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

Dear Piping Enthusiast,

A somewhat belated Guid New Year to one and all. The Festive Season has come and gone in a blur which is not surprising as my social calendar was chockers - the highlights included catching up with friends and family, some piping at Hogmanay and an enjoyable outing to the [Scottish Malt Whisky Society](#) on the East Coast. The Edinburghers do know how to have a good time and I hope I added a nice bit of Glaswegian patter and joie de vivre to the event. It's slàinte for 2018 from me (on the far left of the photo) and from some of my pals.



Over the years and like most of us, I have played many times at Hogmanay in all sorts of venues, from stunning castles to somewhat less salubrious locations (who often paid better) but generally speaking, I now prefer a home celebration. However, a new local restaurant The Lion And Star asked if I could play for their Hogmanay celebrations and late one night, after enjoying their dining and wining experience, I agreed. It's always a bit of a palaver getting ready late in the evening and trying to maintain some degree of decorum as the Bells approach, but after a few piping family favourites, a standing ovation was forthcoming and all the effort proved worthwhile. The timing and location was also good, having moved my business to Kirkintilloch during 2017.

On the weekend of the 5th January, I managed a most enjoyable trip to Oslo with my son Gavin. He was heading on a round of other European cities but was glad the bank of Dad was with him in Oslo as it was a tad expensive. As usual, Begg Bagpipes works 24/7 and I took the opportunity to seek out a contact for Norwegian skins. It so happened that the company in question were a mere 20 minutes away from our hotel and I paid them a visit. I used Norwegian skins some 20 odd years ago and they were of a great quality - I will let you know how this develops.

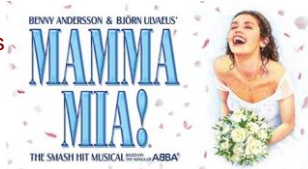
Yours aye,  
James C. Begg  
**Piping Perfection**  
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## News.

In among the melee of the festivities, we continued fitting bags for Lomond and Clyde PB to set them up nicely for their forthcoming assault on Grade 1. We kicked off at the end of November and completed the whole band by the end of January. This could have been quite a logistical challenge but thanks go to Lomond and Clyde's Chris Norton, who ensured that the delivery of the stocks and subsequent collection of the finished articles were executed with military precision. Each set of stocks had the piper's name attached and that made my job so much easier to ensure the correct size of bag was fitted for each player - thanks Chris. We wish Lomond and Clyde all the best for the forthcoming season along with our other up and coming customers in Glasgow Skye and City of London.

Over the years, I have been supplying many sets of pipes to the stage show Mamma Mia! which I believe started in 1999 at the Shaftesbury Theatre in London's west end. On the occasion of the show recently coming to Glasgow, they kindly provided two VIP tickets to include a tour of back stage/meet the cast. On the night in question, I went onstage to set up the pipes for that performance and I ended up doing the tuning right where the spotlight hit the stage. As I basked in the glory of being a star, I did laugh slightly and wondered whether I was just a showbiz natural or simply a show-off. You need to see the show in case you are wondering what bagpipes and doing there and I hope Mamma Mia 2 also includes them.



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## Special Offer - 10% off [Pipe Reeds](#)

For this month and online orders only, 10% off all pipe reeds - free worldwide delivery and James will apply the discount at his end.



Why not also consider a [nice reed protector case](#) to look after your precious cargo of up to 5 reeds.



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## Top Tips - [Bags](#)

1. Never put water on any part of the bag.
2. Testing air tightness - 20/30 seconds under-arm pressure is sufficient. Don't sit on the bag or exert too much pressure as you'll only burst it and weaken the stitching and the skin.
3. Season sparingly- a bag at 2 months reaches its peak and only needs topped up .
4. Play with your cover on. Keep the bag out of your case and let the bag breath overnight. Pull the cover back to let it breath but this is not essential.
5. Empty traps as often as possible. Don't forget and don't leave it for half an hour before emptying. Emptying after one or two selections of tunes would be good.



6. Pour seasoning through the chanter stock and rub round all of the skin

including the stocks and neck.

7. Don't drip the bag too quickly as you'll pour all the seasoning back out. Let it sit for about 5 minutes and then drip when the seasoning has cooled but before it turns solid.

