

*this week's*  
**topic...**  
VOLUME I - 2007

*developed by*  
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*for the*  
**Omaha Pipes and Drums**



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# INTRODUCTION

In 2007, The Omaha Pipes and Drums created a Grade 5 band to give students who were transitioning to the Highland Bagpipes the opportunity to play in a band setting. Weekly emails were sent to all students on a variety of subjects to generate interest and an understanding of Celtic culture and Highland Bagpiping. This is a collection of the first year's (2007) email postings.

# Band Grades

We use the terms “Grade 4” and “Grade 5” frequently but what do they mean?

Pipe band competitions are either sanctioned or non-sanctioned. Sanctioned games are approved by a pipe band association, of which there are many. For example, the **Alliance of North American Pipe Band Associations** (ANAPBA) includes:

- [Alberta Society of Pipers and Drummers](#)
- [Atlantic Canada Pipe Band Association](#)
- [British Columbia Pipers Association](#)
- [Eastern United States Pipe Band Association](#)
- [Midwest Pipe Band Association](#)
- [Pipers and Pipe Band Society of Ontario](#)
- [Prairie Pipe Band Association of Manitoba](#)
- [Saskatchewan Pipe Band Association](#)
- [Southern United States Pipe Band Association](#)
- [Western United States Pipe Band Association](#)

The Omaha Pipes and Drums is a member of the **Midwest Pipe Band Association** (you can click on the link above). Other pipe band associations around the world include:

- [Australian Pipe Band Association](#)
- [Bagpipe Association of Germany](#)
- [B.C. Pipers' Association](#)
- [Irish Pipe Band Association](#)
- [Nederlandse Organisatie van Doedelzakbands](#)
- [Pipe Band Association of Scandinavia](#)
- [Pipe Bands Association of South Africa](#)
- [RSPBA North of Scotland Branch](#)
- [Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association](#)
- [Saskatchewan Pipe Band Association](#)
- [RSPBA - Lothian & Borders](#)

Each Association has grading guidelines for pipe bands. “Grade”, is how a pipe band is classified. The ANAPBA (North American) grades bands from Grade 1 to Grade 5 (Grade 1 is the uppermost grade). The Royals Scottish Pipe Band Association (RSPBA) grades bands from Juvenile, 4B, 4A, 3B, 3A, 2, and 1. For a comparison, a Grade 5 ANAPBA band would compete in 4B in a RSPBA event.

The Omaha Pipes and Drums currently compete as a Grade 4 band. Under MWPBA and ANAPBA regulations, bands may only compete in their assigned Grade. So how did we get to be a Grade 4? We “challenged” up to the next grade. We petitioned the MWPBA for re-designation under their guidelines.

You can read the contest rules and regulations at:

<http://www.pdcpcd.org/mwpba/2007%2019%20THE%20RULES.doc>

At sanctioned games, the different grade bands compete with different music. For example, this is the 2007 schedule of “sanctioned” games for the Mid-West Pipe Band Association:

The MWPBA 2007 COMPETITION SEASON			Contact-Phone	GR.1	GR.2	GR.3	GR.4	GR.5	Other Information
April 14	Mini-Bands	S	Drew Hoinacki 630-257-6570	Med MSR	Med MSR	Med MSR	Med QMM	QMM	president@mwpba.org
May 19	Springfield IL State Fairgrounds	C	Veda Beall 217- 624-3306	-	Med	MSR	Med	QMM	davelabel@mchsi.com
May 26	Alma day 1 Alma College	C	Mike Riley 517-579-3174	Med	MSR	Med	QMM	QMM	michaelriley@chartermi.net
May 27	Alma day 2 Alma College	C	Mike Riley 517-579-3174	MSR	Med	MSR	Med	QMM	michaelriley@chartermi.net
June 2	Milwaukee Bavarian Inn	C	Gary Bottoni 414-774-8124	-	MSR	Med	QMM	QMM	
June 16	Chicago Oak Brook Polo Club	C	Drew Hoinacki 630-257-6570	-	Med	MSR	Med	QMM	president@mwpba.org
Aug 25	Quad Cities Miss - Fairgrounds- Davenport	S	Jennie Baas 309-764-8996	-	-	Med	QMM	QMM	jenniebaas@aol.com
Sept 1	Wisconsin Waukesha Expo Center	C	Russ Read 262-820-9524	-	Med	MSR	Med	QMM	rread1@wi.rr.com
Oct 6	St. Louis Forest Park	S	Dave Massey 314-603-7084	-	-	MSR	Med	QMM	Dave1massey@cs.com

To explain the abbreviations:

- **Quick March Medley (QMM)**  
Any number of quick marches of any common or compound time signatures played in succession within a time limit of 2:45-4:30 minutes.
- **March Strathspey & Reel (MSR)**  
Minimum: 4-parted 2/4 March, 4-parted Strathspey, 4-parted Reel.
  - Grades One and Two must submit two at the Piping Tent, by 10:30 am and draw at the line which is to be played.
- **Medley (Med)**  
Minimum of 4 different tune categories
  - Grades Four and Three play within the time limit 3-5 minutes.
  - Grade Two plays within the time limit 4-6 minutes.
  - Grade One plays within the time limit 5-7 minutes.
  - Grade One must submit two at the Piping Tent, by 10:30 am and draw at the line which is to be played.

That's it in a nut shell.

# Blogs and More

Bagpiping and bagpipers have moved into technology with advances in bags, materials, drone reeds, etc. as well as blogs, ezines and more. Here is a **partial** listing of some select sites you may want to check out:

**Online Catalogs** (these are vendors I use frequently as Quartermaster for the band) –

[J. Higgins Ltd](#) – This is where the band purchases its uniforms. The company is managed by a piper and offers QUALITY merchandise at a reasonable price

[Henderson's](#) – I purchase many of my personal supplies from Henderson's. They ship promptly!

[The British Shop](#) – Operated by Iain Donaldson who pipes with the House of Edgar, Shotts and Dykehead. Highend supplies.

[Song of the Sea](#) – An interesting site for eclectic instruments including bagpipes. They sell shuttle pipes for less than anyone else if you are interested.

[Lark in the Morning](#) – They offer the largest collection of instruments from around the world. They have an interesting and informative music catalog.

[Rocky Mountain Highland Supplies](#) – Run by a piper out of Lincoln, NE.

[Dara Records](#) – I purchase most of my CDs from Dara. \$15 for two or more.

## Online Magazines

[Pipes/Drums](#) – The only independent publication for pipers and drummers.

[The Voice](#) - Published by EUSPBA.

[Piping Times](#) - Published by the College of Piping, Scotland.

[Piping Today](#) - Published by the National Piping Centre, Scotland.

[Piper and Drummer Online](#) - Published by GHB Communications, Canada.

[Celtic Heritage](#) - Published in Nova Scotia, Canada. Usually multiple piping articles.

[Bagpipe News](#) – Offers a variety of links and services.

## Tunes

[Bagpipe Music Writer Tunes](#) – This is **THE largest** collection of b/w tunes I have found. You can download the entire collection.

[Bagpipe Music Scores & Lyrics](#) – This site adds the lyrics to many bagpipe tunes.

[Traditional and Other Scottish Songs](#) – A nice collection.

[ViperPiper Tune Database](#) – Categorized alphabetically.

[Pipefest](#) – Massed band settings.

## Pipe Blogs and Radio

[Pipe Blog](#) – Wonderful clips of video and audio!

[Radio Scotland](#) – The name says it all.

## Highland Games

[Association of Scottish Games and Festivals](#) – A listing of games by State.

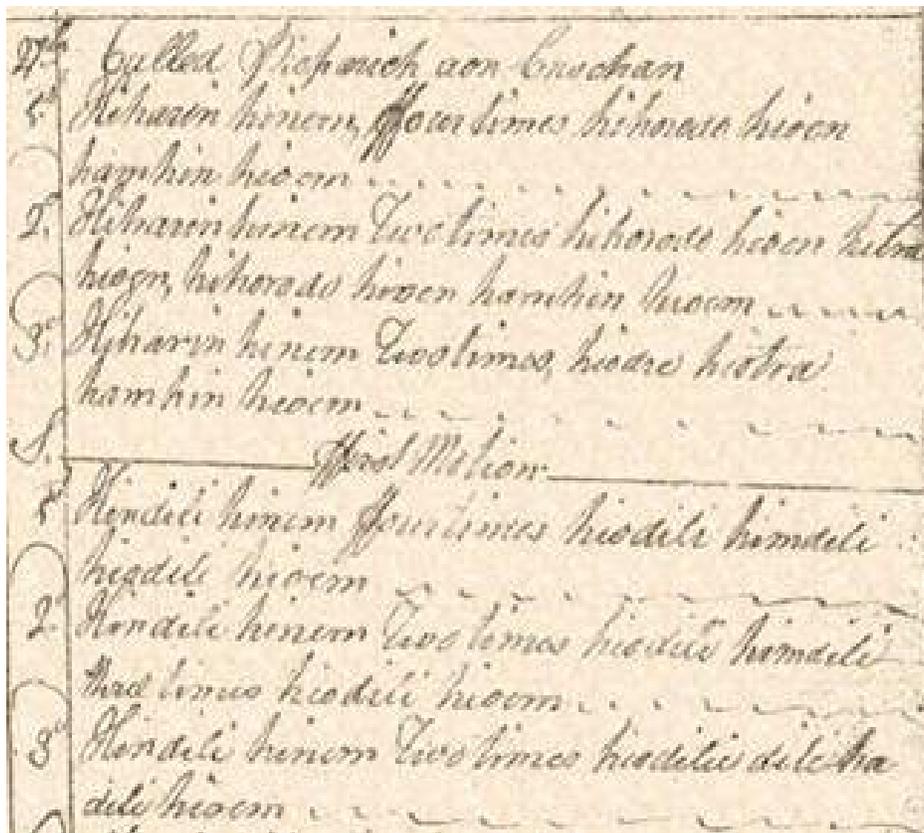
## Directories

[Bob Dunsire's Bagpipe Web Directory](#) – You need no other.

# Canntaireachd

*Canntaireachd* (Scottish Gaelic: literally, "chanting") is the ancient Scottish Highland method of noting classical pipe music or Ceol Mor by a combination of definite syllables, by which means the various tunes could be more easily recollected by the learner, and could be more easily transmitted orally. Nowadays, however, pipers tend to use standard musical staff notation to read and write various tunes, and anyone attempting to read this particular system needs some familiarity with Scottish Gaelic phonetics. It does still linger on in one or two places however. In general, the vowels represent the notes, and consonants the embellishments, but this is not always the case, and the system is actually extremely complex, and was not fully standardized.

Although a similar system of chant may have been in use since the sixteenth century, there is no evidence of it being written down before the 1790s. The piper to the Earl of Breadalbane, Colin Campbell, recorded 168 piobaireachd in the manner most obvious to him. Simply transcribed to paper, however, he found his teachers' *canntaireachd* to be fairly unintelligible.



Between 1797 and 1819, Breadalbane's piper developed a systematic written notation based on the flexible, vocal canntaireachd he knew only by ear. His final text, illustrated above, was never intended for the voice; some of his helpful signals for the eye are quite unsingable. The Campbell Canntaireachd is a visual code, the invention of an individual whose lack of exposure to colonial music education grants his scores a unique importance. Unlike later editors, Campbell had neither the wit nor inclination to sanitize his musical heritage. His father had studied a considerable period with Malcolm MacCrimmon and, according to Angus MacKay, 'was esteemed a performer of merit'. No other source boasts such a close connection with the composers of the Gaelic agrarian high culture, save those of Joseph MacDonald and Niel MacLeod of Gesto.

### **An example of how notes were transcribed...**

The key note "Low A" is always represented in this notation by "in", probably a contraction of "An Dàra Aon", the second one, to distinguish the key note from the first note on the chanter—"low G". "High A" is always "i", but in a canntaireachd, it is often denoted by a preceding "l", thus "liu", and so confusion is avoided. "Low A" is either "in", "en", "em", or simply "n" after some notes. The alternatives seem to have been used for the sake of euphony.

### **An example of how grace notes were transcribed...**

Regarding grace notes, "h" the aspirate, qualifies all notes down to "low A", but often where "ha" obviously means "B" note, it must be concluded that it should be written "cha" (xa). Similarly "ho ho" should be "ho cho" (ho xo). The letter "d" is used, as is "t" to denote both "High G" and "D" grace notes, but an examination of the notation word, makes a mistake unlikely, thus "dieliu" means "F" with "high G" grace note, and then "high A" and "G". "Tihi" means two "E"s played with two "G" grace notes. "T" and "d" resemble each other very closely in Gaelic, but the context in canntaireachd makes it always easy to see whether "high G" grace note or "D" is meant. It is necessary to explain the compound grace note systems. "Dr" is doubling of "low G" by a touch of "D" grace note, and open "low A", and so on, over the whole scale. The letters "dr" are obviously a contraction of "dà uair", two times, or twice. "Tri" means doubling of "low G" by "D" grace note, and as "A" is opened, double "E" by "F" and "E" and open "E". This is a "Crunluath" form. "Tro" is the same, at first, but the doubling of "E" is done with the grips from "o" or the "C" note. This is "Crunluath-a-mach" (outer crunluath). These examples will make the rest easy. In many tunes where the "tr" type appears, it obviously when translated should only have been a "dr" type, this confusion being only to the similarity of "d" and "t" in Gaelic.

Did you get that? And if that isn't confusing enough, the single type of "tri-lugh" is composed of three "low A"s graced by "G", "D" and "E" gracenotes, and it precedes the note embellished. An example of this is "hininindo", the syllable "do" being "C" graced by "D". This type is called "fosgailte" (open), and is opposed by the double or closed form, represented by such a form as "hindirinto". The latter is called "a-steach" (inside), which is taken to a type like "hodorito", which is said to be "a-mach" (outside), as the grips are taken from the note played. The types last named are also "breabach" (kicking) forms, having a "kick" note at the finish. The "crun-lugh" or "ceithir-lugh" forms are also "fosgailte", "a-mach" and "a-steach". The word "hadatri" is "a-steach" when opposed to "hadatri" which is "a-mach".

# Caring for Your Pipes

You're finished playing your bagpipes and aren't quite sure what to do with them when you are done. What steps are necessary to properly stow your pipes after playing will depend on a number of factors, primarily having to do with moisture control. The following advice pertains to the care of wood bagpipes. Poly pipes also have maintenance issues and moisture is a primary concern.

## Chanter

Most pipers remove the chanter from its stock and place the chanter in a chanter cap which covers the end of the chanter and protects the reed. In most locales, a chanter reed will develop mold more quickly if the chanter is left attached to the bag when not in use. And sometimes the chanter may become stuck in its stock—not exactly the most desirable situation! Remove any beaded moisture on your reed by gently pressing it with a tissue for a few seconds, though some pipers go so far as checking the reed against their lip for any wet feeling. Some recommend leaving the reed exposed to air for 5 minutes before stowing it in a cap. If you do air out your reed, be extremely protective of it, you don't want it getting whacked or rolling off of a table or chair!

If you are in a dry climate such as Denver, Colorado (high altitude) you could just leave the chanter in its stock on the bag to help the reed retain moisture. In cold temperatures or after lots of playing, moisture may condense on the inside of your chanter. Ideally, this condensation should be wiped out after playing.

