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Dear Piping Enthusiast,

I trust the holidays are going well this summer. I've had a staycation to Ullapool in the north west of Scotland and enjoyed a variety of outdoor pursuits including fishing, golf and a boat trip.

Ullapool is a beautiful town and it's most surprising to find palm trees there - it's situated on the warm currents of the Gulf Stream. As we took the ferry on a lovely day out to Stornoway and were Crossing the Minch, the hornpipe of the same name came to mind and such thoughts all add to the occasion. A few weeks later, a trip to Sintra just north of Lisbon beckoned and it was great to revisit this area where locals are welcoming and scenery stunning (and don't miss the vinho verde!)

With batteries recharged, I headed off to Dumbarton on the 27th July for the penultimate major championship before the Worlds - check out the Field Report below.

I will be at the trade show run as part of Piping Live! on Thursday the 15th August. Please pop along and say hello. I look forward to meeting everyone again then. If you require any product to be brought along please email your requirements and I will oblige.

There is a lot happening this August with solo piping in Oban and Inverness along with band competitions. One wonders if it's all reaching saturation point and surely a slightly better spread over the year would be more sensible.

The Grade 1 pipe band results have been more sporadic this year than ever before with no one band being consistent in the prize lists. The Worlds are being run on both the Friday and Saturday where 4 performances by each Grade 1 band will be taken into account. This marathon will suit the likes of FMM and Inveraray but it seems a strange albeit bold decision by the RSPBA. It may well be that judging over 4 events will more clearly and more fairly identify who should be Champions but no doubt the stress and pressure on the bands will be intense. The upside of course is that if you falter in the early stages there is still a chance to make up ground later on - a bit like tournament golf in fact. I doubt we will get results after each stage but hey, that would be an exciting development and would lead to an amazing atmosphere over the two days. We could have a giant live scoreboard with the results of each performance and the cumulative score as we go through the 2 days - wow - how exciting would that be and it would really focus the minds of the bands and generate a lot more spectator interest. This is something for the RSPBA to think about.

Yours aye,
James C. Begg
Piping Perfection

www.beggbagpipes.com

News.

We're delighted that the [Piping Live! Trade Fair](#) returns to the festival this year. Taking place at the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall from 11am-7.30pm on Thursday 15th August, the Trade Fair is free to attend, giving you the opportunity to meet pipe makers and reed makers, and learn more about piping events and publications. Begg Bagpipes of course will be in attendance so do pop along and say hello. I look forward to meeting everyone again then. If you require any particular products brought along, please email your requirements and I will oblige.

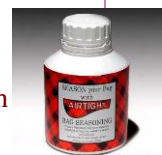


Talking of Piping Live!, I recently had Roddy Macleod in to test out his new bag. Roddy as you will know is the Festival Director of Piping Live! and he tells me all the planning is sorted and he expects yet another hugely successful event. It must be some job to organise all this and Roddy still finds time for his duties as the Principal of the National Piping Centre as well as being a top flight solo competitor - amazing. There are many customers who have called in over the last 40 years including Roddy, John Wilson and many others. Some still have the bag they bought 40 years ago but I would suggest it's time for a refresh - it's not good for business!



Special Offer

Pick up a free tin of seasoning with every new bag ordered at The Trade Fair and with any other order over £30



Field Report - Scottish Championships

I was reminded of Marty Pellow's famous Glaswegian band WET WET WET when attending last Saturday's Scottish Championship - what a shocker. With easy access by train or car, it is a joy to go to such a well run event and huge compliments to the organisers. It's a £5 entry fee including the car park which is seconds away from Levensgrove Park and free entry if you just walk in. Glasgow City Council should take lessons from this - fleecing the public at the Worlds because they can is somewhat unedifying.

Considering the atrocious conditions (pic is of Skye on the attack with a drookit John Wilson looking on), a sizeable audience still attended but I'm sure the burger bars, beer trailer and merchandisers had a miserable time. I know only too well what it's like to put the effort in and get squiddly diddly from your endeavours. The beauty of the trade show mentioned above on August 15th at the Concert Hall is that it's indoors. I heard a few bands in



Grade 2 before shimmying along to hear grade 1. Ravara had a good sized band and impressed and with the eventual winners Coskelt on just after it was easy to compare. There was marked difference in volume as Coskelt had only 10 pipers and comparable drummers. You could argue most bands would be better around about this number although 10 is small. The mass band approach I doubt is not all that healthy since as I have mentioned previously, the big get stronger and the small disappear. However small was beautiful on this occasion with a compact, neat and tidy set and tonally an outstanding performance - FMM without the numbers.

Perhaps size may count when they come up against the challenge from overseas at the worlds but it is certain Coskelt and Ravara will be in contention. The Royal Burgh of Stirling were next under Garry Nimmo and had a nice big bold sound from a large band. Gary led the line well with a good pace throughout. The only thing that gave a problem was after a rattling start in the msr, it waned in tempo and at that point got a little untidy. However, it was an enjoyable performance with gusto and with a little more composure this is a band for the future - musically good.

I heard most of Grade1 but typically missed the winners Inveraray. The standard I thought was very high throughout Grade 1 and since we are at the peak of the season bands will of course be at their best. Whilst Stuart and the guys in Inveraray may have thought it was a poor draw being first on, it was in reality for the best as the weather deteriorated as the day went on with FMM getting the worst of it all as last on. In other circumstances, they would have thought that this draw was a perfect position from which to launch a winning performance. I enjoyed FMM and their stoic performance, with close tight playing and subtle drumming. The drumming perhaps was a bit light in comparison to others but it did complement the pipers which is the game plan. I didn't hear a missed note as the rain ran down the chanters and cascaded through the fingers but at least it was fairly warm rain! I thought it was most appropriate when Shotts played The Little Cascade. The day was not so much a dripping tap but more like a full blown Victoria Falls. Many people don't realise that the bands practice nightly for the week prior to championships and what a commitment that is – it is then really unfair to have to face a complete drenching on the big day.

It was a great pleasure to see so many bands with Begg bags - especially Inveraray which I had completely fitted out in March/April time. It is also nice to give you a small indication of the depth of our product usage in that all 4 bands at the end of the draw including Skye, Lomond and Clyde, Shotts and the perennial FMM are all on board too. It really doesn't get any better. Further down the grades, we enjoy the patronage of George Heriot's, Oban High plus the very impressive sounding Mackenzie Caledonia. I am not sure why they are not positioned higher in Grade 2. I only heard them tuning up in the trees and from the point of view of the tone, it certainly was not missing anything - a Grade1 sound. It was great to see the new boys on the block, Lomond and Clyde as well as the great Shotts firing on all cylinders and chomping at the established elite. Skye as the other new boys are also improving. These 2 new comers will be a force next year



and are upping the ante.

All in all, it was a great day of playing despite the conditions. Dress and marching were immaculate throughout with Scottish Power in particular to the fore - see pic above. Their theme tune of Killiecrankie was lovely and perhaps another Corries' classic like the Bonnie Lass o' Fyvie could be next with four part harmonies.

I love the circle and it's still the best option. Don't listen to the trend to change what's not broken.

A change has been tried before and it didn't work. As John Weatherston once said: "Why don't you take up the piano? You can have an orchestral semi circle with the trombones blaring down your lug hole."

On now to the 2019 Worlds and bring it on – it's open to anyone this year.

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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