standing friend and one of the world's greatest pipers, is Roddy MacLeod, MBE who has achieved everything that is to be achieved in solo and band piping. We first met in 1972 and from the start of my business in 1980, Roddy has been a great supporter. As the Principal of the National Piping Centre in Glasgow, he is at the very forefront on the future direction of Piping - it is certainly in good hands.

Another notable friend and customer is Stuart Liddell who I first met in 1987 when he was young teenager. He and his Mum came into my shop when I was in Kiltmaker, Renfield Street, Glasgow and he was seeking some advice. Barry Donaldson, a senior officer in the City of Glasgow Police and a famous piper, happened to be in the shop at the time and took great interest in trying to help Stuart. Between us, we sorted out how to get his cane drone reeds going properly. Stuart has gone on to great things as you can see in this newsletter and has also worked wonders with the Inveraray and District Pipe Band. Of course, the boot is to some extent on the other foot these days, and rather than the advice being one-way, we all now listen carefully to Stuart's words of wisdom. It is nice to see Stuart getting his just rewards - he is a very natural and gifted player.

James C. Begg

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**YouReport**

If you would like to report on any aspect of the Piping World from wherever you live, we'd be pleased to include it in this Newsletter  
[bill@beggbagpipes.com](mailto:bill@beggbagpipes.com)

Thanks  
Bill Begg

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