## Drones

Most pipers can get away without doing much to their drones after playing. But again, you don't want moisture sitting inside the bores of your drones. If this is an issue for you, a "pull through"—a string with a rag strips at one end—may be used to wipe out the larger bores of your drones.

Now, if you do happen to own a set of poly pipes, you'll find that condensation beads up more easily on plastic than wood and that moisture may run down and clog your reeds. It wouldn't hurt to check your bores and wipe them out when necessary.

## Drone reeds

Condensation on the tongues of synthetic drone reeds is very common, even with dry blowers. It's good practice to dry the body of the reeds after playing and wipe out under the tongue using a thin durable paper—paper currency (i.e., a dollar bill) works well since it's designed to not tear easily. Nose tissue and toilet paper is not recommended (too fragile)—nor is a business card which may have the unintended consequence of springing the tongue, affecting both efficiency and tone.

## Bag

If you have a synthetic or hybrid bag with a zipper, then you will probably want unzip your bag to allow it dry out. With a hide bag, you want to avoid having it dry out, but you also don't want it super moist either. You can help retain moisture by plugging any open stocks with a cork. A hide bag will gradually dry out even with all the stocks plugged—particularly if it's a sheepskin bag. If it's necessary to dry an overly-wet bag then leave one or more of the stocks open.

## Into the Case

A pipe case serves a number of purposes. It allows you to carry quite a number of items easily; it protects your pipes from impacts, and can also somewhat serve to prevent rapid changes in temperature and humidity. When you place your pipes in their case, you don't want so much leeway that the pipes knock around and chip, scratch or dent. You also don't want to force the pipes into the case so that they are on the verge of cracking—while drones and stocks are reasonably solid overall, the tuning pins are particularly vulnerable as is the chanter. And remember, if you employ a hose system, make sure these lie flat as you don't want any kinks.

If your case is overly stuffed you might consider weeding out nonessential items (particularly items that could scratch or otherwise damage your pipes) or if they are all things you need readily available, investigate a larger case.

### **Storing/Moving your Pipes**

A good piece of advice is to think of your bagpipes as your baby. Don't leave it in a car unattended. Play with it often. Don't drop it or throw it. Don't leave it wet (empty/dry your moisture traps). Don't force things to move if they are really stuck. If it screeches, it probably needs some attention. And singing tunes to it (canntaireachd) won't hurt!

Bottom line; treat your pipes to a mild environment that would be very comfortable for you personally. So if your car is a very mild environment and will stay that way while you are gone, then, yes, you can leave your pipes on the seat—but it better be a very overcast and not too hot or too cold of a day!

If you take good care of your bagpipes, they will take care of you. Yes, some pipers are lucky and can get away with not taking proper of their pipes, but sooner or later, it's going to come back and haunt them!

# Céilidh

A **Céilidh** or **céilí** (pronounced "kay-lee") is a social event or disco, typically with Celtic music and dancing. The word *céilidh* is Irish and Scottish Gaelic for 'visit', denoting the event's origin as an informal, home gathering.

The music is provided by any assortment of fiddle, flute, tin whistle, accordion, bodhrán and in more recent times also drums and electric bass guitar. The music is cheerful and lively, and the basic steps can be learned easily; a short instructional session is often provided for new dancers before the start of the dance itself.

The general format of céilidh dancing is the "Set". A Set consists of four couples, with each pair facing another in a square or rectangular formation. Each couple exchanges position with the facing couple, and also facing couples exchange partners, while all the time keeping in step with the beat of the music. However, about half of the dances in the modern Scots céilidh are couple dances performed in a ring. These can be performed by fixed couples or in the more sociable "progressive" manner, with the lady moving to the next gentleman in the ring at or near the end of each repetition of the steps.

Step dancing is another form of dancing often performed at céilidhs, the form that was popularized in the 1990s by the world-famous Riverdance ensemble. Whereas Set dancing involves all present, whatever their skill, Step dancing is usually reserved for show, being performed only by the most talented of dancers.

The céilidh has been internationalized by the Scottish and Irish Diasporas in Canada, the United States, Australia and New Zealand, where local céilidhs and traditional music competitions are held. In recent years, céilidh and traditional music competitions have been frequently won by descendants of emigrants. Between 1997 and 2001 the Scottish céilidh grew in popularity again amongst youths. Since then a subculture in some Scottish cities has evolved where some people attend céilidhs on a regular basis and at the céilidh they find out from the other dancers when and where the next céilidh will be.

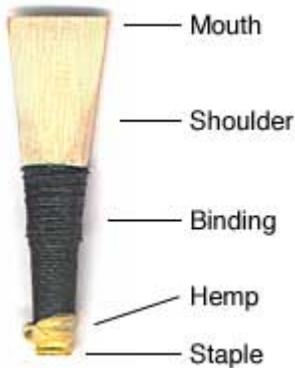
Privately organized céilidhs are now extremely common, where bands are hired in, usually for evening entertainment for a wedding, birthday party or other celebratory event. These bands vary in size, although are commonly made up of between 2 and 6 players. The appeal of the Scottish céilidh is by no means limited to the younger generation, and dances vary in speed and complexity in order to accommodate most age groups and levels of ability.

Public céilidhs are also held. One major event on the calendar is the Stanley Ceilidh, held in Stanley, Perthshire, over the first weekend in November. Some céilidh bands intersperse ceilidh dancing with a DJ playing disco music in order to broaden the appeal of the evening's entertainment. Modern céilidh dancing is a mixture of three things, all done to a less exacting standard than the groups of people who originally devised them.

# Chanter Reed Basics

Let me preface by reminding you, **DO NOT TOUCH THE BAND CHANTER REED**. The reed you play in a band setting is the responsibility of whoever is tuning the band. If you fiddle with the reed, it will take longer to tune the band. Most pipers have a separate chanter for solo/non-band playing. The reed you have in your solo chanter is yours to do what you choose.

## Anatomy of a Reed



**Mouth.** The mouth of the reed is the opening located at the top of the reed and is formed by the two opposing pieces of cane, the "blades," sometimes also called "tongues." The very top of the cane portion of the reed is called the "lips" or "tip" of the reed.

**Shoulder.** This is the area across the central portion of the exposed cane. On a ridge cut reed, the shoulder is fairly pronounced.

**Binding.** To hold the two pieces of cane to the staple, they are wrapped with black hemp. This is called the binding. *If the binding starts coming loose, clear finger nail polish will provide for a good repair.*

**Hemp.** The hemp is not technically part of the reed itself, but facilitates positioning the reed correctly and snugly in the "reed seat" which is the hole located at the very top of the chanter. The hemp should not even partially block the hole at the base of the staple as this will affect the reed's performance.

**Staple.** At the base of the reed is a cylindrical/conical piece of metal, typically copper or brass that provides a support for the rest of the reed. (If you are lucky, might get to see an old reed with a staple made of silver.) The staple opening is round at the bottom and elliptical at the top. The staple is a soft metal because sometimes it is desirable to alter its shape and, consequently, also the reed's sound. This alteration is accomplished with a tool known as a mandrel.

There are two basic reed shapes or cuts:



#### A "Molded" Reed

This is an example of a "molded" reed. Notice the gradual taper from the binding to the top of the reed. Due to their shape, a molded reed's blades get most of their support from the staple.



#### A "Ridge Cut" Reed

This is an example of a "ridge cut" reed, rarely also referred to as "french cut" reed. Notice the distinct step at the shoulder, though not all ridge cut reeds are quite this obvious. The blades of ridge cut reeds get the most of their support from their thick base.

### Effects of Moisture on Reeds

As a chanter reed is played, it will absorb moisture. This moisture will soften the cane, which normally would lower the pitch, however there's a second effect on the reed. When played, a reed experiences air pressure upon it, forcing it to close up, which raises pitch. This means that if a piper picks up a set of bagpipes and tunes the drones to a relatively dry/unused chanter reed, the drones will be out of tune after a brief time (5-10 minutes usually) as the chanter reed pitch rises.



One might think that it would be advantageous to keep the reed very moist—eliminate one variable, so to speak—perhaps by leaving the chanter attached to the bagpipe bag. However, moisture is a catalyst for mold growth. Mold breaks down a reed and will greatly reduce its life span. Consequently, most pipers remove their chanters from the bag and use a "reed cap" (sometimes called a "chanter cap" or "dry stock") to protect the reed while it is seated in the chanter. On the other hand, if your reed is still developing mold while in the reed cap, more air circulation would be wise. Drill a few holes in your reed cap. Later if your reed is drying out, some or all of these holes can be sealed with tape.

### **Setting up a Reed**

In short: "*In/up, out/down.*" Lowering the chanter reed into the chanter shortens the distance between it and the holes in the chanter and raises the pitch. Raising the reed lowers the pitch. Changing the quantity and position of the hemp on the binding will affect where the reed seats. If the bottom of the staple is in direct contact with the reed seat—with no hemp acting as a cushion—the pitch of the reed will be raised even more than you may expect. Whatever you do, you want the reed seated very firmly as a loose reed will be flat and erratic.

The top hand notes' pitches are more greatly affected by raising or lowering the reed. This means that if the lower notes are in tune and the top hand is flat, it may very well be corrected by pushing the reed slightly deeper into the chanter. This also means that the scale is stretched as the reed is seated deeper.

This relationship is useful when setting up a solo chanter with a new reed. Here's the basic procedure:

### **How to Set-up a New Reed in a Chanter for Solo:**

1. Place your reed in the chanter.
2. Tune a single tenor drone to low-A.
3. Check high-A to see if it's in tune.
4. If high-A is sharp, raise the reed in the chanter. If high-A is flat, lower the reed in the chanter.
5. Go back to step 2 and repeat until low-A and high-A are in tune.
6. Check each note on the chanter, if none are flat then tape any sharp notes,\* you're done! (At this point you can read the Low-A note with a tuning meter to determine the chanter's natural pitch in Hertz for future reference.) Otherwise you either sacrifice the chanter & reed's natural pitch and push the reed in to sharpen the flat note, you modify the reed (see below), or if you really know what you are doing and it's a consistent problem, you might consider carving that hole on your chanter.

*\*Sharp notes can be made flatter by placing a piece of tape (I recommend pin striping tape) over the top portion of the corresponding hole.*

Some notes are easy to tune, High A and E for instance. Many pipers have the most trouble with F. Tune as best as you can against a tuned tenor drone then play a tune that you know well and hear how it sounds. If a note sounds out of whack, then it probably is. If you are not sure if a note is sharp or flat, put your finger a little over the top of that hole and listen. If it sounds better, then the note is sharp and needs tape, but if it sounds worse, it's flat and you'll probably have to either sink the reed to sharpen that note and tape the holes above *or* perhaps carving top of that hole of your chanter.

# Cold Weather Piping

At some point we've all been asked to play in cold conditions. As a student you should know the hazards of playing in cold weather:

Thermal stress: I know of a piper who split and broke a \$250 chanter from the thermal shock of playing it in the cold. Replacement drone parts take typically 4-8 weeks if you can order a new part - and the ferrules and projecting mounts won't ever really match. The repair cost for a set of drones which is still made (e.g., Hardie, MacLeod, Gibson) will be about \$200 per part. For those with drones where the manufacturer is out of business (e.g. Tweedie, Lawrie, Grainger) the repairs can be very expensive and can take several months because there aren't many people who do that kind of work. The cost will be upwards of \$1000 if mounts (i.e., imitation, ivory and/or silver) have to be removed. Consequently, most people won't want to take the risk.

Water condensation: Moisture from your breath condenses in the drones and chanter. If you can see your breath, it's cold enough that this is an issue. The humidity in your breath is pretty constant. As it gets colder outside the air can hold less moisture and, more of the moisture in your breath is wrung out in the drones and chanter. The moisture builds up, floods and eventually shuts off the drones. Hence, reliability is an issue. Playing time is limited by the outside temperature (cold=short). The piper will usually play minimally to avoid a disastrous (on a performance basis) build-up of moisture. This moisture will commonly drip down into the tuning joints in the pipe and can cause splits. The high tech bags with desiccants really don't help much because normal desiccants don't work real well in the cold! At a minimum - after playing in the cold, the pipe must be taken apart and meticulously dried. Commonly, a fairly complete overhaul is needed including removal of hemp from the tuning pins as it will likely be soaked. If you plan to play a wooden pipe in the cold, please oil it first to minimize moisture uptake.

Flexibility/Pliability of the reeds: The main plasticizer in a wooden reed is the water. It is possible to set up a bagpipe to play within the range of 40-90 degrees F because the differences in flexibility of the reeds are not large over that range. When it gets near freezing, the chanter reed will stiffen and not play. When you play in the cold and then stop, the reeds will cool off and stiffen to the point that they won't play (chokes) or will only squeal.

The player: The cold is very hard on the player. The heat loss due to the physical exercise and the exchanges of air going through the lungs is significant. The heat loss out the hands is also significant. The loss of heat requires a great deal of energy, so exhaustion is a common side effect. Dehydration due to the need to add so much moisture to the air is another issue. Raw throats are common. Frostbite becomes a problem because you're blowing warm moist air past cold fingers where it eventually begins to freeze. Depending upon the flexibility of the skin, cracks eventually form near the edges of the nails. The left thumb is particularly prone because of the moisture dripping down the bore of the chanter and out the hole in the bottom. Chapping of the lips is an issue due to the need to keep a seal around the blow stick. Fluid flow from the sinuses becomes quite large due to the degree of exercise and many people have burst eardrums after playing in the cold (sniff-sniff-kaboom). Head and chest colds are common after such gigs. When I do play in these conditions, I wear shooter (fingerless) gloves and am dressed in multiple layers to absorb the sweat.

The music: The physical ability to play the instrument is strongly affected when you get cold. Assuming that you can generate a decent sound with a scale that's in tune - for at least a brief period of time before the water condensation issue shuts you down - the lack of feeling in your hands limits your ability to play much of any music.

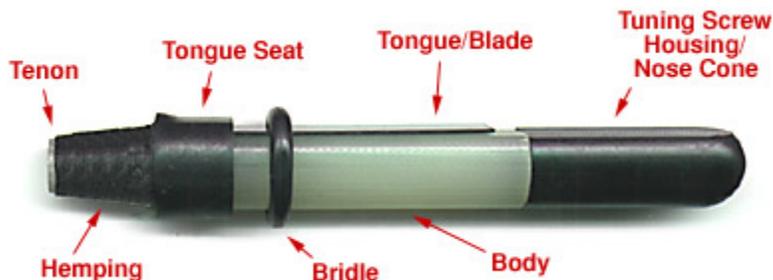
Your reputation: Think about it. What will it mean if you try, but don't sound real good? Do you believe that the audience will remember more strongly that you tried, or that you sounded bad? In my experience, if the event is meaningful for the attendees, they'll remember that you tried. If it is a "fluff" event, they'll only remember that you sounded bad. In short, if you're going to play in the cold for a given event, you need to decide what its worth to risk your health, in both the long and short term, as well as your pipes. Once you decide that - best wishes!

# Drone Reeds

## How do I set up synthetic drone reeds?

The simplest answer is...don't try, let one of us help you. But you need to know how to adjust your drone reeds.

Let me preface by saying that not all drone reeds are "ideal" with all drones. Some drones tune **way** too high with some brands of reeds. Some drones sound "rough" with some brands of reeds. Talk to your instructor and other band members if you are considering a change in drone reeds.



First off, you need to first adjust your new reeds to the air needs of your pipes. For most modern brands, you'll only need to adjust the bridle to set the air consumption. You should just be able to "blow out" a drone reed by blowing really hard - don't give yourself a hernia! - but it should "shut down" at very high pressure. If not, it's too open and you're wasting energy that you could put into playing.

