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

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Piping on the web[®]

Newsletter - September

Dear Piping Enthusiast,

Welcome to September's newsletter and what else can we say after another ONE-TWO for Begg Bags at the World Championships, with Simon Fraser University and the Field Marshall first and second in Grade 1 respectively for the second successive year. Other customers also had a good outing at the Worlds including Fife Constabulary, the Vale of Atholl and Inverary & District.

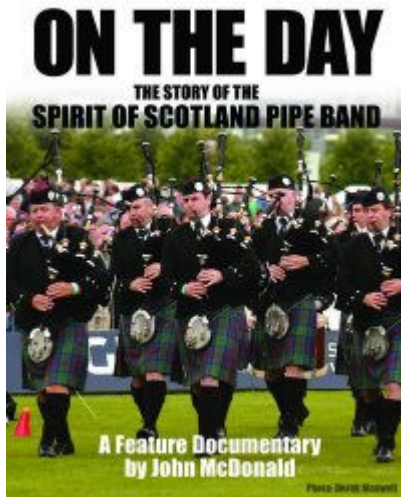
The Piping Live! events were a great success and my first involvement was in sponsoring the Tuesday afternoon at the marquee outside the National Piping Centre. As well as promoting Begg Bagpipes and offering advice and comment on any aspect of piping, I gave the assembled gathering a tune on a very old set of pipes, circa 1820s, which I had just renovated the day before. Thanks to all the Piping Centre staff who helped put up banners etc - it was a very informal and most enjoyable afternoon.

Thanks also to all the customers who came along to our demonstrations in my Bath Street shop on the subsequent days. They went well and I think those attending enjoyed the visit but also realised the amount of work that goes into making hand crafted pipes, chanter and bags from scratch.

Yours Aye,

James C Begg

www.beggbagpipes.com



News

Congratulations to Tyrone Heade of Seattle, USA who won the clasp event for piobaireachd run by the Piping Centre during Piping Live! I have rarely seen anyone so pleased. I first met Tyrone early on in the week and it's funny how you tend to meet the same people at different locations later on - perhaps it's because you are on the same wavelength as to what you like - he's a very nice, easy-going guy.

I also enjoyed receiving a signed copy of John MacDonald's film "On the Day", being the story of the introduction of the superstar Spirit of Scotland

Band at the 2008 Worlds. My pal and superstar himself, Roddy MacLeod also signed it, so that is a nice memento to keep.

I also met Roddy MacDonald who now resides in Australia and who was launching his 2nd book. He surprised me in that my picture is in the book from a great trip we made to Scapoli, Italy-that was quite a weekend in the hills, a couple of hours drive south east of Rome. I've still to get a copy but it's bound to be a great book - I'll keep you posted.

Top Tip - Cane Drone Reeds - part 3

When drone reeds are new, you may have to spring them slightly i.e. lift the tongue to encourage it to vibrate. Do this gently but with conviction. It will be at its optimum position just before the breaking point of the tongue - so take care! You will get the reed to go but it is likely to stop after a small amount of time and initially after lifting the tongue, it will also sound a bit rough -so you will go from rough to a smooth sound and then to a complete stop. Start this process again at the next practice and slowly you will get less of an extreme variance in the sound -it settles more and becomes steadier.

You also have to get the moisture content of the reed to be stable. The reed picks up moisture as you play and keeping a steady moisture input is vital to the sound and steadiness of the reeds. This is why synthetic bags have limitations as moisture content varies constantly and hence so does your sound -good for 15 minutes and bad for the next 15.

The waxed bridle now can be fully adjusted to the optimum position -generally higher up towards the red sealing wax .You move it upwards to the point that the drone may stop but a slight move in the opposite direction may be required. At this point the drone should be vibrating with ease and the reed will take as little air as possible. This is now the reed settled and will perform till the cows come home or to when you start with a new pipe reed.

So it's not just the drone reed but also it's your pitch, your bag and your hemping which have to all pull together to get a bagpipe that sings like an organ -all 4 reeds in unison and not just steady, but vibrating and chording

together to produce one coherent, harmonic, easy to blow bagpipe with maximum output.

The Top Tunes Selection - by Mr J. Noble

1. Highland Wedding - a 2/4 march by Angus MacKay
2. Lament for the Children - a piobaireachd by Patrick Mor MacCrimmon.
3. John MacDonald of Glencoe - a 2/4 march by William Lawrie.

This month we take a slightly different angle on the Top Tunes and have invited champion drummer, judge and businessman, Joe Noble, for his selection. Joe highlighted that Highland Wedding, from a drumming point of view, had drive and a rhythmic pulse - it is a sheer joy to play to along with. The piobaireachd has a strong emotional grip and poise and when played by experts like

Donald MacPherson and Willie MacCallum, it left Joe longing for more piobaireachd. The third tune, John MacDonald of Glencoe, is perhaps a tune that is not played by many bands but Joe likes its flow -this choice highlights his musical side as it's a great and unique composition.

