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-----Est. 1980 Piping Perfection-----
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[April Newsletter](#)

Dear Piping Enthusiast,

As I write, we are in uncharted territory across the world and who knows how it will all end up. I am sure we are in for tough times but it surely will be temporary and in a few months time we will look back on how we all coped. Begg Bagpipes will continue working and with a suggestion to do more by courier/post as I mention below, we will get through it. Amidst all the gloom, there is a bit of a silver lining for some folks in that the pound sterling has had a serious downward movement against the US dollar and the Euro, and no doubt against some other currencies as well. This means that UK exports just got a whole lot cheaper and so for example, we are now some 13% and 10% cheaper against the US dollar and the Euro respectively than we were at the beginning of 2020. So it sounds like the perfect time to get our pipes into prime condition as we await the call to get back out and play again with our friends and colleagues. Stay well.

Yours aye,
James C. Begg
Piping Perfection

www.beggbagpipes.com

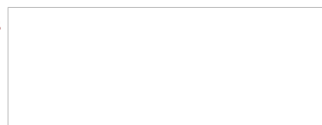
News.

We got off to a great start in 2020 on the bag front which fortunately will stand us in good stead for the tough times ahead. Many big hitters were supplied including Inveraray, Glasgow Police, Lomond and Clyde to name but a few of the Scottish bands along with many from New Zealand, USA, Canada and elsewhere. This has actually been our busiest time in 40 years of business - brilliant.

It's interesting to see we have the amateur clasp event this coming Saturday the 28th March being held over Skype. Players will get a time slot and will record performances separately in case of any glitches over Skype. I understand that the wearing of pyjamas instead of your number 1 outfit may be acceptable - lol. In all seriousness, what a novel idea and if successful, it would allow players from abroad to compete without all the high expenses of travel and accommodation. It's a bit surreal and sure to be a strange feeling with no applause when you finish. At least the event is going ahead and so our thanks go to Margaret Dunn for another good initiative. It's also well done to Scott Currie for getting most of the bagpipe and drum suppliers in Scotland together in collectively petitioning the Scottish Government to provide some sort of support to our niche but important industry in these difficult times. I am not sure it will achieve its objective amidst all the other priorities facing the Government but let's hope so

Special Offer

We now have a new [sheepskin bag section](#) and around 40 bags at a reduced price. These skins have been tanned 3 times so are well oiled, supple and of good substance. The functionality of these bags is absolutely perfect and the only issue is the colour,



which is of a fleshy brown appearance and different from the norm. This therefore is a great opportunity to get a bargain or perhaps to move into sheepskin for the first time if you have previously been on cow or synthetic bags - at a very affordable price. We have 4 standard size bags in stock and will make further bags to order. Please allow approximately 2 weeks for made to

order. Pricing is set at £112.50 (plus vat if applicable) compared to our normal price of £225 (plus vat if applicable) - half price!

Your Health.

We may already be suffering from news over-load on the coronavirus and if you thought Brexit was bad, this is in your ear daily - because of course it is so serious. Piping hygiene is something that many in the past maybe didn't take too seriously but we do now need to look more closely at it. In the interests of all pipers' health, I hope the National Piping Centre don't mind me supplying a link to a valuable article of theirs which was actually written way back in 1950 by a former teacher of mine - Tommy Pearston. His advice then is completely relevant to today's situation. Please click on this link [Your set and your health](#).

There are other actions we can also take and I would advise customers to use couriers/post to send stocks to me to have a new bag fitted. I am geared up for this service as it's the preferred way to get the job done efficiently - I can turn around on a daily basis. The only down time is dependent on the post here and their speed of return. Bags, reeds, chanters and pipes are posted daily and we like to think we are quite proficient at speedy delivery. As some may have their band practices cancelled and house orientation becomes more prominent, it makes complete sense to get our pipes in order. Let's make most of things with home practice and work on the principle that it's not a glass half empty but half full.