Remember that most reeds will become more pliable with temperature, so play for a minute or two to warm up the reed. Then set the reed so that it will just barely shut off when you blow really hard by adjusting the bridle up or down in millimeter increments. If you get tired in this process, you may have to tweak it again tomorrow, but make very small adjustments.

Once the air flow is right for your drone/reed combination, then move the screw/plug to get the drone to tune to the right spot on the hemp for your chanter.

At this point, you are done.

## Why do my drone reeds squeal?

If you are, first and foremost, sure that your reeds are properly adjusted, it's a matter of learning how to deliver what is needed by your combination of pipes/reeds. The bottom line is that you'll need to adjust your strike-in technique to meet the needs of your drone/reed combinations - so that they don't squeal.

Squealing is the drone reed vibrating at the wrong harmonic - usually two or four times the intended frequency. Depending on the air flow characteristics of the pipes, your reeds may start vibrating at the wrong harmonic if the air pressure comes up too quickly or too slowly - or if it goes back down and back up again!

Some drones squeal if struck in an a given way with some kinds of reeds. I know that a very common brand of reed in a certain highly regarded brand of bass drone will commonly squeal upon a normal strike in, but a very gentle strike will do just fine. Some reed/drone combinations "like" a strike-in right under the

bass drone - or not! - or with a certain strength. This sounds odd, but it's all true. Experiment and you'll find the right way for YOUR pipes.

The most common cause of squealing is that piper who actually hits the bag, bounces off a little and then pushes again. This causes the pressure to spike up, fall off and then come back up. I see this most commonly amongst inexperienced pipers that are trying to strike in and get both hands to the chanter in two beats!

A controlled squeeze - faster or slower - from the right initial pressure - not too high or low - is what you want. Once you start the pressure going up, keep it going up - never allow it to back off - and you'll do very well.

Experiment by starting out without striking in at all, blow up your pipes by mouth bringing up the pressure slowly from a low initial point and see what happens. From here you can add in a gentle strike. Learn what your pipes need and learn to deliver it.

For additional information on drone reed adjustments, check out Andrew Linz's web page:  
<http://www.bagpipejourney.com/articles/dronereedadjust.shtml>

# Drone Valves

Drone valves may seem like an easy solution to achieving a clean cutoff. Like anything on the bagpipes...there is no easy solution.

Drone valves serve a variety of purposes and as you will read they have been around since at least the mid 1800s.

**Drone valves** are placed at the base of the drone stock to help regulate air through the drones. Or if the piper is using a hose moisture trap, the drone valves can be in-line. The intent is to stabilize changes in bag pressure with regard to the drone reeds, so the piper has steadier sound, easier starts and crisper stops. Volume is reduced slightly. I do not recommend students first starting out on the pipes to install drone valves.

Most valves are certainly most practical with a zipper or clamp-back bag however, some allow insertion through the drone stock.

Contrary to the assumptions of many, drone valves are not a new invention, having been employed by the early 19th century and perhaps even earlier.



## **McDonald-made Pressure Regulators**

**Introduced:** Before 1840

The image to the left shows a drone regulator made by Donald McDonald (a bagpipe maker) who died in 1840. The regulator was made from the same billet of wood as the accompanying stock so was turned at the same time and was not added at some later point in time.

**Some of the more common drone valves include...**



## **Shepherd Tone Enhancers**

**Manufacturer:** R.T. Shepherd Co. of Scotland.

**Introduced:** Late Summer 2000

Made of black plastic. These devices contain desiccant beads to absorb moisture.



**McCallum Drone Valves**  
**Manufacturer:** McCallum.  
**Introduced:** 2001

These devices also contain a desiccant to absorb moisture. These are most practical with a zipper or clamp bag.



**Ash Plugs**  
**Manufacturer:** Alan Ash of Canada.  
**Introduced:** 2001

These are modeled after the McCallum valves, but have some design differences and retail at a much lower price than the McCallums.

They also drone valves to work with the Ross Canister System:



**Hylands In-Line Drone Valves**  
**Inventor/Manufacturer:** Nigel Hylands and co-developer Ian Lyons, both of Melbourne, Australia  
**Introduced:** March 2004

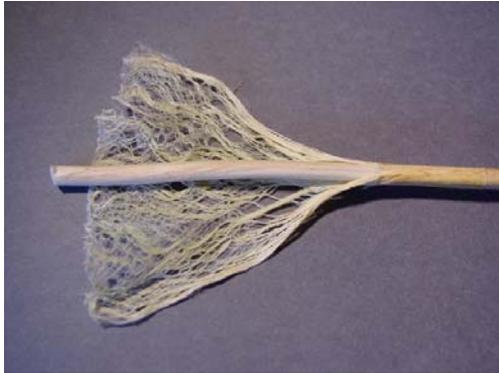
These valves fit in-line on most hose moisture control systems. Strength of the valve is adjustable via a hex screw located on the side of the valve collar (clockwise tightens).

I do not recommend students just starting on the pipes install drone valves. You first need to learn to strike in and cut cleanly without the valves. They can be added at any time. Check with your instructor before installing.

# Hemping

As with most aspects of bagpiping, there are a lot of varying opinions as to how to best hemp the tuning pins on your bagpipes' drones. The term "hemping" comes from the time of when the string material used to wrap the tenon\* of a tuning pin was, in fact, made from hemp.

**Hemp** (from Old English *hænep*, see cannabis (etymology)) is the common name for plants of the genus *Cannabis*, although the term is often used to refer only to *Cannabis* strains cultivated for industrial (non-drug) use. Hemp is cultivated virtually everywhere in the world except for the United States, and its cultivation in western countries is growing steadily.



The fiber is one of the most valuable parts of the hemp plant. It is commonly called bast, which refers to the fibers that grow on the outside of the woody interior of the plants stalk, and under the most outer part (the bark). Bast fibers give the plants more strength, which is especially true with the hemp plant. Hemp fibers can be 3 to 15 feet long, running the length of the plant. Depending on the processing used to remove the fiber from the stem, the hemp naturally may be creamy white, brown, gray, black or green.

These days it's made of linen and is usually found in one of two colors: yellow and black.



**Yellow Hemp** comes in 1 and 2 oz. prewaxed and unwaxed versions. I keep a spool of both prewaxed and unwaxed yellow hemp in my kit.



**Black Hemp** also comes in 1 and 2 oz. and is dyed black. It is saturated with a sticky wax. I keep one spool of black hemp in my kit.

In order to tune your drones, the upper section of the drone must slide up and down (usually twisting at the same time) on the tuning pins using one hand—but not so loose that they move unintentionally. Also, for sake of tonal quality, you'd like the tuning pins to be as airtight as possible; again this means you don't want them to be too loose such as rocking side to side.



In addition to hemp, I keep a roll of Teflon tape in my pipe case. **Teflon (plumbers) Tape** is easily available at almost all hardware stores in 1/2" widths and is used to provide a snug but easily moveable fit.

Other materials some pipers use include:

**Cobbler's Wax (resin).** This black sticky resin is applied by those who want to create a very sticky hemp. This resulting hemp would be used as a solid base for top layers of a less sticky hemp.

**Beeswax.** Another wax commonly used to wax unwaxed hemp. Beeswax is on the "sticky side" of waxes. Not too many decades ago, waxed hemp was unavailable—or at least, not introduced to the piping community—so you *had* to make your own. Some people prefer to use this old method.

**Waxed Dental Floss (Unflavored).** This very easy to get item can be used on the pins when waxed hemp is too thick, but you need it just a little bit tighter. Not the most aesthetically pleasing to the eye—and hence not very common—but stays in place over waxed hemp if pressed in well.

**Toilet Seal Wax.** Toilets typically use an large oily wax ring to seal their connection with the sewer pipe at the floor. These seals are quite cheap and are readily available at a hardware store. Some piper discovered that this oil-impregnated wax works very nicely as a lubricant for tuning pins. One down side to this method is you may find lint/grime from your pipe case sticking to your exposed pins, or the wax rubbing off on your bag cover.

**Paraffin/Candle Wax.** Some pipers like to use paraffin as the final outer coating of the hemping to provide a smooth slide. Paraffin is available at grocery stores and any store selling candle-making supplies.

**Cork grease.** Cork grease is designed for preserving and lubricating cork fittings on wind instruments—such as clarinets. (There are different types, avoid cork grease made from petroleum.) Some pipers use cork grease over their hemping to ease sliding.

There are NUMEROUS opinions on what combination of materials to use. Like everything else in piping, the final decision is yours. Some options require more maintenance than others. Talk to others and find out what they do. Attend workshops to learn what the professionals recommend.

I use a combination of materials. I generally lay a base of black waxed hemp on all joints and finish them off differently depending on the joint. Remember, unwaxed hemp can draw and retain moisture.

Here's what I use:

**Blowstick:** Waxed hemp covered with a layer of Teflon tape. I'm a wet blower and the blowstick is the first and most direct contact for moisture.

**Drone Stocks:** Waxed hemp of various diameters. That's it. When I lay down layers of waxed hemp I am careful to lay them down evenly and then roll the joint on a hard surface to seat the threads together. I like my drone to set snug so that they do not move when I tune but yet can be removed when necessary.

**Tuning Pins:** Heavier black waxed hemp for the bottom, covered by a top layer of waxed yellow hemp (although many people use a layer of unwaxed yellow), and covered by a layer of Teflon tape. The Teflon tape serves as a moisture barrier and helps the pin to slide easily. The temptation is to overuse Teflon. If you have NUMEROUS layers of Teflon tape on your pins, consider removing some of the layers and adding additional hemp.

If your hemping is too loose, the drone top will shift or rock back and forth or your stock will move in the base. If this is the case, it should be tightened up in some manner.

# History of the Kilt

The history of the kilt stretches back to at least the end of the 16th century. Although the kilt is an item of traditional Scottish highland dress, the nationalism of that tradition is relatively recent. It was only with the Romantic Revival of the 19th century that the kilt became irreversibly associated with Highlanders, and was subsequently adopted by Lowlanders and the Scottish Diaspora. Other modern Celts such as the Irish, Cornish, Welsh and Manx, have also adopted tartan kilts in recent times, although to a lesser degree.

The word *kilt* comes from the Scots word *kilt* (fancy that) meaning to tuck up the clothes around the body. The Scots word derives from the Old Norse *kilting*, from Norse settlers who wore a similar, non-tartan pleated garment.

## The Great Kilt



Highland chieftain wearing belted plaid, around 1680.

The *Breacan an Fhéilidh* or *Féileadh Mòr* was originally a length of thick woolen cloth made up from two loom widths sewn together to give a total width of 54 to 60 inches, and up to 7 yards in length. The great kilt, also known as the belted plaid, was an untailored draped garment made of the cloth gathered up into pleats by hand and secured by a wide belt. The upper half could be worn as a cloak draped over the left shoulder, hung down over the belt and gathered up at the front, or brought up over the shoulders or head for protection against weather. It was worn over a *léine* (a full sleeved garment gathered along the arm length and stopping below the waist) and could also serve as a camping blanket. For battle it was customary to take off the kilt beforehand and set it aside, the Highland charge being made wearing only the *léine* or war shirt.

## The Small Kilt or Walking Kilt

Sometime early in the 18th century the *fèileadh beag* or philabeg using a single width of cloth hanging down below the belt came into use and became quite popular throughout the Highlands and northern Lowlands by 1746, though the great kilt also continued in use. The small kilt developed into the modern tartan kilt when the pleats were sewn in to speed the donning of the kilt.

## The “Dress Act”

The Jacobite Risings demonstrated the dangers to central government of warrior Highland clans answering only to their chieftains, and as part of a series of measures the government of King George II imposed the "Dress Act" in 1746, outlawing all items of Highland dress including the new kilts (though with an exception for army uniforms) with the intent of suppressing highland culture. The ban remained in effect for 35 years.

Although the kilt was largely forgotten in the Scottish Highlands, during those years it became fashionable for Scottish romantics to wear kilts as a form of protest against the ban. This was an age that romanticized "primitive" peoples, which is what Highlanders were viewed as. Most Lowlanders had viewed Highlanders with fear before 1745, but many identified with them after their power was broken. The kilt, along with other features of Gaelic culture, had become identified with Jacobitism, and now that this had ceased to be a real danger it was viewed with romantic nostalgia.

Once the ban was lifted in 1782, Highland landowners set up Highland Societies with aims including "Improvements" (which others would call the Highland clearances) and promoting "the general use of the ancient Highland dress". The Celtic Society of Edinburgh, chaired by Walter Scott, encouraged lowlanders to join this antiquarian enthusiasm.

The kilt became identified with the whole of Scotland with the pageantry of the visit of King George IV to Scotland in 1822, even though 9 out of 10 Scots lived in the Lowlands. Scott and the Highland societies organized a "gathering of the Gael" and established entirely new Scottish traditions, including Lowlanders wearing the supposed "traditional" garment of the Highlanders. At this time many other traditions such as clan identification by tartan were developed.

After that point the kilt gathered momentum as an emblem of Scottish culture as identified by antiquarians, romantics, and others, who spent much effort praising the "ancient" and natural qualities of the kilt. King George IV had appeared in a spectacular kilt, and his successor Queen Victoria dressed her boys in the kilt, widening its appeal. The kilt became part of the Scottish national identity.

## Military Use



From 1624 the Independent Companies of Highlanders had worn kilts as government troops, and with their formation into the Black Watch regiment in 1740 their great kilt uniform was standardized with a new dark tartan. Army uniforms were exempt from the ban on wearing kilts in the "Dress Act", and as a means of identification the regiments were given different tartans. These regiments opted for the modern kilts for dress uniforms, and while the great kilt remained as undress uniform this was phased out by the early 19th century.

Many Scottish units wore kilts in combat during WWI. In particular, the ferocious tactics of the Royal Highland Regiment led to their acquiring the nickname "Ladies from Hell" from the German troops that faced them in the trenches. The kilt was last worn in action at the start of WWII. Irish troops have no tradition of wearing the kilt in battle, though pipers in Irish regiments of the British Army have traditionally worn a mustard-colored saffron kilt.

*2nd Lieutenant Donald Callander commissioned in The Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders (the Tartan we wear) prior to fighting with the British Expeditionary Force in May 1940 at the Battle of Dunkirk. The last time a Highland Battalion fought in the kilt.*

## Fabric

The typical kilt as seen at modern Highland games events are made of twill-woven worsted wool. The twill weave used for kilts is a 2-2 type, meaning that each weft thread passes over-and-under two warp threads at a time. The result is a distinctive diagonal weave pattern in the fabric which is referred to as the twill line. This kind of twill when woven according to a given color pattern, or *sett*, is called **tartan**. In contrast, the Irish kilt traditionally was made from solid color cloth, with saffron or green being the most widely used colors.

Kilting fabric weights are given in ounces per yard. They run from the very heavy regimental worsted of approximately 18–21 oz. down to a light-worsted of about 10–11 oz. The most common weights for kilts are 13 oz. and 16 oz. A kilt for a typical adult uses about 6–8 yards of single-width (about 26–30 inches) or about 3–4 yards of double-width (about 54–60 inches) tartan fabric. Double width fabric is woven so that the pattern exactly matches on the selvage (uncut edge). Kilts are usually made without a hem, since it would make the garment too bulky and cause it to hang incorrectly. The exact amount of fabric needed depends upon several factors, including the size of the *sett*, the number of pleats put into the garment, and the size of the person.