Since Joe's retirement, he spends a lot of time judging bands all over the world -quite often ensemble rather than his drumming speciality. When James was in the Babcock-Renfrew band with Joe as lead tip, he always played sympathetically to the pipers and appreciates all elements of a pipe band. Joe is now enjoying art and he recently purchased one of the piping art works presented at the Piping Live! art gallery -I Got a Kiss of the King's Hand - again demonstrating his appreciation of piobaireachd and art. James was pleased to catch up with Joe and hopes to see him soon in the shop for a coffee and a catch-up on old and new times.

Thanks for your selection Joe. Watch out in future issues for other leading figures in the world of piping and pipe bands making their Top Tunes selections.

Special Offer - Henderson Drone Reeds

In support of our concluding 3 part Top Tip series on cane drone reeds above, Henderson Drone Reeds are reduced by 15%.

Look out for more great offers coming soon! At the point of purchase, we will price match any product of the same quality from another supplier.



Field Report 1 - The Simon Fraser University Pipe Band Concert

The Royal Concert Hall in Glasgow was packed to capacity for the SFU band from Vancouver, Canada. Their status as 2008 World Champions clearly helped to pull in the crowds, along with their reputation for concert excellence. They perhaps don't have the competition week in week out that occurs in Scotland and so they tend to promote the art of concert performances around the world in leading venues such as the Sydney Opera House, New York's Carnegie Hall and the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall. Lots of credit should go to the Glasgow Skye Association for putting the concert on and they perhaps do not receive the plaudits for their efforts year in year out. The concert itself was excellent, with dancing, solos and all round entertaining music. The main highlight for me was the haunting piobaireachd performed by Jack Lee and finished off with the Field of Gold sung by the Band. Another item of note is the strength of the Lee dynasty within SFU - P/M Terry, his brother Jack, three Lee sons and a world champion, dancing daughter. Fantastic!

Neil Dickie was the compere for the evening and threw himself wholeheartedly into the role. He may well have gone on too long at times and his language was not always in keeping with a family concert. Neil is also a great composer with his first book of tunes being an excellent buy. It was also nice to hear the Vice Chancellor of Simon Fraser University making a speech about the standards and quality of the University and how the Band is a clear reflection of all the University stands for - he obviously backs the Band up to the hilt. Wolfstone, a Celtic folk/rock outfit, performed in between the band sets but it was somehow out of place - it did not gel with the SFU style and was not what people had come along to listen to.

All in all, many congratulations to SFU not just for the concert but on another world championship performance. These guys work so hard and are ultra dedicated - it is an honour and a pleasure for Begg Bagpipes to be associated with them.

Field Report 2 - The World Pipe Band Championships 2009

Mixed weather, fairly high entry prices and the introduction of live streaming on the internet resulted in



lower attendance this year than previously - the introduction of the internet of course allowed a global audience which otherwise would not have been the

case. An event as prestigious as the World Championships surely should have free entry to all those making the trip to Glasgow Green - doesn't Glasgow gain enough from visitors from all over the world coming for at least a week in most cases and spending on accommodation, dining, sightseeing and so on? Come on Glasgow City Council - sort this out for next year and let's get many more people attending this great event.

As to the contest itself, Grade 1 was situated in the top corner of the park and left quite a void in the middle - surely the Grade 1 should be centre stage? However, it's not all about Grade 1 and good music is present across the whole spectrum. In addition, the pressure on bands like the Central Police in Grade 3, was just as great if not greater than that on the SFU. It was also nice to see the officer in charge of the Central Police wishing P/M Russell all the best. Did the brass in Strathclyde Police turn up to do the same for P/M Don Bradford and his boys? I don't think so and the hard work put in by the Police Band was in stark contrast to the beat bobbies who had little to do. Will this get back to HQ? Unlikely.

The standard of playing was excellent and although it's a bit of a cliché, the quality improves year in year out as the pressure increases to be the best. There is not much to choose between the top bands these days but Simon Fraser University (pictured) seemed to be the all round item - the drive and tone ensemble in particular were of note and these were something they were lacking a few years ago when they were 2nd on many occasions. Make no mistake - the SFU work hard at this and is what makes them stand out on the day.

Good to see the Fife Police doing well as they had to qualify and play again - new converts to Begg sheepskin bags at the end of June 2009 and it paid off for them. The Vale of Atholl did well too and again Begg Bagpipes enjoy their patronage.

James C. Begg

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 and our website - click on the link below and then my email link on the home page, or copy and paste bill@beggbagpipes.com

Thanks

Bill Begg
www.beggbagpipes.com

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