

## Welcome to Begg Bagpipes

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

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### Newsletter - October

Dear Customer,

Welcome to October's newsletter and I hope you have enjoyed the previous issues. Should you wish to look back on the earlier editions, then you can now do so as we have them archived on the web site.



It's been a hectic time recently with all the piping events coming thick and fast. In the autumn, it is perhaps time to sit back slightly and assess the season and indeed plan for next year. The next busy period in the shop will be, dare I say it, Christmas. December virtually disappears as we really only have 2 and 1/2 weeks of trading.

Please note the special offer on pipe bags has been extended for a further month. If you are needing to renew your bag in the next 6 months or so, then now is the time to buy. Prices will certainly not be as they are now and I would anticipate a further increase in the price towards the end of the year. So bag a bargain bag now.

Thanks to Neil Hossack of Lochgoilhead who is a long time friend and insurance expert. He kindly organised Chris Terry from South Africa to do this month's field report from the Northern Meeting - arguably solo piping's most prestigious event. Chris is somewhat of a piping guru in Africa and also makes pipes. He was a pupil of John MacFayden and won various accolades/prizes in top class solo piping. Thanks Chris, for an excellent report.

Yours Aye,

James C Begg

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

### Testimonials

If you would like to comment on any aspect of Begg Bagpipes for inclusion on the web site, we'd be pleased to hear from you - click on the link below and then my email link on the home page, or go to the Testimonials section on the web site.

Bill Begg

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

### News

The new model of the Deger electronic chanter is now coming on stream with new features. It looks like a practice chanter, with a baritone effect and other subtle changes to improve it. The 2008 World Pipe Band Championships CD volumes 1 and 2 are out now, along with the DVD.

I have a couple of old sets of pipes just arrived in the shop - a nice 1/2 mounted ivory and nickle Lawrie pipes and I am currently refurbishing a beautiful silver and ivory set which will, I am sure, turn out to be quite an instrument. If you have any interest in either of these pipes, please call me or email me for more details.

## Top Tip

Tuning your Drones.

The conventional method of tuning the Great Highland Bagpipe is to stop the bass and middle tenor drone and tune the outside tenor drone to the high A of the chanter - then check that it also tunes to the low A of the chanter. You should never tune to the E. You would then tune the bass to the tenor and follow this with finally tuning the middle tenor . With practice, you can tune the bass and tenor without stopping the bass and with a lot of experience, it is possible to tune all three together without stopping the drones. This is not easy but it's very professional looking and also shows a command of the instrument. I have heard of some people tuning the bass first and this different approach may have some merit as the bass is the dominant harmonic within the drones. The tenor drones are one octave below the low A of the chanter and the bass one octave lower again . Steady blowing is the pre-requisite of good tuning. In the early days, a learner piper will have the slightly more difficult task to tune as the blowing may not be totally steady, but this will come with practice - as I have said before, daily practice even if relatively short, is far better than say one long weekly session. In next month's newsletter, we will have a look at pitch and devices which can assist with tuning.

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## The Top Three Tunes (plus a bonus)- by P/M Willie Cochrane

1. Donald Cameron - 2/4 March composed by Hugh MacKay.
2. Leaving Glenurquart -2/4 March composed by William MacDonald.
3. Captain Carswell -a 2/4 March composed by Willie Lawrie
4. Donald MacLean's Farewell to Oban - a 2/4 March composed by Archie MacNeill.