## Setts (Tartan Patterns)

One of the most distinctive features of the authentic Scottish kilt is the tartan pattern, or *sett*, they exhibit. Many of these patterns have come to be associated with Scottish clans or families, but there are also tartans for districts, counties, countries, corporations, States and Provinces, schools and universities, individuals, commemorative, and simple generic patterns that anybody can wear. Setts are always arranged horizontally and vertically, never on the diagonal. They are specified by their thread count, which is the sequence of colors and their units of width.

Setts are further characterized by their size which is the number of inches (or centimetres) in one full repeat. The size of a given *sett* depends not only on the number of threads in the repeat, but also on the weight of the fabric. This is so because the heavier is the fabric weight, the thicker the threads will be and thus the same number of threads of a heavier weight fabric will occupy more space when woven.

The colors given in the thread count are specified as in heraldry, although tartan patterns are not heraldic. The exact shade which is used is a matter of artistic freedom and will vary from one fabric mill to another as well as from one dye lot to another within the same mill. Tartans are commercially woven in four standard color variations that describe the overall tone. "Ancient" or "Old" colors are characterized by a slightly faded look intended to resemble the vegetable dyes that were once used. Ancient greens and blues are lighter in shade, while reds appear orange. "Modern" colors are bright and show off modern alkaline dyeing methods. The colors are bright red, dark hunter green, and usually navy blue.

"Weathered" or "Reproduction" colors simulate the look of older cloth weathered by the elements. Greens turn to light brown, blues become gray, and reds are a deeper wine color. The last color variation is "Muted" which tends to earth tones. The greens are olive, blues are slate blue, and red are an even deeper wine color. This means that of the nearly 5,000 registered tartans available there are four possible color variations for each, resulting in nearly 20,000 tartans.

Setts are registered with the Scottish Tartans Authority which maintains a collection of fabric samples characterized by name and thread count. In all, there are approximately 5000 registered tartans. Although many tartans being added every year, most of the registered patterns available today were created in the 19th century by commercial weavers who had a large variety of colors to work with. The rise of Highland romanticism and the growing Anglicization of Scottish culture by the Victorians at the time led to registering tartans with clan names. Before then, most of these patterns had little or no connection to any clan. There is therefore nothing symbolic about the colors, and nothing about the patterns is a reflection on the status of the wearer.

## Pleating



A kilt can be pleated with either box or knife pleats. A knife pleat is a simple fold, while the box pleat is bulkier, consisting of two knife pleats back-to-back. Knife pleats are the most common in modern civilian kilts. Pleats can be arranged relative to the pattern in two ways. In pleating to the stripe (middle picture), a vertical stripe is selected and the fabric will be folded so that this stripe runs down the center of each pleat. The result is that horizontal bands appear along the back and sides of the kilt, which will look different from the front than it does from the back. It is often called military pleating because this is the style adopted by most military regiments. It is also widely used by pipe bands. In pleating to the sett (right picture) the fabric is folded in such a way that the pattern of the sett is repeated all around the kilt. This is done by taking up one full sett in each pleat, or two full setts if they are too small. This causes the kilt to look much the same both front and back.

## Other Types of Kilts

The **Northumbrian kilt** is almost identical to the Scottish Kilt, but usually of plainer weave and less colorful. Although of a cross-weave, the fabrics used are not a true tartan. Plain monocolour weaves or "Northumbrian tartan" are popular choices.

In contrast to the Scottish kilt, the **Irish Lein-croich** traditionally was made from solid color cloth, with *saffron* and green being the most widely used colors. Solid colored Irish kilts can often be seen in 19th and early 20th century photos in Ireland especially at political and musical gatherings.

A **Welsh Kilt** (Welsh: *Cilt*) is a type of kilt worn in Wales and by Welshmen. Although not considered a traditional component of Welsh national dress, the kilt has become recently popular in the Celtic nations as a sign of Celtic identity. The St David's Tartan or brithwe Dewi Sant is one of the most popular tartans in Wales, but individual family tartans are being produced.

# Hogmanay

Pronounced hog-muh-NAY is the Scots word for the last day of the year and is synonymous with the celebration of the New Year in the Scottish manner. Its official date is 31 December (Old Year's Night). However this is normally only the start of a celebration which lasts through the night until the morning of **Ne'erday** (1 January).

The roots of Hogmanay perhaps reach back to the pagan celebration of the winter solstice among the Norse, as well as incorporating customs from the Gaelic New Year's celebration of Samhain. In Europe, winter solstice evolved into the ancient celebration of Saturnalia, a great Roman winter festival, where people celebrated completely free of restraint and inhibition. The Vikings celebrated Yule, which later contributed to the Twelve Days of Christmas, or the "Daft Days" as they were sometimes called in Scotland. The winter festival went underground with the Protestant Reformation and ensuing years, but re-emerged near the end of the 17th century.

There are many customs, both national and local, associated with Hogmanay. The most widespread national custom is the practice of *first-footing* which starts immediately after midnight. This involves being the first person to cross the threshold of a friend or neighbor and often involves the giving of symbolic gifts such as salt (less common today), coal, shortbread, whisky, and black bun (a fruit pudding) intended to bring different kinds of luck to the householder. Food and drink (as the gifts, and often Flies cemetery) are then given to the guests. This may go on throughout the early hours of the morning and well into the next day (although modern days see people visiting houses until the 3 January). The first-foot is supposed to set the luck for the rest of the year, so it is important that a suitable person does the job. A tall, handsome, and dark-haired man bearing a gift is strongly preferred. According to popular folklore, a man with dark hair was welcomed because he was assumed to be a fellow Scotsman; a blond or red-haired stranger was assumed to be an unwelcome Norseman.

An example of a local Hogmanay custom is the fireball swinging that takes place in Stonehaven, Kincardineshire in north-east Scotland. This involves local people making up *balls* of chicken wire and tar, paper, and other flammable material up to a diameter of 61 cm. Each ball has 2 m of wire, chain or nonflammable rope attached. The balls are then each assigned to a swinger, who swings the ball round and round their head and body by the rope while walking through the streets of Stonehaven from the harbor to the Sheriff court and back. At the end of the ceremony any fireballs that are still burning are cast into the harbor. Many people enjoy this display, which is more impressive in the dark than it would be during the day. As a result large crowds flock to the town to see it.

Another example of a pagan fire festival is The Burning of the Clavie that takes place in the town of Burghead in Moray. The Hogmanay custom of singing Auld Lang Syne has become common in many countries. Auld Lang Syne is a traditional poem reinterpreted by Robert Burns, which was later set to music. Outside Scotland, a common mistake is to sing "For the Sake of Old Lang Zine" instead of "For auld lang syne".

An old custom in the Highlands, which has survived to a small extent and seen some degree of revival, is to celebrate Hogmanay with the *saining* (protecting, blessing) of the household and livestock. This was done early on New Year's morning with the smoke of burning juniper, and by drinking and then sprinkling "magic water" from "a dead and living ford" around the house ("a dead and living ford" refers to a river ford which is routinely crossed by both the living and the dead). After the sprinkling of the water in every room, on the beds and all the inhabitants, the house was sealed up tight and the burning juniper carried through the house and byre. The smoke was allowed to thoroughly fumigate the buildings until it caused sneezing and coughing among the inhabitants. Then all the doors and windows were flung open to let in the cold, fresh air of the New Year. The woman of the house then administered "a restorative" from the whisky bottle, and the household sat down to their New Year breakfast.

For more information, visit:

<http://www.edinburghshogmanay.org/> OR <http://www.hogmanay.net/>

# The Kelpie



The **kelpie** is a supernatural shape-shifting water horse from Celtic folklore that is believed to haunt the rivers and lochs of Scotland and Ireland. It generally has grayish black fur, and will appear to be a lost pony, but can be identified by its constantly dripping mane. its skin is like that of a seal but is deathly cold to the touch. In Orkney a similar creature was called the *Nuggle*, and in Shetland a similar creature was called the *Shoopiltee*, the *Njogel*, or the *Tangi*.

It also appears in Scandinavian folklore where in Sweden it is known by the name **Bäckhästen**, the *brook horse*. In Norway it is called *nøkken*, where the horse shape is often used, but is not its true form.

In Scottish folklore, a kelpie would lure people onto its back and then dive into a deep lake to drown its unfortunate rider. A kelpie if bridled by a human might be forced to do the bidding of the rider but if the bridle should slip then the unfortunate soul would find them in a watery grave.

The kelpie sometimes appeared as a rough hairy man who would grip and crush travelers, but it most commonly took the form of a beautiful tame horse standing by a stream or river. If anyone mounted it, it would charge into the deepest part of the water, submerging and taking the rider with it. They would sometimes interbreed with humans' horses, and the foals were said to be fine fleet footed horses. The kelpie was also said to warn of forthcoming storms by wailing and howling. Rarely, kelpies could be benign.

According to the Swedish naturalist and author Bengt Sjögren (1980), the present day belief in lake monsters in for example Loch Ness, is associated with the old legends of kelpies. Sjögren claims that the accounts of lake-monsters have changed during history. Older reports often talk about horse-like appearances, but more modern reports often have more reptile and dinosaur-like appearances, and Bengt Sjögren concludes that the legends of kelpies evolved into the present day legends of lake-monsters where the monsters "changed the appearance" to a more "realistic" and "modern" version since the discovery of dinosaurs and giant aquatic reptiles from the horse-like water-kelpie to a dinosaur-like reptile, often a plesiosaur.

The following tale is a good illustration of the brook horse:

“ A long time ago, there was a girl who was not only pretty but also big and strong. She worked as a maid on a farm by Lake Hjärtasjön in southern Nerike. She was plowing with the farm's horse on one of the fields by the lake. It was springtime and beautiful weather. The birds chirped and the wagtails flitted in the tracks of the girl and the horse in order to pick worms. All of a sudden, a horse appeared out of the lake. It was big and beautiful, bright in color and with large spots on the sides. The horse had a beautiful mane which fluttered in the wind and a tail that trailed on the ground. The horse pranced for the girl to show her how beautiful he was. The girl, however, knew that it was the brook horse and ignored it. Then the brook horse came closer and closer and finally he was so close that he could bite the farm horse in the mane. The girl hit the brook horse with the bridle and cried: "Disappear you scoundrel, or you'll have to plough so you'll never forget it." As soon as she had said this, the brook horse had changed places with the farm horse, and the brook horse started plowing the field with such speed that soil and stones whirled in its wake, and ”

the girl hung like a mitten from the plough. Faster than the cock crows seven times, the plowing was finished and the brook horse headed for the lake, dragging both the plough and the girl. But the girl had a piece of steel in her pocket, and she made the sign of the cross. Immediately she fell down on the ground, and she saw the brook horse disappear into the lake with the plough. She heard a frustrated neighing when the brook horse understood that his trick had failed. Until this day, a deep track can be seen in the field.

— (Hellström 1985:16)

# Key Signatures and Key

In musical notation, a **key signature** is a series of sharp symbols (#) or flat symbols (b) placed on the staff, designating notes that are to be consistently played one semitone higher or lower than the equivalent natural notes (for example, the white notes on a piano keyboard) unless otherwise altered with an accidental. Key signatures are generally written immediately after the clef at the beginning of a line of musical notation, although they can appear in other parts of a score, notably after a double bar.

The purpose of the key signature is to minimize the number of accidentals required to notate the music. In principle, any piece can be written with any key signature, using accidentals to correct any notes where it shouldn't apply.

For example, here is the bagpipe scale using the appropriate symbols:



Instead of placing a sharp (#) in front of every "C" and "F", the key signature tells the musician that throughout the music there will be 2 sharps; "C" and "F". Here is the same scale written with the key signature:



A key signature is not the same as a **key**; a key signature is merely a notational device. The key identifies the tonic triad, the chord, major or minor, which represents the final point of rest for a piece, or the focal point of a section. A key may be major or minor. Although many musicians confuse key with scale, a *scale* is an ordered set of notes typically used in a key, while the *key* is the center of gravity, established by particular chord progressions.

For key signatures with sharps, the first sharp is placed on F line. Subsequent additional sharps are added on C, G, D, A, E and B.

In the illustration below, you can see that bagpipe music, written with two sharps, is in the key of B minor or D major. In Germany, Scandinavia, Serbia, Croatia and Poland it is referred to as "h-moll".

	<u>Flats</u>		<u>Sharps</u>	
	<u>Major</u>	<u>minor</u>	<u>Major</u>	<u>minor</u>
0	<u>C (Major), a (minor)</u>			
1	<u>F</u>	<u>d</u>	<u>G</u>	<u>e</u>
2	<u>B<math>\flat</math></u>	<u>g</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>b</u>
3	<u>E<math>\flat</math></u>	<u>c</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>f<math>\sharp</math></u>
4	<u>A<math>\flat</math></u>	<u>f</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>c<math>\sharp</math></u>
5	<u>D<math>\flat</math></u>	<u>b<math>\flat</math></u>	<u>B</u>	<u>g<math>\sharp</math></u>
6	<u>G<math>\flat</math></u>	<u>e<math>\flat</math></u>	<u>F<math>\sharp</math></u>	<u>d<math>\sharp</math></u>
7	<u>C<math>\flat</math></u>	<u>a<math>\flat</math></u>	<u>C<math>\sharp</math></u>	<u>a<math>\sharp</math></u>

In baroque times, B minor was regarded as the key of passive suffering. The theorist Christian Daniel Schubart regarded B minor as a key expressing a quiet acceptance of fate and very gentle complaint, something commentators find to be in line with Bach's use of the key in the St. John's Passion. By Beethoven's time, however, the perception of B minor had changed considerably: Francesco Galeazzi wrote that B minor was not suitable for music in good taste, and Beethoven labeled a B minor melodic idea in one of his sketchbooks as a "black key".

## Matching a Reed to the Chanter

Matching the right reed to the chanter is essential in creating a unified “band sound.” Take the same chanter reed and stick it in another chanter and it may not sound the same. Similarly, take a chanter and stick in various chanter reeds and the sound will change. This is why we all use the same brand of chanter (and usually reed) when competing. Chanter reeds vary from brand to brand and perform differently under different conditions. Some reeds do well in dry conditions – while that same reed goes limp in humidity. For the most part, we will supply you with a chanter reed for band performances. But you will also want to have a supply of reeds for personal/solo use. There are many excellent pipe chanters and reeds on the market. Hendersons bagpipe supply suggests the following pipe chanter/reed combinations. This is not the last word in pipe chanters and reeds but it is a good place for beginners and less experienced players to start.

<b>Reeds</b>	<b>Strength Available</b>	<b>Works well in</b>
Shepherd	Hard	Shepherd, Gibson, Naill
Warnock	Easy, Medium, Hard	Warnock, Gibson, Shepherd, Dunbar
Apps	Easy, Medium	Naill, MacCallum
Abedour	Easy (beginner), Medium	Gibson, Shepherd, Dunbar
McCann	Easy, Medium	Gibson, Shepherd
McAllister	Hard	Naill, Gibson, Hardie
EZEE PC	Easy, Medium, Hard	Naill, St. Kilda
Ross	Medium, Hard	Naill, St. Kilda, Kintail, Shepherd, Gibson

If you find you cannot get any of the above combinations to work then you may want to examine the way in which you break in or store your reeds. You should not have to blow through hundreds of reeds in order to find a good one for your chanter.

