

Pipe Music of the Clan Maclean

This is an attractive book with a magnificent colour photograph of Duart Castle, Mull, the traditional home of the MacLean chiefs, on the front cover. Of special interest and value to pipers is the very good history of the Rankins, pipers to the MacLeans, by Iain MacInnes. The Rankins have been somewhat neglected when compared with other piping dynasties. The book contains 76 tunes, 13 of them ceol mor, three of which are recent compositions: Lament for the Piper of Lewis ('big' Donald MacLean) by Hugh MacFarlane, Sound of Mull by William Barrie and Culloden – the Aftermath by Ronald MacLean. These are musical tunes except for Culloden which becomes much more acceptable if all the Cs are changed to Ds. