

# Welcome to Begg Bagpipes

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

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Piping on the web<sup>®</sup>

## Newsletter - July

Dear Customer,

Here we go, Here we go, Here we go, as the song says. Glorious August is fast approaching and the feast of all that is good in piping is about to be unleashed. All the practice comes to its peak this month after the previous outings to hone your gracenotes into one massive outpouring of sound.

The good news keeps on coming as far as bag sales are concerned . We now supply the whole of the grade 1 Fife Constabulary Pipe Band under P/M James Murray. The band pulled out of the recent British Championships in Banbridge N. Ireland due to risk assessment by the Force - this however has had a welcome side effect by giving them the time to change all their bags and like many others these days, convert from synthetic bags to sheepskin. Our years of experience came to the fore as we swiftly matched each piper to the correct size of bag and tied all the stocks in.

It was also nice to hear from two prominent pipers as to how well they liked their new Begg Bags -Niall Mathieson of Caber Feidh Bagpipes and a teacher in Inverness, as well as Donald MacPhee -reed maker, soloist, bandsman and highland dance player. It is much appreciated when people take the time out of their busy schedules to give us positive feedback.

Yours Aye,

James C Begg

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

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## News

As mentioned last month, I would like to invite all along to the shop on Wednesday 12th August, Thursday 13th August and Friday 14th August from 2.30p.m. for demonstrations of how we turn the pipes and also how the bags are made. You can select the skin for your bag if you wish and we will forward it when made. Alternatively, buy your african blackwood practice chanter as it comes off the lathe. Should be good afternoons with all the piping banter as well!

We are also supporting the Piping Live! Event on the Tuesday at the street cafe outside the Piping Centre. James will be there to add to the afternoon with free advice on any aspect of piping.

[Click here for Piping Live! website](#)

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### **Top Tip - Cane Drone Reeds - part 1**

Whilst a vast majority of pipers use synthetic reeds today because of ease of use, you may find the tone more pleasing by introducing yourself to a cane reed - you would also use less air. Whilst not easy for a novice to deal with, cane is something which I would encourage everyone to try.

The idea would be to introduce one at a time and only use the others when you are happy with the way the first is going.

i.e. 2 synthetic with one cane. A lot of pipers have this set up with cane bass and 2 synthetic tenors, with the cane still being used for its tone and depth of sound.

You should look for the following things:

1. Solid, clean looking cane. Green cane should be avoided as the cane is damp and soft. So a hard cane that does not collapse at the open reed seat end is sought .
2. The tongue of the cane should be pretty much closed and not too open. This allows us to open it up slightly and keep the string in the reed - too open and it is coarse sounding, as well as taking excess air.
3. The red ceiling wax should be secure and tidy in appearance.
4. A reasonable diameter is good - not too thin nor too fat. However, as you get to know your bagpipe better you may find your pipe responds to a thin reed or fat one but middle of road is always best to start with.
5. The bridle should be firm but not overly tight. Be prepared to re-tie the bridle when you have perhaps moved it for tuning purposes as it can slacken too much in this case. It's quite easy to re-tie so don't be frightened

Part 2 next month - What to look for when trying them.

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## The Top Tunes Selection- by RT Shepherd M.B.E.

1. March/Strathspey/Reel
  - a) Angus Campbell's Farewell to Stirling
  - b) Atholl Cummers
  - c) John Morrison of Assynt House

A M/S/R with their respective structure of rhythmic note patterns helping to display authentic style and interpretation and producing a combination of excitement, spirit and dignity for the listener.

2. 4x4 Marches
  - a) The Auld House
  - b) The Lea Rig

Two 4x4s showing a majestic and emotional style and interpretation, combining the opportunity of displaying the tonal character of the bagpipe to the listener.

3. Piobaireachds
  - a) The Desperate Battle
  - b) The Incarceration

Two truly descriptive piobaireachds immersing the listeners in their respective emotional stories.

Bob Shepherd M.B.E needs little introduction. He is a doyen of the piping world, particularly in the pipe band arena. Bob could be described as a controversial figure but that is mainly because he generally puts himself in the firing line via his judging role or in his business that he has run successfully for many years. Bob was the man behind the world championship winning Dysart and Dundonald Band which he resurrected during his time at the Balingry J. H. School where he was a maths teacher. (Photo shows Bob in his Dysart and Dundonald days). He was also instrumental recently in bringing about the map idea to the lower grade bands (map = musical appreciation and presentation, for grade 4A and 4B bands) -the idea being to improve the standard, by setting tunes of quality that are to be played and also being able to let the bands express themselves on the set pieces . I mainly know Bob from a business sense as I have dealt with RT Shepherd for many years. I visited Bob at his factory in Cardenden a few years back and he was most hospitable. I have found the service from RT Shepherd of a high standard and I must give special mention to two of his staff, Janet and Elaine, who make it such a pleasure doing business with them.

Thanks Bob, for your top tunes. Look out for other world class pipers' selections in future issues.



[Click here for more on Bob Shepherd and his famous Company](#)

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### **Special Offer - selected RT Shepherd products**

This months offers are:

- a) 10% discount on RT Shepherd reeds, pipe chanters and plastic drone reeds (sm 90) reeds.
- b) free set of Shepherd plastic drone reeds (sm90) with small pipe order.
- c) Used RT Shepherd wooden chanters reduced from £90 to £70.

These discounts apply to online purchases only. 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.

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### **Special Report - The Demise of Strathclyde Police Pipe Band?**

The Strathclyde Police Band issue of police first and pipers second seems not to be resolving itself. Unfortunately it has been the same position with the British Army and we all can see the state of Army



pipings today. It appears that we want to have great bands when it suits but not to properly resource them. The police are obviously under a strict regime to cut costs -they now want football clubs to pay for police to patrol grounds and so the pipe band are not alone in cost cutting. As a tax payer and trying to take an objective view, we of course should be looking for efficiency savings in these difficult times but we should not be ditching a long and proud heritage that has taken many years of great toil and dedication to establish. Pipe Bands are part of the Scottish psyche and well worth investing in for future generations - Strathclyde Police Band **MUST** be safeguarded. I find it interesting when I talk to policemen outwith the band and they all seem keen on its retention and promotion. I have three policemen that stay virtually next door to me and all are enthusiastic. I recently met former Chief Superintendent Dougie Kelly who ran the Band in the 70s before John Wilson and naturally discussed the sorry state of affairs with him and again it was the same reaction -**great band, work hard and Strathclyde should be proud of its heritage.**

So there we have it -poor decision making at the top and it's now hard to change direction - we all will suffer in the long term.

If you would like to take positive action, please click on the link below and sign the petition.

[Save Strathclyde Police Pipe Band](#)

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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 and our website - click on the link below and then my email link on the home page, or copy and paste [bill@beggbagpipes.com](mailto:bill@beggbagpipes.com)

Thanks

Bill Begg

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

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