# Modifying the Chanter Reed

Let me again preface by reminding you, **DO NOT TOUCH THE BAND CHANTER REED!** Modifying the band reed is the responsibility of whoever is tuning the band. What you do with your solo chanter and reed is up to you.

Altering reeds is a controversial subject. Some pipers swear by barely touching their reeds at all. Others have scraped so much that they could do it in their sleep. Problem is, the reeds you get are sometimes going to require more pressure than you can muster and are not always going to match the characteristics of your chanter. Unless you want to just toss the reed into the trash (which some pipers do), that's where sanding, scraping, pinching, poking, squeezing comes in.



*A chanter reed's—for lack of a better term—"red zones."*

## **Reed is too hard.**

If a new reed is a "gut buster" here are a few things you can do:

- **Play it until it softens up.** This can take weeks, but is the safest method and leaves you with the strongest reed. Just plug up the drones and play it as long as you can, it may only be five or ten minutes. Over a week or two, when comfortable, add a drone until you have your full set going. If after a few weeks it's stopped getting easier to play and it's still too hard, then think about taking a more proactive step.
- **Hydrate the reed.** Dip it in water for a second or two, then shake it out and dry it off, then play it. New reeds are usually pretty dry and need moisture. (Unless you get a "Piper's Pal" humidity control product for storage of new reeds.) Avoid using saliva as it may contain microbes that will begin to eat the reed—there are no enzymes in human saliva that digest cellulose, it's only the microbes we'd worry about. Don't soak a reed, it can warp. You can repeat this, but less dramatic hydration is better. Store the reed in a reed cap to keep it from drying out too much, or ideally, use a Piper's Pal cap to help regulate humidity.
- **Pinch it with your fingers.** This will temporarily ease a reed (and raise its pitch). Try to keep pinching to the top third of the reed. If you squeeze too low and too hard you will collapse the sound box and destroy the reed. You can repeat pinching, but again less is better. If you overdo it, a mandrel may help open the reed back up.
- **Install a rubber band bridle.** Slide an orthodontics rubber band wrapped a few times over the staple up past the hemping to a point about 1/5 of the way up the exposed cane of the reed. If this makes it too easy, slide it down a bit. If it's still too hard, scraping may be in order or move the bridle up a bit—too high though, and the top hand will sound a little thin. After a few weeks to months and the reed eases, this bridle may be removed or gradually worked down the reed as time goes on. If you wrap the rubber band very tight or the reed is weak or you just want to be safe, it'll be best to only slide the bridle up during playing sessions, and to lower it back to the supported staple area after.
- **Pinch the staple with pliers.** This is more drastic and usually unnecessary. Needle-nose pliers either well wrapped in tape or covered with leather works well. If you squeeze too hard, but

haven't damaged the blades, you can open the staple back up with a mandrel. I've also "bitten" the staple with my teeth, but a pair of pliers is easier to control.

- **Sand/Scrape it.** This is irreversible. Removing part of the cane from the reed cannot only reduce required pressure, but can also have the unintended side-effect of changing the sound of a reed. Dangerous "red zone" areas that typically affect sound also are: the top strip of the reed, the sound box, and the area down the center of the blades. (See *image above*.) Where you scrape depends some on the type and make of reed. A very drastic step is to carve notches at both edges of the reed a bit above the hemp line—only if you really have to, such as "the parade is tomorrow!" On a ridge cut reed, you can scrape/sand down a bit on the pronounced ridge itself. Don't take a brand new reed and scrape it down to your usual comfortable blowing pressure. Always leave "room" for the reed to weaken. If you start at soft, it'll turn to mush later.

### **Reed is too soft.**

If the reed shuts down easily with normal blowing pressure, it probably won't last long and you should consider discarding it. (Unless you are a hard blower, in which case you can pass it along to another piper.) However, there are a few options if for some reason you wish to chance it.

- **Pinch the edges of the reed to open its mouth.** You might have to do this repeatedly.
- **Moisten *then* pinch the edges of the reed to open its mouth.** You might have to do this repeatedly.
- **Use a mandrel to open up the staple and force the mouth open.** Just be careful to keep the blade symmetrical—that is, the blades should be an equal distance from an imaginary center line across the length of the mouth.
- **Cut off the tip of the reed.** We're talking about a reed that's on it's deathbed anyway (even if it's a new reed), so amputation may not out of line as extreme as it is. This will also increase the pitch and will most likely alter the relation of the high notes to the low notes. Use a very sharp blade and cut precisely even. Cut off small (0.5mm) amounts—as long as you can keep it even—since you can't put it back!



**Mandrel.** While a mandrel looks like a small screwdriver, it differs in that the end of the blade is a quite rounded on the two sides. A cross section of the end would reveal a stubby rectangle with rounded corners though mandrels vary in shape somewhat.

### **Reed doesn't sound right.**

Customizing chanter reeds for sound can be a bit of a mystical art, sometimes shrouded in secrecy. Reeds are by nature organic and therefore somewhat variable. To further complicate the issue, reeds are made differently by different makers as you would expect. What works for some reeds can be a disaster for others. Adjusting the high notes produced by a reed is the best understood, but it's problematic trying to change the reed to affect just a single note on the scale.

Here's a few situations you might run into:

**If the top hand is too sharp,** you can sand/scrape off some off the top fifth (or so) blades. Careful, you don't want to sand all the way through the lips of the reed. *An alternative to modifying the reed is to tape the top of the chanter holes to flatten notes that are too sharp.*

**If the top hand is too flat,** the reed is too soft, see the remedies given above. *An alternative to modifying the reed is to sink the reed farther into the chanter to sharpen notes that are too flat.*

**If the High-A is too sharp**, you can sand at the very tip of the reed. Again, you don't want to sand all the way through the lips of the reed. *An alternative to modifying the reed is to tape the top of the chanter hole to flatten the note that is too sharp.*

**If the High-A has too much "crow"**, aside from just blowing through it (blowing harder) or giving a new reed some time to break-in, you can sand at the very tip of the reed as you would to flatten High-A. Again, don't sand all the way through the lips of the reed as this will actually make the blades shorter.

**If the High-G is too sharp**, gently sand about 1/16" down from the top of the reed.

**F is inconsistent or flat relative to other notes.** An inconsistent F is known as a "collapsing F" or as a "double-toning F." The note varies wildly with small changes in pressure. It is usually caused by three things: the sound box being too open, the blades being a little too long, or the reed being positioned incorrectly in the chanter's reed seat.

- For some very odd reason, sometimes the F note can become flat when the reed is pushed too far *into* the chanter. I have yet to hear a good explanation for this counter-intuitive phenomenon. If you are in a non-band situation, try moving the reed out (or in) to correct a problematic F.
- Try gently pinching the sound box, repeat as necessary.
- The easily reversible procedure to try is to tie hemp around the sound box creating a bridle to apply a little pressure. You can also try a small rubber band (such as used in orthodontics) as a bridle around the sound box, but since this applies more pressure, it would be wise to roll this type of bridle down onto the binding when you are done playing the reed, otherwise you may gradually collapse the sound box.
- The drastic option is to cut a bit off the end of the reed, which will also make the reed harder to blow. On the other hand, you don't have to worry about bridles shifting.

Unfortunately, there's no great substitute for experience. The road to true mastery of reed scraping and sanding will be littered with destroyed reeds. Just go easy, start timid.

# Moisture Control

The single most important aspect of bagpipe maintenance is the issue to moisture control. An instrument that varies with respect to moisture can never be stable or reliable.

Water traps, desiccant systems and pipe bags must be chosen to be suitable for the climate in which you live and the proper considerations for maintaining an appropriate moisture level.

Moisture absorbed into a reed makes it both heavier and more flexible, so the native pitch of a wetter reed is different (generally lower) than that of a dryer one. If the pitch changes as you play, you'll have a problem. If the level of moisture in the bag is too high, the reeds will become wet in the short term and will mildew in the long term. (Mildew is evidenced by a black color on the reeds.) For this same reason, the pipe chanter should never be left inside the bag when not in use. It should be kept outside the bag with a reed protector in place. I'd also recommend swabbing out the chanter stock after each day's playing to remove water or saliva that may be absorbed into the wood. Swab out the drones and chanter stock on cold days.

Condensed moisture in the drones results in funny noises, instability and eventually drone "shut-down". It can swell hemp leading to frozen joints. If it soaks into the wood, it can cause cracks. This moisture comes from the passage of your humid breath into the drones where it hits cooler ambient air. When the extra moisture content coming from your breath is more than the ambient air can hold, you'll get condensation. A "little" condensation can be tolerated, but at some point, you're in trouble.

The amount of condensation depends upon the air flow through your drones (lots of moist air flow = lots of condensation), the relative humidity of that air (desiccated air contains less moisture than non-desiccated = less condensation) and the ability of outside air to accept the extra humidity going up the drones (lower relative humidity in the outside air and/or warmer temperature = less condensation).

I'll wager you've never seen your breath come out the chanter or drones - even when the water condenses on the cool surfaces inside the drone. That's because of a fairly high mixing ratio of ambient air and your breath in the drones.

This is a good place to bring up the fine point that, on a given day, plastic pipes may have more condensate than non-plastic pipes. The thermal conductivity of plastic is higher than that of wood, so when you are playing on a cool day, the bore of a plastic pipe will be losing heat faster than a wooden pipe and will be colder than that of a wooden pipe. A colder bore represents a surface for more or earlier condensation.

OK, so where does that leave us? We know that the air leaving our pipes has some amount of moisture in it. That moisture needs to be absorbed into the ambient air. If it cannot be absorbed at the temperature in the bores, the moisture will condense in our drones. On Saint Patrick's Day, even with a moisture control system I end up **POURING** water out of my drone reeds. The water runs down the drones and into the drone reeds shutting them off.

There are two major forms of moisture control systems, 1) water traps and 2) desiccants/absorbents



**Moisture traps** deal mostly with spit (yes spit!). The first thing they do is divert the spit away from the chanter reed toward the back of the instrument. This is usually done with an elbow a tube. If the trap has an elbow, then the larger water/spit particles will be knocked out because they aren't carried along in the flowing stream of air. The medium sized "bits o' spit" will fall out of the air stream and collect in the tube. This is an aerodynamic issue in which particles obey "stoke's law". This law says that big particles fall faster in a viscous fluid and that small particles will remain suspended longer. The slower the fluid is moving, the more efficiently the particles are removed. This is best done in a large diameter, long tube so that the air is moving slowly and you catch most of the particles that fall out. There are obvious practical there are practical limitations. In particular, very small particles of water will remain suspended for a long time and will go through the trap.



**Desiccants and absorbents** are materials which have the ability to attract moisture from the air. If desiccant is dry, has a high surface area and the flow rate is slow, the relative humidity of the air can be significantly reduced before it reaches the reeds. Desiccants do have limitations in that the humidity of the air passing over the desiccant will increase as the desiccant becomes more and more laden with moisture. Hence, you should use "dried" desiccant on those cold damp days when you know you need it. The ability of a desiccant to absorb moisture is also a function of temperature.

Whichever system you choose, controlling moisture is part of pipe maintenance and will dramatically affect how your pipes play.

# Oiling the drones...or not

Oiling is one of those issues that causes heated arguments. Obviously for those of you playing pipes made from Polyplenco material...this discussion is irrelevant.

As a maintenance issue - on a well conditioned, frequently played, well cared for pipe, not exposed to extremes of heat or humidity- you probably don't "need" to oil it. However, if you occasionally leave your pipe in the car, near a radiator, play in high humidity/rain or leave you pipes unplayed for a few weeks or more - you might want to oil them.

If we consider "oiling" to be an "answer", the underlying "question" is, "how do I prevent my pipes from ever cracking?"

## Let's understand the issue...

When you play, you put very humid air into the inside of your instrument. That's why most pipers play with a moisture control system. If the moisture is absorbed by the wood, the wood will swell to accommodate the molecules of water. Only the wood near the bore will swell, not the rest. This creates a stress in the wood which can result in a crack or split.

Although it is sometimes presented that oil creates a layer on the surface of the wood so that moisture can't get to the wood - **more correctly**, moisture can only get through the oil and into the wood "slowly". This lets the wood swell slowly. As long as the rate of swelling is slow, moisture can migrate through the wood and allow the entire piece to swell slowly. In this way there is minimal stress built up in the wood and minimal internal forces to cause a crack.



Let's first understand that we want a layer that moisture cannot easily/rapidly penetrate. Commercial woodwind bore oil is often simply a particular viscosity of mineral oil. This is a simple hydrocarbon (paraffin) mixture like common motor oil. It is rather incompatible with wood and only coats the very surface. It basically never dries and seems to lose its effect after several weeks.

Oils which are biologically derived from natural sources (i.e., almond, tung or linseed) may be slightly more "soluble" in wood, but when spread out in a thin layer, will cross-link and "dry". These oils tend to last longer after application.

Paraffin waxes or biological waxes are just higher molecular weight versions of petroleum and biological oils, respectively.

My advice would be that commercial bore oil won't hurt and can be applied once or twice a year. I oil my pipes in the spring and fall.

Another reason for oiling the bores is to help smooth the surface of the bore. A rough bore acts like a filter to remove some of the harmonics of the sound. In general, smoother bores have more high frequency content in their harmonics. Polishing or oiling results in a smoother bore and increases the

fraction of high frequencies coming out of the drone. Depending upon your point of view, this may or may not be a good thing! Some pipes have the reputation for having gun-barrel-smooth bores and do not require oiling.

A rough bore also presents more surface area for absorption of moisture from your breath into the wood. Rough surfaces have more surface area and, therefore, take up moisture faster and potentially result in a more rapid build-up of stress. If the rate of moisture uptake is slowed sufficiently to allow equilibration of the moisture level between the wood on the inside and outside of the drone, the wood will not build up stress and will not crack. Once the wood is equilibrated to a humidified level and the drone is played regularly, the moisture level in the wood will not change and the drone will not split.

The roughness of the bore can be treated by either oiling or polishing. Oil or wax creates a water-resistant layer that slows the uptake of water into the wood, it also fills in the imperfections in the wood surface making the surface smoother. Polishing reduces the surface area available for absorption of moisture and thus keeps the rate low. Both techniques will reduce moisture uptake. Both approaches will alter the sound of the drones.

The decision to oil or not is ultimately yours to make.

# Piobaireachd

Piobaireachd is the Gaelic word for "piping or the actions of a piper". In the days before 1745, it is likely that most of the music played on the bagpipe was not of the march, strathspey, reel, hornpipe, or jig styles that we are familiar with today. Piobaireachd is an ancient style of theme and variation in which a thematic melody (called the "urlar" in Gaelic where it means "ground" as in most basic part) is played followed by variations of increasing difficulty. It is the classical music of the bagpipe.

After composing the urlar, a simplified series of notes are selected to represent the musical theme. Structured variations are played upon these theme notes. The first variations may involve single gracenotes on the theme notes, but later variations can incorporate extremely ornate embellishments with more than ten gracenotes per theme note. Eventually the melody is repeated to complete the cycle.

The timing or pulse of the music is of the rubato form where a strict rhythm is not kept. A bit of a beat is added here and taken away there - much as in jazz today. To further complicate matters, there are cadence and connecting notes that "don't count" in the timing and which are interpreted differently by different masters of the form.

The timing aspects are sometimes known as "scansion", which refers to the "shape" of the piece. The development of a piobaireachd player may be likened to the maturation process of a student reading the words of William Shakespeare aloud in high school and then bringing more to those words through timing, phasing and emphasis as the student continues to grow and study with masters in live theatrical performances.

