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Piping Perfection
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Dear Piping Enthusiast,

A Guid New Year to one and all, even if I am a bit late. Where does the time go? The 5 week month of January has disappeared quicker than an Aberdeen Burger at Glasgow Green. I am always busy during the first 3 months of the year and 2019 seems even busier than usual. I'm certainly not complaining even if the stress levels are increasing. It generally takes to the end of January before pipers come out of their winter hibernation but this time they snuck up when I wasn't looking - ha. I'm glad production is in full swing - this lets me keep on top as it's no easy thing to send out so many bags every week. We are producing virtually 7 days a week all year round. With my head buzzing, it's not quite counting sheep to get 40 winks but it's not far off. For me it's sheep 24/7 - working with the skins during the day and counting the sheep at night! The coming season in the Northern Hemisphere is on the horizon and I hope you find the time to pop in to our premises amongst the sunny hills of Kirkintilloch. We are 10 minutes from Glasgow and with easy parking. Please call in advance as opening times are variable.

Yours aye,
James C. Begg
Piping Perfection

www.beggbagpipes.com

News.

I managed a few tunes at New Year in my local hostelry, the Lion and Star. That was my second Hogmanay there and a standing ovation was the order of the day - mind you, by midnight the place was jumping and ready for anyone on the GHB. The locals in Kirkintilloch, otherwise known as the Venice of the North, thoroughly enjoyed the pipes and the night. There is a strong piping history in Kirkintilloch and I think it can claim to have the oldest pipe band in Scotland. There were some nice comments on their Facebook page and I look forward to going back again next time.



[Special Offer.](#)

A great opportunity to own the famous [Deger electronic chanter](#), along with a case at an amazing price. This is a great way to practice your fingering and phrasing over a long practice period without having to strain your lungs and lips! The Deger and Case normally retails for £400 incl. Vat but is reduced to £350 incl. Vat - for those of you outside the EU, that is £333.33 reduced to £291.67 - and we will ship worldwide free of charge. Offer available whilst stocks last.

The Uist and Barra Invitational

One of the most prestigious solo piping events takes place shortly at the National Piping Centre, Otago Street, Glasgow, on Saturday March 2 at 9am. I have supported this event for many years and in addition to piping of the highest order, you can be sure of a warm Hebridean welcome too. If you can make it, do pop along and I will see you there to hear the delights of Roddy MacLeod, Angus MacColl, Pipe Major Ben Duncan and Willie McCallum to name but a few. It's a great way to spend a Saturday and we wish the organisers and competitors all the best for what will undoubtedly be yet another successful Uist and Barra.



Tune(s) of the Month

I have wondered what tunes people would find appealing and what one person likes can be the complete opposite to others. After the results of a competition, we can often hear the comments like "how come Angus MacShuggle won -- it was an awful choice of tunes" and so on.

I am going to suggest a couple of Jigs which I like and have popular appeal. They are hardy annuals and I make no apology to you for suggesting Cork Hill followed by The Rakes of Kildare. They are not too hard but never-the-less, it's easy to play them poorly. Start slowly with heavy gde gracenoting and with a slight increase in speed in the first line - but making sure not to go overly fast. Cork Hill can be played for an eightsome reel and in this instance, speed can be intense depending on the dancers. However, in most situations, it's not a race to the finish nor indeed by thinking you are a bit flashy by overdoing the speed. Moderate and steady is the order of the day. I would play Cork Hill first of all with a nice and jaunty transition going into the minor key of The Rakes. You can reverse the order of these tunes as it's your choice but I think they go best as suggested. The run into The Rakes should be smooth and keeping the flow going from Cork Hill. Hope you enjoy this suggestion and Good Piping - click here for the settings I like of [Cork Hill](#) and [The Rakes of Kildare](#).

An afterthought on the settings: The Rakes has a grip on the 4th part followed by 2 high A grace notes. I would suggest a grip instead of the lightweight high A gracing as it provides more body, weight and balance i.e. 2 grips.

From the Editor: Cork Hill was the very first jig I learned in the 167th Glasgow Company of the Boys Brigade and it is still a favourite today. Bill Begg

Some thoughts on Bags.

The hardest part for me in the bag business is not so much sales as manufacturing. I suspect people generally have little idea of the time and energy that goes into each bag. They are all completely hand made and every part is formed by hand, left overnight then worked on again. Even the twine is hand made and the whole process is very time consuming. When I'm asked what makes my bags so good and popular, there is no single factor. Ultimately, it's a vast number of things adding up to make a product that is now world famous and the choice of champions (even I modestly say so myself). The no 1 area of excellence is the fact the skins are unique to me. No one else selects them as I do. It surprises me to find others using skins that wouldn't get past my front door - skins that are too dry, too thin, tanned incorrectly and so on. To have this as a starting point seems wrong as problems mount all the way through the product process and a duff bag will be the result - a complete waste of time and potentially a lot of spondulies down the drain. As we near 40 years of being in the business, this experience does help and we don't make mistakes - well to be honest, not many and if we do err, you can be sure we will rectify it forthwith. We have built contacts that again are unique to us. As with the sheep, our cow hides go through the same rigorous selection process. I used to do some workshops in my previous Bath Street shop during the Piping Live! week and customers were stunned and amazed at how complicated and individual each bag was.



Brother Bill keeps telling me we should take a workshop on tour to Canada, the USA, Australia and New Zealand to name but a few - sounds like a plan!

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

Begg Bagpipes
The Chall Building Kirkintilloch G66 1QF United Kingdom
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