8. Clean the stocks thoroughly with a little water and dry with cloth - make sure the bottom of stock is reached and cleaned thoroughly

9. Test every few months that the stocks are tight. Again don't use excessive strength but use medium power to check the stocks are not turning

10. Bags are normally replaced yearly. This varies from player to player and some will be fine for many years. However a fresh bag can have benefits and so regular re-fitting is advisable.

11. Most bags will look after themselves and slight seasoning is generally all that is required i.e. don't overthink it - just play it.

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### **And so - what about 2017?**

Last year was a huge success for one band, both individually and collectively. No prizes for guessing who I am referring to. So who said that you can't play in a band and also be a great solo player? This has been the well worn mantra for years and look how time has proven this to be wrong. Another outlandish generalisation is that you'll ruin your playing if you join a folk group. 2017 was a fairy tale come true for [IDPB](#) - a well deserved and hugely popular outcome. I remember some 10 years ago when the young girls and boys of the Band came to my shop for a sheepskin bag and I have to say they looked quite bewildered by this unusual item. How do I hold it? Is it still alive? I am exaggerating a bit but these youngsters then got the head down and got on with it - brilliant.

On a less impressive note, 2017 saw the comings and goings at the College of Piping or should that be College of Sniping? From what is usually a very steady ship, we saw a rather strange situation developing with an almost weekly faux pas, followed by the departure of personnel throughout the establishment. The late and great Seumas MacNeill would no doubt be suggesting "Too long in this Condition" (which is name of a piobaireachd). If you want to look for a role model on how things can be run, then look no further than the solid 60 years under the banner of Seumas. Whilst frictions always existed through these years, there was one boss, one direction and few challenged him. When I started my own business and had dealings with the College, there were quite a few irritances for me albeit of a minor nature but I knew never to take on the bold Seamus as there would be one winner - and it wasn't going to be me no matter how valid my argument was!

Sniping from the Piping media does no great service to Piping - it all looks like tabloid journalism at its worst. Wee snide remarks aimed at the NPC or the COP or judging forums is misplaced and is in the same class as the Beano. Is it jealousy, or "ye cannae see green cheese", or a competitive spirit or all the bad traits in human nature that brings this to the fore? Whatever the reason, there is little edification in it - it does nothing but self harm to individuals and harms Piping in general. We can only hope that 2018 will see things improve and that no more dirty washing will be seen in public - a New Year and clean underwear please!

### **And so - a suggestion for 2018.**

This year's World Championships will be the same and rather repetitive format, taking place on the same site as has happened for the last few years. I can understand the concept of having such a site for a one off event. It makes it easier to organise - just pick up the phone and Joe Bloggs from the council sets the ball rolling and all his council pals say great. What an easy day and overtime too no doubt. The VIP invites go out and everybody is happy with slaps on the back before the event has even started. Hopefully someone somewhere will grasp the nettle and give some new impetus to what should be a 5 star event but one which meanders along at a generous 3 stars. Will bands continue coming to such a stale event? We hear every year that record numbers have attended but instead of some 240 bands we should be talking in the region of 300 to 350 at least. So the Worlds remain static and are not flourishing as they should. A prime example of the stagnation is that of the BBC TV coverage. We might as well watch the one from 10 years ago as the patter/presenters are exactly the same. The whole event reeks of a lack of ambition, a lack of development, a lack of drive and a lack of vision. Let Glasgow flourish as the City proclaims and so too should the Worlds - it is the global pinnacle event for pipe bands and yet it leaves so much to desire in so many areas. We are grateful for the huge number of overseas bands who make the trip each year at great expense, but surely for their and everyone's sake, the Worlds can up their game and make the whole occasion truly world class.

What a lovely backdrop for the Worlds - NOT!



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**And so - in conclusion**, do you agree or disagree with my thoughts on 2017 and 2018? Maybe I have been a bit too caustic and we of course know that countless numbers of people are doing a great job, but hopefully a few hackles will have been raised - and it's all to try and do our collective best for Piping and Pipe Bands.

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## 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](mailto:bill@beggbagpipes.com)

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