While sometimes considered an acquired taste, when well played, piobaireachd will induce a rhythmic swaying in the attentive listener. It speaks to the listener in a deeper and more contemplative manner than most light music.

Piobaireachds were often written to commemorate an event (e.g., Laments for death are very common as are Salutes for various occasions) or had practical uses in Highland society (e.g., Gathering of the Clans). These tunes are generally 8 to 15 minutes in length and, when well played, are some of the most inspiring music of the bagpipe. The music may be described as insistent and persistent - demanding to be heard and creating a need to be heard in order to satisfy the listener. Like many classical music forms, it may not have instant appeal to the uneducated listener.

The study of piobaireachd has two real advantages for the player who wishes to improve.

1. Mastery of the embellishments builds dexterity of the hands.
2. Placement of the pulses and development of phrasing and sub-phrases within the timing allows one to fully investigate and experiment with interpretation and finding the "music" within the written score.

# Playing in the Rain

Sooner or later, you will experience playing the pipes in the rain. Andrew Lenz offers the following suggestions for playing in the rain:

The first thing to keep in mind is that Scotland is not exactly a desert wasteland and, traditionally, rain is no stranger to bagpipes. They've survived hundreds of years in that very moist environment, which includes rain. Your pipes aren't going to explode in a million pieces as soon as it starts to drizzle, particularly with modern bagpipes made of oily African Blackwood. That said, most of us have seen the undesirable swollen rings left on varnished tabletops from cold moist glasses or cans. There are steps to take to help prevent something bad from really happening.

If you do a lot of playing in the rain, you might consider a few investments. One, a set of poly (plastic) bagpipes. Two, an Inverness cape. Three, an extra set of cheaper shoes (wingtips) for muddy performance spots (e.g., graveside). Four, maybe an extra cheap kilt (of which only a portion would show anyway under a cape). Five, a pipe bag which has easy internal access.

For the following discussion, we're going to assume that you have a set of wood bagpipes. Just know that if you are playing a set of poly bagpipes, standing water isn't going to hurt any plastic parts.

## ***Preparation for Your Performance***

While it's good practice to play your pipes often anyway, if there's a likelihood of rain for your performance, playing your pipes every day to build up the moisture content will help your pipes cope with a sudden influx of water. Absorbing a lot of water quickly can split the pipes.

If the outside of your pipes are not varnished, then treating the outside of your pipes could be helpful. Waxing or oiling them will help repel rain. Lightly oiling the inside of your bores may also be a good idea. Oil is much more stable than water, and therefore your pipes will expand and contract less having absorbed oil rather than water. There is a lot of controversy about oiling bagpipes, so if you are concerned, talk with more experienced pipers in your area about their approach to maintaining their pipes in that particular climate.

If you play cane reeds, you might consider using a synthetic set for a rainy performance since synthetics will be much easier to dry. Otherwise, just be aware that the reeds will absorb a lot of water and could fail. Plus they will require a longer recovery time to return to nominal moisture content.

Tuning pins can be a problematic area when it comes to rain. If you use plain unwaxed hemp, it will swell significantly in the rain and may bind. Waxed hemp, while it doesn't eliminate absorption completely, does reduce the speed and extent of absorption. Teflon tape or cork grease can be helpful as a barrier to rain. If you are inclined to go traditional and have your pins redone with cork, cork stands up very well to rain.

On the day of the performance, if it's wet *and* very cold, consider acclimating the pipes to the playing conditions. If they are stored in a warm house, place them in a location where they can slowly cool to something closer to the outside temperatures. The shock of an extreme temperature change can crack wood pipes.

Put a few towels, swabs and pull-throughs in your car for quick access after the performance. And extra pair of socks and shoes wouldn't hurt either. Also handy may be a large plastic garbage bag to throw wet clothing into.

## ***During Your Performance***

If you have a cape, use it to cover up your pipes while you are not playing. Be most protective of your wood chanter since it has the thinnest—and most fragile—walls. Also while not playing, keep your drones pointed toward the ground so the rain won't get in.

If you get any opportunity to dry your pipes do so. If you don't have enough time to rustle up a towel and dry the pipes, try to at least remove and blow out your drone reeds from the seat end of the reeds to keep them operational. A dollar bill (durable paper) slipped under the tongue will absorb trapped condensation.

## ***After Your Performance***

Use the towels in your car to remove standing liquid from the instrument as soon as possible after the performance, starting with your chanter if it's wood.

Completely disassemble your pipes and use swabs and pull-throughs to dry the inside of the bores. Try to dry your hemping as well by pressing on them with a towel. Let your pipes dry disassembled.

Dry your drone reeds. In the unlikely event that any residual moisture is colored, rinse them out with fresh water.

Remove the cover from your bag. If your bag has zipper or clamp access to the inside of the bag, wipe out it out. If it doesn't, hang it chanter stock down for a while. If nothing drips out, but the bag is saturated, plug the stocks of the bag then fill the bag with air and hang it to dry fully inflated—while it takes longer to dry, this will help prevent the bag from wrinkling. Once it's dry on the outside, it should be good to go after some seasoning (if that is recommended by the bag maker).

While you may be in the routine of capping your chanter after playing, you might consider airing out your reed to alleviate the excess moisture trapped in the reed. Sealing up a very wet reed may provide you with a black and fuzzy reed next time you open it up. If you have chanter cap with holes drilled in it, you might get by just capping the reed. Even if you have a Piper's Pal (moisture control) cap, it would be a good idea to air out the reed.

Whatever you do, don't stick your pipes on a heater, next to a fire, or over a heater vent—unless you like the sickening popping sound of splitting wood. Let the pipes dry at their own pace at normal room temperature.

## Pronunciation of “Celtic”

The pronunciation of the words **Celt** and **Celtic** in their various meanings has been surrounded by some confusion: the initial <c> can be realized either as /k/ or as /s/. Both can be justified philologically and both are "correct" in terms of English prescriptive usage.

The word is believed to have originated in an early Continental Celtic language, but it comes to us from Greek (*Keltoi*), where it is spelled with a kappa; thus /k/ is the original pronunciation. This was borrowed into Latin (*Celtae*), where it was likewise pronounced /k/. However in Mediaeval Latin, the letter <c>, originally pronounced /k/, shifted to /s/, a process known as palatalization, and many words and names borrowed from Latin into English after this sound shift are pronounced this way: *centre*, *Cicero*, *et cetera*. Thus /s/ is the inherited pronunciation in English.

Until the mid-20th century, *Celtic* was usually pronounced with /s/ in English except by academics, but the pronunciation with /k/ has been gaining ground rapidly. Following the usage of philologists, /k/ is now almost invariably used with reference to Celtic languages even in non-academic contexts. It is also the more popular pronunciation when talking about most other aspects of Celtic culture. However /s/ remains the only recognized pronunciation of the word when it occurs in the names of sports teams, most notably Celtic Football Club and the Boston Celtics basketball team; as these are proper names, the traditional pronunciation is entrenched.

There is a great deal of misinformation in circulation on this topic. It should be noted that there is no American-British distinction in these pronunciations nor is there a Scottish-Irish distinction. Neither pronunciation has been influenced by any modern Celtic languages, or by Old Norse. The corresponding words in French are pronounced with /s/ while those in German have /k/, but neither French nor German has influenced English usage; rather, they show independent reflexes of the same phenomena in Latin and Greek.

So...either pronunciation is correct.



## Scotland's Thistle

The prickly purple thistle is the national emblem of Scotland. Ever present in fields and pastures throughout Scotland, thistle has been Scotland's emblem for centuries. The first use as a royal symbol was on silver coins issued by James III in 1470. The plant, which grows to a height of five feet, has no enemies because of vicious spines that cover it like armor plating.

There are many different stories of how the Thistle became Scotland's symbol, but most point to the events surrounding the Battle of Largs in 1263. It is generally forgotten that for more than 600 years most of Scotland was part of the Kingdom of Norway. By 1263 Norway seemed to have little interest. King Alexander III proposed to buy back the Western Isles and Kintyre, still Norwegian territory. However this re-awoke Norse interest and King Haakon IV attacked with a large force, but was finally defeated at Largs. At some point during the campaign the Norsemen tried to surprise the Scots with a night attack. They removed their footwear for a silent approach but found themselves on ground covered with thistle.

It is said their leader stepped on thistle and cried out. His shout warned the Scots who then saw off the Norsemen, thus saving Scotland. The role of the thistle was then understood, and was chosen as Scotland's symbol, with the motto "Nemo me impune lacessit", "No-one harms me without punishment" but more commonly translated as "Wha daurs meddle wi me".

# Skirl of the Bagpipes

Skirl is not a technical term. It probably started out as an onomatopoeic word, like screech, and was intended to imitate the sound of the instrument. Regardless of the origin, the word has acquired a derogatory connotation - and may be used by a knowledgeable piping instructor to describe an undesirable sound that a beginner/student might make on the instrument. It may be used by those less knowledgeable to describe the sound of the bagpipe - along with the equally trite "mournful wail".

**Not so seriously** the origin of "skirl" is seldom fully explained, but here it is...

While the academics have struggled to clearly trace the origin of the pipes in Britain, and marveled at the wood working skill of early makers, and while the sound of pipes heard at unexpected times in unexpected places has been off-handedly attributed to the "wee people", there have been a few who have discovered the truth.

As is not uncommon, the words of those who speak the truth are not always clearly heard. An increasing body of evidence reveals the shocking truth to all these unanswered, yet interwoven, questions...

**The "Skirl" of the Pipes is really just a mispronunciation of.... the "Squirrel" of the Pipes!!!**



This rare photo shows P/M Skippy MacBaggins playing "Lament for the Old Oak Tree" at the edge of the campus on the College of Wooster in Wooster, Ohio USA (Fall 2006).

# The Band Mess

**Mess Night** refers to a time-honored tradition in the military of dining in with formal mess dress. **Dining in** is a formal military function for members of a company or other unit. The practice is thought to have begun in 16th Century England, in the monasteries and early universities. During the 18th Century, the British Army incorporated the practice of formal dining into their regimental mess system. Customs and rules of the mess were soon institutionalized rules called the Queen's Regulations. The mess night or "Dining in" became a tradition in all British regiments. During World War II, the custom was revived in the U.S. Military due to participation with the Officers' Mess in the British military.

The United States Army, the United States Navy and United States Air Force refer to this event as a "Dining in" or "Dining-in." The United States Marine Corps and the United States Coast Guard refer to it as "mess night." The Army sometimes calls it a "regimental dinner." A unit's dining-in consists of only the members of the unit. An optional formal dinner, known as the "**dining-out**" may include spouses and other guests. The dining-out follows the same basic rules of the dining-in, but is often tailored to minimize some of the military traditions and be more interesting to the guests. So, technically our Band Mess is a dining-out since all members, students, and their families are welcome.

By the early 19th Century, the British Army's "mess night" developed formal rules, as a result of troops being stationed in remote areas. Officers elected mess committees to conduct their meals. The officers were expected to adhere to the rigid etiquette of Victorian society. The dining in follows established protocols. After a brief cocktail period of 30 to 45 minutes, the presiding officer, known as the "President of the Mess", announces "PLEASE BE SEATED." The group will then retire to the dining area to be seated.

Formal toasts are the heart of the formal dining in. A junior officer, known as "Mr Vice", proposes a toast, "TO OUR GUESTS." Guests remain seated. The other officers rise and respond, "HEAR, HEAR." They then sit down. Other toasts include "TO THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF." Standing, all respond "THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF." This is followed by toasts to "TO THE UNITED STATES NAVY" or "TO THE UNITED STATES ARMY" and "TO THE (UNIT)." The responses follow in kind, of "HEAR HEAR."

Violations of the formal etiquette of the dining in are "punished", generally with fines. In the United States Army, the following are considered "Violations of the Mess":

*untimely arrival at proceedings, smoking at the table before the lighting of the smoking lamp, haggling over date of rank, Inverted cummerbund, loud and obtrusive remarks in a foreign language, improper toasting procedure, leaving the dining room without permission from the President of the Mess, carrying cocktails into the dining area before the conclusion of dinner, foul language, toasting with an uncharged glass, wearing a clip-on bow tie at an obvious list, rising to applaud particularly witty, succinct, sarcastic, or relevant toasts, unless following the example of the President, haggling over penalties or fines imposed.*

At Army and Air Force dinings-in, violators of the mess are obliged to publicly drink from a grog bowl in front of the mess attendees. The grog is usually contained in a toilet bowl, consisting of various alcoholic beverages mixed together. As a more disgusting effect, the grog may also contain floating solids, such as meatballs, raw oysters, or Tootsie Rolls.

The tradition of drinking grog originated with the Royal Navy. Grog was originally a drink composed of watered down rum. In today's Navy dining-ins, grog comes in two varieties (one with alcohol and one without). The non-alcohol variety may contain anything that will make it less appealing to the taste, including hot sauce.

In addition to visiting the grog bowl and paying fines, violators may be sentenced to sing songs, tell jokes, do pushups, or perform menial tasks to entertain the mess. In most cases, when a violator has been identified, he or she is given the opportunity to provide a rebuttal or defense for the violation, which rarely results in the violator being excused for the offense, and usually only results in more punishment.

Members of the mess may also be singled out for some good-natured ribbing and teasing. In some units, members go out of their way to be picked on, often wearing obvious uniform violations, such as crowns, tiaras, eye-patches, bowties and cumberbunds of the wrong color, and other items that have no place on any military uniform.

You will find our Band Mess is far less formal and a whole lot of fun.

# The Kilt Pin



Our Band Uniform Regulations state, “*No unauthorized kilt pin or accessories will be worn.*” We adopted this as a result of a former member who liked to attached paraphernalia of all sorts to his kilt – he looked like a walking haberdashery. A uniform is meant to be just that; uniform. The intent is for everyone to be dressed similarly. While we are competing or performing as a band, and until the Band authorizes the wearing of a kilt pin, a pin should not be worn. However, when not performing with the Band...

The history of the kilt pin originates with Queen Victoria, who, upon observing a kilted soldier standing at attention with the wind whipping his kilt up around his ears, came to his rescue by pinning the aprons of his kilt together with a pin she was wearing. Thereafter, it was decreed that all Scottish regiments would wear some device to hold their kilts down. Regiments such as the Black Watch, however, opted for rosettes of ribbon.

Many people object to the kilt pin because of its feminine origins and some men refuse to wear a kilt pin at all; while some don't feel dressed without one. This is certainly optional and my sentiments tend to fall somewhere between the two extremes. If you do decide to wear a kilt pin, the proper place to wear it is three inches from the bottom of the kilt and three inches inward from the right side of the apron. The kilt pin should only go through the top apron and not be pinned to the bottom apron. Any variation in this general area is considered ok, and if you have a double thickness on the right side of the apron, you might affix it to that area. The biggest objection I have to the kilt pin is its predilection to getting snagged and the possibility of tearing the kilt. Again, as with the sgian dhub and the sporan, the kilt pin should be appropriate for the level of dress and the occasion. Silver or gold kilt pins with jewels are properly only worn with evening wear. A plain silver or brass kilt pin is appropriate for daywear.

Some people have problems with the clasp of their kilt pin coming loose and their pin falling out and being lost. To prevent this, one idea it to take the eraser off of a pencil and run it through the back of your pin as you pin it on your kilt. If the clasp should come loose, the eraser will keep your pin from falling off.