I have everything in stock that you might need to get those pipes into tip-top shape.

I hope you and your families are all safe and well in the coming months no matter what part of the world you are in - we will get through it together.

Tunes of the Month - by Colin Magee, Vancouver, Canada

Colin, originally from Glasgow, is a drummer and piper and was one of the founding members of the innovative City of Victoria Pipe Band. He was the leading drummer of the band for ten years and was also a guest drummer with the original Triumph Street band. He is a published composer and his music has been recorded by pipe bands and Celtic entertainers alike. He is a registered judge with the BC Pipers Association and is currently leading drummer with the Greater Victoria Police Pipe Band.

[Click here](#) for two very nice strathspeys, going by the names of Mrs Gerri Magee and The Ruby Slippers. Colin has provided some background to these tunes and this is always nice to know. Mrs Gerri Magee was written for my lovely wife Gerri, who was a highland dancer when I first met her. I am sure there are many pipers who have followed the same path. The Ruby Slippers was written for Pipe Major James Troy of the City of Victoria Pipe Band who had/has a thing for quality shoes. He showed up to band practice one afternoon with a bright red pair of sneakers from some famous fashion house. It was not long before the wags in the band were asking him when he was going to be clicking his heels and had he seen the Tin Man or the Cowardly Lion lately. I had to write a tune to commemorate the event.

Colin Magee

Thanks a lot Colin and we are pleased to hear that Boghall and Bathgate have included a hornpipe of yours in one of their medleys - great stuff - please keep up the good work and the compositions flowing!

Field Report - The Uist and Barra

The solo piping world started with a bang in March 2020 with The Uist and Barra Association or Comunn Uibhist agus Bharraigh Ghlaschu as they say in teuchter land - not sure if teuchter is an affront to my Highland friends but it seems an endearing term. The competition is in its 75th year and a good entry of 11 top class world players strutted their stuff - and they did strut very well indeed. There were lots of different styles of play which is encouraging. I seem to recall not that long ago that each player sounded like the last but that was not the case with most players expressing the tunes in their own style. It was a refreshing change. Even the tonal aspects of the pipes varied which was also great and avoided some of the

uninteresting sounds which we hear from time to time. 3 drones in tune with the chanter are not enough at this level - a bagpipe with harmonics and reed that is complementary is required. A wishy-washy pipe is an immediate turn-off and should be avoided at all costs. There were only a few breakdowns during the day and these occurred mainly in hornpipe/jig section which was played directly after the MSR.

Overall winner was Angus MacColl and his playing throughout was truly consistent and effortless. I had a nice chat with Angus as I was sitting right next to Iain Speirs and him. Angus is a busy guy with his teaching for 3 and 1/2 days at Oban High School plus private tuition in the evening. He somehow also manages to fit in running his croft at Benderloch just outside Oban and his novice and juvenile band which I'm pleased to supply. Many years ago, I well remember the young Angus going around with his dad and in keeping the family tradition going, Angus' son is now an accomplished player too.

(Angus MacColl's photo - Derek Maxwell)

Overall, the playing was of a high quality but there were no really outstanding ones that I can report on. Competition tends to force pipers to be in a safe playing mode - "get to the end and I might get a prize" seems to be the mantra - steady as you go.

Another feature of the day was the Hebridean chorus singing along with the slow airs played during the tuning-up. However, if you chose the wrong and a somewhat less musical slow air, there would be no singing accompaniment - but pick the correct slow air and the room is electric! Even the judges could not stop smiling.

My only criticism of a great and well run affair was the temperature in the National Piping Centre's Otago Street venue - it was ridiculously hot and really uncomfortable.

Many thanks to John Angus Smith, Mags Sproat, and the new secretary Alison Richardson for all their hard work. See you next year, all being well.

James C. Begg

YouReport

If you would like to report on any aspect of the Piping World from wherever you live, or if you would like to comment on any articles or issues, we'd be pleased to hear from you. Email to bill@beggbagpipes.com

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