

Welcome to Begg Bagpipes

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

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Piping on the web[®]

Newsletter - October

Dear Piping Enthusiast,

Welcome to October's newsletter. We are now nearing the end of the competitive piping season but still have the Royal National MOD in Oban from 9-17th October, the Glenfiddich Piping Championships at Blair Castle on the 31st October and Bratach Gorm in London on the 7th November to look forward to. Also, check out the great pipers of the future in the juvenile competition on 24th October at the College of Piping. At the same time, it is pleasing to reflect back over the year and to see how well Begg Bagpipes customers have done. Some highlights include the following:

Simon Fraser University - Winner Grade 1 World Championships
Field Marshall Montgomery - Winner Grade 1 Scottish, British, European and Cowal Championships, runner up World Championships
Inveraray and District - Winner Grade 2 in every major Championship
Alistair Dunn - Winner Gold Medal Argyllshire Gathering
Cameron Drummond - Winner Silver Medal Argyllshire Gathering
Stuart Liddell - Winner Clasp, & Hornpipe and Jig Northern Meeting
Roderick MacLeod - Runner up Clasp, & Hornpipe and Jig Northern Meeting

So it is now time to get essential maintenance done, improve your technique, learn some new tunes and most importantly of all, continue to enjoy all that is good with the Great Highland Bagpipe.

Yours Aye,

James C Begg

www.beggbagpipes.com



News

I am pleased to report a continuing and increasing trend away from synthetic bags to sheepskin, as more and more bands around the world realise the benefits to be gained from such a switch. Amongst the latest converts to sheepskin BeggBags are the Torpichen and Bathgate Pipe Band, and they follow hotly on the heels of the Fife Constabulary. Best wishes to Stuart Shedden(shown in photo) who is the new P/M of the Torpichen and Bathgate - following a successful solo career, Stuart is putting time into this up and coming grade one outfit. Eton College in England continue to source Bagpipes from us and they have just ordered another two sets. Another regular customer is the ABBA musical Mamma Mia who order bagpipes from us whenever they open a new production - the latest one is in Australia.

Since we are almost at the end of the season, I am taking some time off with my children to go to Disney World in Florida. So from 11th-23rd October, the shop will be open Monday, Tuesday, Friday and Saturday - if you are thinking of visiting, it would be worthwhile to phone ahead and make sure someone is there to attend to your requirements. We are also planning on moving the newsletter onto a bi-monthly basis or thereabouts during the close season, so the next one will be out around Christmas time.

James C. Begg

Top Tip - Which bag is best?

1. Sheepskin - good air pressure and very solid feel under arm. The skin moulds to your shape and can be adjusted slightly for a perfect fit. Small amount of maintenance required i.e. seasoning on occasions and more so at first but no big hassle. Sheepskin retains the moisture content to keep your reed stable ie depth of sound -you notice on other bags that they often have a very shrill high A. So seasoning does more than keep the bag tight -lots more. Sheepskin is slightly expensive but worth the cost as it naturally dries out and so you can concentrate on playing and not emptying cannisters, drying out the bag etc. Expense is due to the long procurement and manufacturing process and generally being replaced annually by top players. However there are a lot still around after 30

years. Will keep for a long time if not tied in and stored in normal atmospheric conditions.

2. Cow hide - cheaper than sheepskin and long lasting. It retains moisture totally so good for occasional players and beginners. Low maintenance with good feel and moulds to your shape. Can also be adjusted for a perfect fit.

3. Canmore bag -made from goretex material. Advantages are that it is well made, easily installed and feels comfortable to use -good for occasional players and dry blowers -breathes slightly but not a lot. Disadvantages vastly outweigh the advantages including a badly positioned blowpipe and thin material which does not support the pipes well - this results in the pipes collapsing when you stop blowing. You may also find that the lack of a good solid pressure leads to a softer and softer tone over time. It has been used successfully by some top players but doesn't tend to produce a good consistency and a depth of sound.