# The Queen Mother's Pipers

Whereas the pipers appointed to H.M. Queen Elizabeth II were serving regular Army pipe majors, the pipers appointed to H.M. Queen Elizabeth Queen Mother were all from The Territorial Army (Reserve Forces). It was in 1935 that H.R.H. The Princess Elizabeth, Duchess of York, graciously accepted the Honorary Colonelcy of The London Scottish Regiment. Upon the abdication of Edward VIII and the Coronation of H.M. King George VI, the then Queen Elizabeth, requested to remain as Honorary Colonel. It was following the death of King George VI and the Coronation of H.M. Queen Elizabeth II that the now "Queen Elizabeth - The Queen Mother" requested from her regiment that a piper be appointed as "Personal Piper to H.M. Queen Elizabeth, Queen Mother." Thus in 1953, the honorary appointment was established.

## Appointment and Duties

All the QM Personal Pipers—except one—were the current pipe major of The London Scottish Pipes & Drums at the time of their appointment. Leslie de Laspie was the pipe sergeant at the time of his appointment, but very soon after, was appointed pipe major. While the LSP&D now has some civilian members, the pipe major has—to date—always been a serving reservist. Selection of the Personal Piper, was almost "hereditary," as one took up the pipe majorship of the L.S., but an interview and a recommendation to H.M. was the deciding factor.

Much like the Sovereign's Piper, the duration of service as the piper to the Queen Mother depended on the remaining length of service as a reserve. (For instance, PM John Backen's service with the London Scottish Regiment terminated with his retirement just a few weeks before the Queen Mother's death; she would never appoint another personal piper.)

There was no additional financial compensation as Personal Piper to the Queen Mother. As PM Spoore explains, "The appointment was indeed an honor, financial reward would not have been relevant."



PM Christopher MacPherson in the No. 2 dress uniform. The chevrons and piper's badge are worn on both sleeves. The red sash is worn by all sergeants up to warrant officer. On the epaulets is the wording "London Scottish" in silver.

## Duties

The duties included the attendance of "Her Piper" on three mornings of each week, to play in the gardens of her residence—Clarence House—beneath her window. Her piper would also play as and when requested (sometimes with the Queen's Piper) at St. James's and Buckingham Palaces and other royal residences. He would occasionally also accompany her on official visits to galleries, theaters etc. and for various functions such as: balls, banquets, royal visits, investitures, premiers, private parties and the like.

The duties somewhat lessened over the years with the aging of The Queen Mother. To quote PM Christopher MacPherson, "My duties were to play in the gardens of Clarence House on the second Wednesday of each month when Her Majesty was in residence from 9 a.m. to 9:15 a.m."

### **Passing of the Queen Mother**

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, Queen Mother, died (in her 102nd year) at The Royal Lodge, Windsor, on March 30, 2002. Her State Funeral was held on Friday, April 5, 2002. P.M.C. Macpherson and P.M. J. Spoores (despite his having retired from the post 12 years earlier) had the honor to play at her funeral. (PM John Bracken was on sick leave recovering from injury as an officer of The City of London Police and was unable to attend.)

A massed band of just under 200 pipers and drummers, marched the gun carriage bearing the Queen Mother's coffin from Westminster Palace where she had laid in state, to Westminster Abbey playing the tunes "My Home" and "The Mist Covered Mountains" (played in funeral march time). "Of't In The Stilly Night" was the lament played at The Abbey.

# The Sovereign's Piper



**Alistair Cuthbertson, The Queen's Piper at Buckingham Palace**

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.

## **Duties**

Duties for Sovereign's Pipers—"Piobair na Bhan Rìgh"—were not limited to just piping. Official duties outlined in 1854 included serving as footman in the garden in the morning, waiting at dinner as needed, greeting visitors and escorting them to dinner and generally taking orders from the Sergeant Footman in general service around the household.

Currently, the Sovereign's Piper's primary duty is to play Monday through Friday at 9 a.m. for about fifteen minutes under The Queen's window, a tradition that tourists appreciate! Regardless of inclement weather, he pipes every morning when Her Majesty is residing at Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle, the Palace of Holyroodhouse in Edinburgh or at Balmoral. (He usually takes his vacation when the Queen is at Sandringham in Norfolk.) He also plays for special events. The piper lives in the royal residence and travels with the Queen acting as a Page of the Presence, escorting the Queen to the various audiences.

One unofficial rule is the piper cannot play the same tune twice for the morning performance the entire duration of the Queen's stay at Balmoral in the summer months. (The Queen likes fresh material!) At official state banquets, the Piper to the Sovereign is responsible for coordinating a dozen bagpipers who play in the dining room after the Heads of State have finished dinner. At Balmoral, Holyroodhouse, and Windsor he plays each evening at The Queen's dinner table.

## **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.

### **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 spend 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).

# The Story Behind the Badge

Heraldry in its most general sense encompasses all matters relating to the duties and responsibilities of officers of arms. To most, though, heraldry is the practice of designing, displaying, describing and recording coats of arms and badges. The origins of heraldry lie in the need to distinguish participants in combat when their faces were hidden by iron and steel helmets.

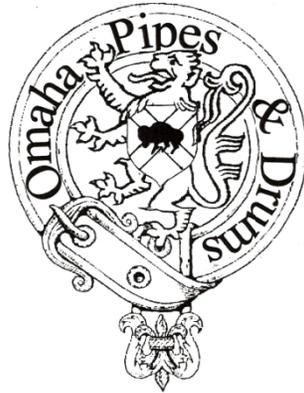
At the time of the Norman Conquest of England, modern heraldry had not yet been developed. The beginnings of modern heraldic structure were in place, but would not become standard until the middle of the twelfth century. By the early thirteenth Century, coats of arms were being inherited by the children of armigers. In Britain the practice of using marks of cadency arose to distinguish one son from another, and was institutionalized and standardized by the John Writhe in the fifteenth century.

In the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, heraldry became a highly developed discipline, regulated by professional officers of arms. As its use in jousts became obsolete coats of arms remained popular for visually identifying a person in other ways—impressed in sealing wax on documents, carved on family tombs, and flown as a banner on country homes.

The arms of the Omaha Pipes and Drums was originally designed by George Lynch (Pride's husband) and can be seen in its original form on the bass drum in this early photo of the band.



*Early Photo of the Omaha Pipes and Drums  
Joslyn Castle - Omaha, NE*



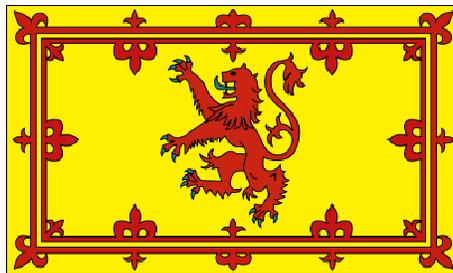
In 2001, the Band adopted the current version incorporating George's original design with "Omaha Pipes and Drums" on a "belt and buckle." Here is an explanation of the major components:

### The Lion Rampant

A **charge** is any object or figure placed on a heraldic shield or on any other object in an armorial composition. Any object found in nature or technology may appear as a heraldic charge in armory. Charges can be animals, objects, or geometric shapes. The beast most often portrayed in heraldry is the lion. It traditionally symbolizes bravery, valor, strength, and royalty, since it is traditionally regarded as the king of beasts. "Rampant" means the body is drawn roughly vertical, forepaws raised to strike (or to display the claws to best advantage). The position of the hind legs varies according to local custom: the lion may stand on both hind legs, braced wide apart, or on only one, with the other also raised (armed) to strike.

The lion in the Band arms is stylized after the Royal Standard of Scotland. In heraldic terms it is blazoned (described as):

*"A lion rampant Gules (red) armed."*



The **Royal Standard of Scotland**, also known as the **Royal Standard of the King of Scots** or more commonly **The Lion Rampant** is the flag used historically by the King of Scots. It is a banner of the Royal Coat of Arms of the former Kingdom of Scotland. The Lion is commonly thought to have been adopted in the early 12th century by William I (known as "William the Lion"), but there is no evidence of its use as "the Arms of Dominion of Scotland" before 1222, when it appeared in the seal of his son, Alexander II.

## The Shield

The central element of a coat of arms is the shield. In heraldry, an **ordinary** is a simple geometrical figure on the arms. The ordinary in the OP&D shield is a white saltire, a *crux decussate* (X-shaped cross) representing the cross of the Christian martyr Saint Andrew, the patron saint of Scotland, on a blue field. It is named the **Saltire** or the **Saint Andrew's Cross**. In heraldic language, it is blazoned:

*"Azure (blue), a saltire Argent (white)"*



According to legend, in 832 A.D. King Óengus (II) (or *King Angus*) led the Picts and Scots in battle against the Angles under King Aethelstan of East Anglia near modern-day Athelstaneford in East Lothian. King Angus and his men were surrounded and he prayed for deliverance. During the night Saint Andrew, who was martyred on a saltire cross, appeared to Angus and assured him of victory. On the following morning a white saltire against the background of a blue sky appeared to both sides. The Picts and Scots were heartened by this, but the Angles lost confidence and were defeated. This saltire design has been the Scottish flag ever since.

## The Bison

On the shield is the silhouette of an American bison. The American bison is the largest terrestrial mammal in North America. In heraldic terms, this is blazoned:

*A bison passant (walking) Sable (black)*

The complete blazon of the Omaha Pipes and Drums badge would be something like...

*A lion rampant Gules armed, overall a shield Azure, a saltire Argent, charged with a bison passant Sable. Around all is a belt and buckle inscribed Omaha Pipes and Drums.*

# Traditional Christmas Yule

Although Christmas and its customs were in disfavor for only a short time in England (during the reign of Cromwell), Scotland ignored the holiday far longer. Bear in mind that "Christmas" is "Christ's Mass" and mass was banned in Scotland. There are records of charges being brought against people for keeping "Yule" as it was called in Scotland. Amazingly, this dour, joy-crushing attitude lasted for 400 years. It has only been in recent years that the Scots observed December 25 as a special day at all. So if there is a specifically "Scottish" aspect to Christmas it is that it was not celebrated!

Christmas in Scotland is now a time for going to church, food, presents, parties, holidays and all sorts of other good things. It's a time for celebration because it's the birthday of Jesus.

Planning for Christmas starts weeks before the events. Children are busy writing their Christmas lists for Santa Claus, parents are busy buying presents, cleaning the house and organizing food for the great day.

Houses are decorated with tinsel, holly wreaths candles and decorations. Mistletoe is hung to catch a kiss from anyone who stands under it. The Christmas tree, decorated with baubles, takes pride of place in any household.

On Christmas Eve, children prepare for Santa Claus by hanging up their stockings in anticipation of their being filled with presents while they sleep. They leave out a small glass of whisky or milk for Santa along with a mince pie. They also leave out carrots for the reindeer - particularly Rudolph - the red nosed reindeer that guides his sleigh through the dark skies. Then the children are ready to go to bed. In all the excitement children find it difficult to get to sleep. Some waken up VERY early in the morning.

Christmas day finally arrives and is marked by screams of delight at the surprises Santa has left. Once the presents are opened, many people get ready to go to church. Christmas carols are sung during the hour long service.

On return, parents prepare the Christmas lunch while children play with their toys. Christmas dinner is a time when families get together - grannies, grandpas, aunts, uncles, cousins. Once it is finished and the clearing up done, there is generally a party. People sing songs, dance or play games. All the preparation has been worth it. People go to bed happy yet exhausted. Christmas is over for another year!

A traditional Christmas lunch will include - Starter: Scotch Broth or Smoked Salmon. Main course - Roast Turkey, Sage & Onion Stuffing, Chippolata Sausages, Roast Potatoes, Carrots, Brussel Sprouts. Dessert - Christmas Pudding and Brandy custard.

## **A traditional children's Yule song:**

I'm gaun to hing a stockin up,  
I'll borrow my big brither's,  
It's bigger nor my sister's ane  
And strang-er nor my mither's.

I'll be in bed on Yule E'en  
When Faither Christmas comes.  
I ken he'll wale oor chimley oot  
Amang the ither lums.

On Yule richt early I'll be up  
Afore the screich o day  
To see what ferlies Santa Claus  
Has brocht me for my play.

I hope he'll mind a cuddly bear,  
And cups for dolly's tea  
Wi lots o ither bonnie toys  
For a guid wee lass like me.

# Tuning

Tuning is a mechanical and rational procedure. The guidelines for tuning are straightforward and sensible. It's a skill every piper needs to know and every piper can learn.

To understand the process, we have to first understand sound. **Sound** is generally known as vibrational transmission of mechanical energy that propagates through matter as a wave and is perceived as hearing. Hearing is performed primarily by the auditory system: vibrations are detected by the ear and transduced into nerve impulses that are perceived by the brain. Sound is further characterized by the generic properties of waves, which are frequency, wavelength, period, amplitude, speed, and direction.

So, sound is a wave. It is defined as the number of cycles, or periods, per unit time (frequency). The unit of frequency is hertz (Hz), named after the German physicist Heinrich Hertz. For example, 1 Hz means that an event repeats once per second, 2 Hz is twice per second, and so on. Each note produces a frequency measured in Hz. For example, the concert "A" is measured at 440 Hz. That means that a concert "A" produces 440 cycles per second. What you "hear" is the brain's interpretation of the hertz (and sometimes it hurts).

The highland bagpipe scale, however, doesn't match a concert scale. The "A" isn't "set" to 440. The "A" on a bagpipe can range from 470 to 480 Hz depending on the reed, the weather, and the musician. As a band, we set our pipes so they all match as closely as possible. That's why we use a tuner and one person is primarily responsible for tuning the band. What they are listening for is whether or not you are sharp or flat as compared to the designated "tuned" pipe – usually the person doing the tuning. Eventually, you will be assigned a "band chanter." Do not adjust the reed in the band chanter; consider it band property. For now, if you only have the one chanter, do not adjust the reed; doing so makes tuning the band take more time during practice.

## How to tune your drones to the chanter...

What you hear when you tune the drones is often described as a "Wa-Wa." It is produced by sound waves opposing one another. The closer the sound waves come to one another the slower the Wa-Wa. It disappears entirely when the drones are in tune with one another and the chanter.

To begin, strike in and tap off your bass and middle tenor drone. Remember to blow steady. Play a low "A." Listen for the Wa-Wa of the drone. SLOWLY move the top of the outside tenor drone up or down listening to hear if the speed of the Wa-Wa increases or decreases. If it increases, slowly adjust in the opposite direction. Continue to adjust the drone until the Wa-Wa stops. Play a scale to see if the drone is still in tune. If not, the chanter may be out of tune.

Once you feel you have the outside tenor in tune with the chanter, the rest is easy. Most instructors will recommend you tune the bass drone to the outer tenor first and then bring in the middle tenor using the same technique previously described; listening for the Wa-Wa and adjusting the bass to match the outside tenor drone and then bringing in the middle tenor to match the outside tenor and bass. The goal is for the three tenors to sound as one – no Wa-Wa.

Tuning is a continuous learning process. It is one of the characteristics judges listen for in solo and band competition. It is skill that anyone can learn and constantly refine. Work with your instructor to check your tuning to make regular progress and ask for help tuning for competitions.