Willie Cochrane was born in Castle Douglas, Kirkcubrightshire and started playing the pipes at the age of 6. He was taught by his grandfather, the late P/M Willie McRoberts of the Royal Scots. His main practice period would take place on the 2 mile walk to and from his grandfather's house and he was expected to play without a break on the whole journey - his younger sister was sent ahead to open and close the gates! Maybe this also explains his fondness for 2/4 marches as you can see from his selection above. At 17, he joined the King's Own Scottish Borderers as a piper and later became Pipe Major. Since leaving the Army, Willie set up a piping business playing the pipes for a living -a very good one at that. He has appeared all over the world and can be seen on advertisements and films in all parts of the globe. He is well known on the Tommy Scott records -Pipes and Strings of Scotland. Whilst playing the pipes in folk groups is now commonplace, Willie was at the forefront of this long before anyone else. I first met Willie on piping trips to Sicily and at film festivals in Cannes where we had an ad hoc pipe band set up- perhaps not quite in the same league as the new Spirit of Scotland superband but having said that, Roddy MacLeod was in the line up in Ortigueira, Spain as were other top players. I would rank Willie as a great player and he is probably better known around the globe than he is in his native Scotland.



Thanks Willie, for your top tunes selection.

Watch out for other world class pipers making their selection in future issues.

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## October Special Offer

End of Season Special extended for another month - 15% off all cow and sheepskin bags when ordered online in October.



## Special Feature - Field Report from the Northern Meeting.

A personal view by Chris Terry.

This year's Northern Meeting was back in the Eden Court Theatre, a magnificent venue in which piping can be heard at its very best. The magic of being last on worked yet again for both the Clasp winner, Greg Wilson, and the Gold Medalist, Alan Bevan, while Bill Geddes, the runner-up, was second-last on. Perhaps the psychological boost of knowing that he is last on gives the piper the extra confidence to produce a winning performance? The large digital clock counting down the tuning time is such an improvement on the tuning light system used elsewhere that it is surprising that the CPA has not lobbied for this to be universally adapted. Why does the CPA not purchase another couple of these timers and ensure that they are used at all the major indoor events? This may well be a contributing factor in the fact that the pipes were better at Inverness than at Oban. Another probable factor was that the Gold Medal was given a tuning time of 5 minutes at Inverness, and most pipers used the full 5 minutes – perhaps the extra minute is justified? Of the prize winners in the Silver Medal I heard only Colin Lee, whose Lament for the Castle of Dunyveg was a strong tune played on a good pipe. The acoustic in the Maclean Room probably makes tuning a little more difficult, as several of the pipers I heard in the Silver event did not have the pipes quite 100%. Colin Lee had a good Northern Meeting, picking up a first in the B Grade March as well. The Gold Medal produced a number of good performances. The tunes set were something of a mixed bag, with several heavy tunes along with a couple of very melodious ones. I found listening to The Blind Piper's Obstinacy multiple times began to pall a little, so it was good to hear Bill Geddes breathe a little new life into it right at the end. The Clan MacNab's Salute is a highly melodic tune, and Alan Bevan's performance was a clear winner for me. Callum Beaumont was third, Niall Stewart was fourth, and Fiona Manson fifth. The Former Winners' MSR I found mildly disappointing, with one or two below par performances from the top players, though those in the prize list produced some fine playing. Angus MacColl was the pick of the judges, followed by Chris Armstrong, Stuart Liddell, Bruce Gandy and Willie McCallum. The set tunes for the Clasp were "modern" tunes, most of which had probably never been heard before by most of those in the audience. It would have been interesting to have some historical notes on these tunes in the programme. For me there was considerable pleasure in hearing these tunes, several of which really should find their way into the repertoire of today's pipers. I sincerely hope the Music Committee set them again soon. The day's playing made for excellent listening. Greg Wilson played an outstanding Phantom Piper of the Corrieyaireack to win his third Clasp, while Jack Lee played The Lament for Angus Campbell, a most attractive tune, for second place. Another tune that I really liked was The Lament for Pipe Major Robert Reid, and Roddy MacLeod played this well for third place. The same tune earned Willie McCallum fourth, while Stuart Liddell played Salute to James Campbell for the fifth prize. The Northern Meeting is slick, well run, provides wonderful entertainment in a magnificent venue, and is

truly one of the high points in the piping year.

Chris Terry

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