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Sovereign’s Piper Trivia

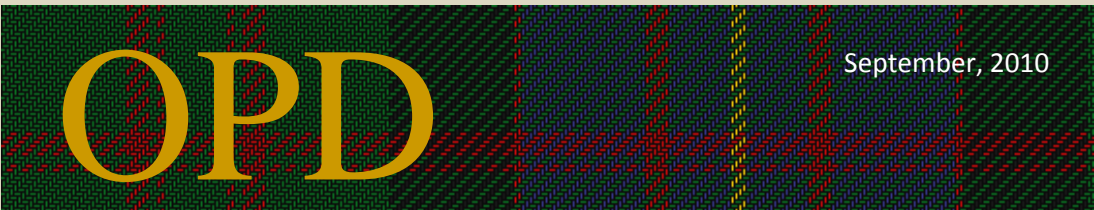
Pipe Major John "Gabby" Roe (Scots Guards) is the only known piper to have refused the post of Piper to Her Majesty. Apparently, the wages were so low at the time that he would have not been able to support his family. Understandably, this resulted in some murmuring, but he stuck to his guns and took a civilian job instead. After this occurrence, wages were reviewed and consequently raised. While the Sovereign Pipers are simply compensated with their military pay, most would rather spent their time at a palace and play tunes than perhaps be shot at!

The Balmoral tartan is worn only by those pipers employed in service to the Royal family and the members of the Royal family themselves. The Balmoral tartan is always worn by the Sovereign's Piper when at Balmoral in Scotland. (In England, the Royal Stewart is worn on ceremonial occasions.)

The Sovereign's Piper wears two eagle feathers in his headwear, versus one such feather for other pipers serving in some capacity to the Royal family (i.e. Balmoral estate pipers).

Piper to the Sovereign

- 1843–1854: Angus MacKay
- 1854–1891: William Ross
- 1891–1910: James Campbell
- 1910–1941: Henry Forsyth
- 1941–1945: None
- 1945–1965: Alexander MacDonald
- 1965–1973: Andrew Pitkeathly
- 1973–1980: David Caird
- 1980–1995: Brian MacRae
- 1995–1998: Gordon Webster
- 1998–2003: Jim Motherwell
- 2003–2006: Jim Stout
- 2006–2008: Alastair Cuthbertson
- 2008–To Present: Derek Potter



September, 2010

Piper to the Sovereign

Queen Victoria took a trip, with her husband Albert, to Taymouth Castle in 1842 to visit the Marquis of Breadalbane and heard the famous bagpiper John Ban MacKenzie play. She was delighted. She sent a letter to her mother, the Duchess of Kent, exclaiming, *"We have heard nothing but bagpipes since we have been to the beautiful Highlands and I have become so fond of it that I mean to have a piper."* When asked for a recommendation, the Marquis suggested Angus MacKay as a piper for the Queen. Angus accepted the post and moved to London, England to become the first Piper to the Sovereign.



Derek Potter – Current Piper to the Queen

Appointment and Duration of Duty

Early on (Angus MacKay and William Ross), since this position was a lifetime appointment, another piper might unofficially take over duties of a Sovereign's Piper if he was unable to perform, but the title was usually held until death. This is no longer the case, as evidenced by James Campbell ending his service with retirement in 1910. These days, service is limited by the individual's remaining enlistment (maximum of twenty-two year term), so it will depend upon at which point in his term the individual is appointed. (For example, if appointed twelve years into enlistment this would leave a decade of service to the sovereign as piper.) It was decided in 1965 that appointments be removed from the Civil List and be made only from serving army pipe majors. Like a business, these pipers are interviewed by the Queen before she makes her appointment, and is based much on whether she feels their personalities are compatible as they will be interacting on regular basis.

Other Pipers

Before Queen Victoria's death in 1901, it was common to have several pipers at the Queen's disposal. For instance, at one point James Campbell was 1st Piper and his nephew William Campbell was 2nd Piper. After her death, one piper was retained but it became the practice to employ several pipers at Balmoral as gamekeepers, deerstalkers or fishing gillies. These "extra" pipers would join the Sovereign's Piper in entertaining the king or queen. Two very famous such estate tenders/pipers were the "Bob's of Balmoral", Bob Brown and Bob Nicol. This practice continues to this day.

In 1932, the Scots Guards granted a warrant as "Household Pipers to the Sovereign" and were required to provide a dozen pipers to perform at State Banquets.

Until next month...

Sláinte