4. Bannantyne/Shepherd hide zipper bags have established some popularity particularly in the lower divisions as the bag has a solid feel and low maintenance. It does not breathe at all so the only solution to eliminate moisture is to open the bag up and let it dry out. All very messy and you could end up spending more time on the drying process than on actually playing. Zipper and the seam tend to leak and so its longevity is not actually what you might imagine.

5. Ross synthetic bags are another option but again the comment might be exactly as the synthetic market advertises -nearly as good as leather - and that is the whole point. They all do a job to some extent but all have weaknesses as they are trying to imitate the real item. The Ross bag is exceptionally heavy and cumbersome -solidly made but very hard to fit or should I say even harder to dismantle. With all the screws and tubes its more suited to a car mechanic -unattractive to look at and expensive. It is a good idea in some respects but lacking finesse.

6. There are a few other synthetic bags and these are similar to those mentioned above.

So there you have it. Leather or synthetic? The Bagpipe is a great instrument with a long history going back to the MacCrimmons and the traditional leather bag has stood the test of time -often imitated but never bettered. The choice is yours.

The Top Tunes Selection - by P/M P. MacInnes

1. The 93rd at Modder River - a 2/4 March by William Robb.
2. Mrs Donald MacLean - a 2/4 March by P/M Donald MacLean.
3. The Brolum Reel - a reel by Dr Bannatyne.
4. Leaving Eriskay - a Slow Air by Donald John MacInnes, Peter's Uncle and Tutor.

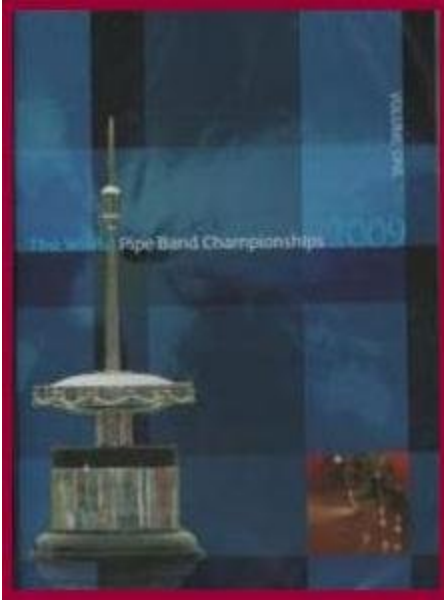


Peter MacInnes is a well-known piping figure and has various awards for both his solo playing and band performances over the years. Peter joined the Army at 16 and did the usual induction training at Pirbright, Surrey. He then joined the Scots Guards 2nd Battalion and saw action in the Falklands in the early 80s where his courage resulted in him receiving a medal "for bravery under fire." Fortunately for Peter and all of us, he survived and went on to do his Army P/M course in Edinburgh Castle under Jock Allan. I remember bumping into Peter in the Castle where he was receiving tutorage from the famous Pipe Major Angus Macdonald MBE, arguably the finest piper of the 20th century. This was the start of my business with the Army and I still remember "sweating buckets" as I tied in Angus' bag in front of everyone in the Pipe Major class. The following week Angus played at the Scotway competition in Glasgow City Hall and won - I was so glad and relieved that the bag and the tying-in stood the test and assisted in the fine result. Peter went on to become Pipe Major of the Guards in the 90s, as well as having postings around the world including Cyprus, Germany and Africa.

He is currently employed by Glasgow District Council as the sole piping instructor for Glasgow. You may be surprised that a city the size of Glasgow has only one instructor to cover the schools, particularly when other regions in Scotland seem to have much better access to instruction.

Cap badge of the Scots Guards shown top right - unusual translation of the motto is "No-one attacks me with impunity". (As a young lad, I was told the translation was "Strike me at your peril". Seems to have a better ring to it. Ed.)

Thanks for your selection Peter. Watch out in future issues for other leading figures in the world of piping and pipe bands making their Top Tunes selections.



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*Begg Bagpipes
202B Bath Street
Glasgow, Strathclyde G2 4HF
United Kingdom*