## When The Battle Is Over

Retreat March

P/M W. Robb



## REEL

The **reel** is a folk dance type as well as the accompanying dance tune type. It is one of the four dances which comprise Scottish country dancing, the others being the jig, the strathspey and the waltz. It is very rhythmic and very quick tempo. It is believed that the reel was originated from an old Irish dance called the *Hey* in the mid 1500's. Today many Irish reels are supplemented with new compositions and by tunes from other traditions which are easily adapted as reels. It is the most popular tune-type within the Irish dance music tradition.

Reels are generally written in a 4/4 or 2/4 time and have the same structure, consisting largely of a quaver movement with an accent on the first and third beats of the bar. Most reels have two parts (AABB) which are repeated. Each part (A or B) has eight bars, which again are divided into four and then into two. These are called phrases. The structure obeys to a scheme of question-answer where A is the "question" and B is the "answer" to A. The group of thirty-two bars (AABB) is repeated three or four times before a second reel is introduced. The grouping of two tunes or more in this manner is typical in all dance tunes. An example is the tune, *Sleepy Maggie*. Note the steady driving rhythm –like a steam locomotive.

## Sleepy Maggie

Reel

P.M. J.G. Slattery



## HORNPIPE

The term **hornpipe** refers to one of several dance forms played and danced in Britain and elsewhere from the late 17th century until the present day. The most common use of the term nowadays refers to tunes in 2/4 or 4/4 time. It is danced wearing a hard shoe. This type of hornpipe is generally thought of as a sailors' dance, and perhaps the best known example is the *Sailors' Hornpipe*. There are two basic types

of common-time (4/4) hornpipe, ones like the *Sailors' Hornpipe*, moving in even notes, and ones like *The Harvest Home*, moving in dotted notes:

### The Harvest Home

### Hornpipe

The musical score for 'The Harvest Home' Hornpipe is presented in four staves. The first staff is the treble clef melody, starting with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The second staff is the bass clef accompaniment. The third and fourth staves show a more complex accompaniment with triplets and sixteenth notes. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

## STRATHSPEY

**Strathspey** refers both to the type of tune, and to the type of dance usually done to it (although strathspeys are also frequently danced to slow airs). It is named after the Strathspey region of Scotland, in Moray and Badenoch and Strathspey. A strathspey is a dance tune generally in 4/4 time (usually set to quavers or eighth notes). It is similar to a hornpipe but slower and more stately, and containing many snaps. A so-called *Scots snap* is a short note before a dotted note (cut-dot). These days there are at least four, some would say seven, varieties: the bouncy schottische, the strong strathspey, the song or air strathspey, all three of which can be enjoyed for dancing, and the Competition strathspey for the bagpipe, primarily intended as a display of virtuosity. An example we play is:

### The Smith's A Gallant Fireman

### Strathspey

The musical score for 'The Smith's A Gallant Fireman' Strathspey is presented in four staves. The first staff is the treble clef melody, starting with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The second staff is the bass clef accompaniment. The third and fourth staves show a more complex accompaniment with triplets and sixteenth notes. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

## JIGS

The **jig** is also a folk dance type as well as the accompanying dance tune type. The word "jig" seems to have cognates in various Germanic languages that describe a certain type of repetitive seesaw motion. The most common structure is two eight-bar parts, each of which is repeated (AABB). There are a number of tunes with three or more parts, and some in which the length of one or more parts varies from eight bars.

The "**Irish Jig**" is a popular tune-type within the traditions of Irish dance music, second only to the reel, and popular but somewhat less common in Scottish country dance music. It is transcribed in compound meter. "**Double jigs**" are always transcribed in 6/8; "slip jigs" are always written in 9/8. "**Single jigs**" are most commonly transcribed in 6/8, but sometimes also in 12/8. "**Slides**" are transcribed in both 12/8 and 6/8.

*Tripping up the Stairs* is an example of a jig played by the band. While it is written in an even meter, we play it with a "jigidy" rhythm with a heavy emphasis on the first note of the triplet (series of three notes)

Tripping up the Stairs	Jig	Traditional Irish
		

and more...

# What a Piping Judge Listens For

It may be somewhat foolish for someone who is not a certified piping judge (and I'm not!) to try to provide a definitive answer, but the truth of the matter is that the principle role of the piping judge is to preserve the art-form. Consequently, judges are listening for "good piping" from a technical and musical viewpoint.

The judge will listen to the sound quality of the instrument: both tuning and timbre.

1. Are the drones tuned together and in tune with the chanter?
2. Is the chanter well balanced and in tune?
3. How is the tonal quality - full, or thin, or dull?

The judge will evaluate the technique and execution.

1. Are the embellishments and notes played accurately and precisely?
2. Is blowing steady throughout or does it degrade with time or during difficult passages?
3. Does the player have control of his instrument?
4. Are there "chokes" (i.e, the melody cuts out for a note or two) or "squeals" from the chanter?
5. Is the tune appropriate for the player's ability and the level of the contest?

The judge listens to the "music".

1. Does the player understand and play this type of tune correctly?
2. Does the music "flow"?
3. Is the interpretation correct?
4. Is this an appropriate "setting" of the tune?

A piping judge is not influenced by and does not assess the following: genealogical background, years of experience, connections to other pipers and individuals, pride, costume, dress (beyond enforcing minimum standards for the game), deportment, military rank, marching, weaponry, weather, the actions of others on the field, or anything else that isn't related to the music and sound of the bagpipe.

# What Grade Should I Compete?

As a student you have the opportunity to compete as a soloist at area competitions. You begin competing in Grade 5. **Grade V (five)**: This is the beginner level. Competitors typically try to get through the tune without any glaring errors. Tunes are played very slowly. Most competitions require you to play a 4-part, 2/4 March. Yes...you play from memory in front of a judge.

Typically, you change grades when you register between seasons, usually around January. You *might* be able to change mid-season if you were to be blowing away all your competition, placing first in every event and the judges all giving you AGLs ("Above Grade Level") on your forms. It would be quite the rare thing indeed, but who knows. You might be a Mozart of piping. Associations strongly discourage and may even deny a mid-season change as it reeks a bit of havoc on the scoring bean-counters at the association, but it has been done.

After your season is over (or earlier if there's a prior cut-off for submissions), if you think you did well enough, write a letter to the competition/grading committee asking for an upgrade <http://www.pdcpd.org/mwpba/RegradePetition.pdf> . The important thing is, if you want to move up, **ask!** When you petition, you should send them copies of your score sheets, a letter of recommendation by your instructor and/or a judge and/or a well-known top piper. Committee members want to be convinced that you are capable of winning prizes in the next grade and that you won't be placed in a position for which you aren't ready and get frustrated and discouraged.

Now the bad news. If you placed high but competed against subpar pipers, you may not be ready to perform well at a higher grade. You have to understand that you may be one of the pipers that may never be ready to upgrade, whether it's lack of quality or quantity of practice, motor skills, proper instruction—whatever—it does happen too. You have to be ready to accept that also.

You should be playing the pipes for fun. If it's not fun, don't do it. Or at least change your approach or attitude about playing until it *is* fun. If you do want to advance and you are not and the judges' comments reflect that you are where you belong, you need to change the way you practice.

While it's exciting to win and advance grades, you should be competing to improve yourself, not to beat other players or to prove anything to anyone. It's easy to get caught up in the whole competition mentality and lose the focus: *music* and *entertainment*.

# What the Score on Your Sheet Really Means

A judge, after listening to your performance, may assign it a point value and note it on your adjudication sheet as well as—hopefully, but not always possible—lots of constructive comments. (Depending on your association guidelines, points will be assigned either immediately after your performance or after all competitors have played.)

Piping scores aren't like a math test where you get points for each question. You don't earn a set number of points for each properly played embellishment or for consistent tempo or for each correct melody note.

You should consider the points you get for a performance for that event only. If you score 50 on one day, it could be an 85 from another judge for the same performance. The only truly meaningful comparison of your own performance scores over time would require the same judge, the same event, the same competitors playing the same tunes in the same playing order, under the same circumstances—impossible.

It is the opinion of some judges that the primary purpose of a score sheet is to justify the result, not to be used as a lesson for improvement. Since in many instances there are more faults than can be covered on the form, especially given the time constraints, many judges just comment on the fundamental flaws first. This means that even if the *mentioned* flaws were corrected in advance, that piper still *may not* have won a prize for that event.

The judge will listen to the sound quality of the instrument: both tuning and timbre.

4. Are the drones tuned together and in tune with the chanter?
5. Is the chanter well balanced and in tune?
6. How is the tonal quality - full, or thin, or dull?

The judge will evaluate the technique and execution.

6. Are the embellishments and notes played accurately and precisely?
7. Is blowing steady throughout or does it degrade with time or during difficult passages?
8. Does the player have control of his instrument?
9. Are there "chokes" (i.e, the melody cuts out for a note or two) or "squeals" from the chanter?
10. Is the tune appropriate for the player's ability and the level of the contest?

The judge listens to the "music".

5. Does the player understand and play this type of tune correctly?
6. Does the music "flow"?
7. Is the interpretation correct?
8. Is this an appropriate "setting" of the tune?

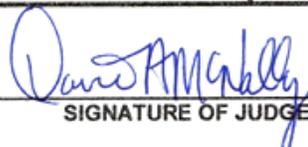
Let's take a look at one of my early score sheets as an example:

**CELTIC HIGHLAND GAMES OF THE QUAD CITIES 2003**  
**Midwest Pipe Band Association**  
**INDIVIDUAL PIPING**

COMPETITOR: Heinemann, Peter DATE: AUG. 23, 2003

EVENT: \_\_\_\_\_ CONTEST: GRADE 4 JUDGE: David McNally

Walker Douglas MBE

EVALUATION	COMMENTS
<b>TONE</b> <b>CHANTER</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BRIGHT <input type="checkbox"/> DULL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FULL <input type="checkbox"/> THIN  <b>DRONES</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WELL TUNED <input type="checkbox"/> SLIGHTLY OUT <input type="checkbox"/> OUT OF TUNE	<p>1st ✓</p> <p>2nd - a little roundish</p> <p>3rd - more on LA's before Tairdeath</p> <p>4th Nicely Expression - small fluff on Hit</p> <p>Well played &amp; expressed - though in some spots there was some round playing drone together but not locked into chanter.</p> <p>Nice job</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> VERY GOOD <input type="checkbox"/> GOOD <input type="checkbox"/> FAIR <input type="checkbox"/> POOR	
<b>EXPRESSION</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> VERY GOOD <input type="checkbox"/> GOOD <input type="checkbox"/> FAIR <input type="checkbox"/> POOR	
<b>TEMPOS</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> VERY GOOD <input type="checkbox"/> GOOD <input type="checkbox"/> FAIR <input type="checkbox"/> POOR	
<b>BREAKS</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> VERY GOOD <input type="checkbox"/> GOOD <input type="checkbox"/> FAIR <input type="checkbox"/> POOR	
<b>FINISH</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CLEAN <input type="checkbox"/> RAGGED	
<b>TOTAL POINTS (100 MAX)</b> ( no fractions )	
 SIGNATURE OF JUDGE	

MWPBA Form I P-1, 1 Feb 00

Not a bad performance but still needing improvement. Notice the comment about "rounding." This means I didn't play the "dot cuts" crisply...does that sound familiar? The chanter was also not in tune with the drones. Where you place in an event is much more telling than the score on your sheet. Use the feedback to polish your performance and improve your piping skills.

# Why Compete as a Soloist?

Competition. The word makes some pipers shake their heads knowingly. Been there, done that—or tried that. Others relish the thought. If you've never competed, you may wonder what drives a piper to compete and what drives a piper away from competition.

I recommend all students compete as a soloist. Here are a few reasons:

**Specific Goals.** A competition gives you a specific goal with a drop-dead deadline to improve your skills. You'll have to push yourself, perhaps be more disciplined than you might be otherwise.

**Objective Feedback.** Rather than a subjective opinion of your skill level—some pipers have a too high an opinion of their own playing—you get an objective view and hopefully constructive specific feedback from the judge on where you can improve.

**Overcome Pressure.** By competing, you will learn to play under pressure in a new unknown environment in front of strangers. Though some may feel differently, aside from high-profile band competition, there aren't many venues with equal (or more) pressure.

**Camaraderie.** Highland games are a great opportunity to meet other pipers doing the same thing as you. Granted that you don't have to compete to rub elbows with other pipers, but there's something to be said for being "under fire" together.

**Inspiration from Great Piping.** If you are at a competition, you usually have the opportunity to see exceptional pipers live. It's one thing to hear a recording, another to be there in person. Seeing how well they perform gives you a target to strive for. Again, you don't have to compete to see them, but you might not even be there otherwise.

**Focus.** Competition gives you a reason to learn a tune at a very focused level, usually with more attention to detail than you would otherwise or have drive to learn. No dropped grace notes allowed. Every nuance can be critical.

**Encouragement.** If you do well, you'll get a "pat on the back" from the judge and other pipers. Fellow competitors are pretty supportive usually. If your drones shut off in the middle of your competition piece, odds are it's happened to them too and they'll tell you so. I've never had an unkind remark come from another piper at a competition. Most pipers understand that it's not about beating other pipers, but the piper trying to do his or her personal best.

**Legitimized.** There are those that assume that non-competing pipers are less skilled (or at least an unknown quantity) and by competing you put those prejudices to rest. There is a certain respect given to pipers who overcome all the potential problems and compete regardless.

Bottom line, whatever you decide, it's to enjoy your bagpiping—*it's supposed to be fun!*

## Why Scotland is called “Scotland?”

The word *Scotland* was derived from the Latin *Scoti*, of uncertain origin, applied to Gaels of Hibernia, the Roman name for modern Ireland. The Late Latin word *Scotia* (*land of the Gaels*) was eventually used only of Gaelic-speaking Scotland. This name was employed alongside *Albania* or *Albany*, from the Gaelic *Alba*.

**Alba** is the Scottish Gaelic and Irish name for Scotland. It is cognate to *Albey* in Manx, the other Goidelic Insular Celtic language, as well as similar words in the Brythonic Insular Celtic languages of Cornish (*Alban*) and Welsh (*Yr Alban*) also meaning Scotland.

The Goidelic word is ultimately loaned from Latin *alba* "white", probably referring to the whole island of Great Britain after the white cliffs of Dover. Hence also the early classical name *Albion*. It was used by the Gaels to refer to the island as a whole until roughly the ninth or tenth centuries, when it came to be the name given to the kingdoms of the Picts and the Scots (Pictavia and Dál Riata), north of the River Forth and the Clyde estuary, traditionally considered to have been unified by Kenneth Mac Alpin.

As time passed that kingdom incorporated others to the south. It became Latinized in the High Medieval period as "Albania" (it is unclear whether it may ultimately share the same etymon as the modern Albania). This latter word was employed mainly by Celto-Latin writers, and most famously by Geoffrey of Monmouth. It was this word which passed into Middle English as Albany, although very rarely was this used for the Kingdom of Scotland, but rather for the notional Duchy of Albany. From the latter the capital of the U.S. state of New York, Albany, takes its name.

The use of the words *Scots* and *Scotland* to encompass all of Scotland became common only in the Late Middle Ages. In a modern political context, the word Scot is applied equally to all inhabitants of Scotland, regardless of their ancestral ethnicity. However, a 2006 study published by the University of Edinburgh suggest that segments of Scottish society continue to distinguish between those who claim to be Scots on ethnic grounds and those who claim to be Scots on the grounds of civic commitment. "Scots" is also used to refer to the Scots language, which a large proportion of the Scottish population speak to a greater or lesser degree.



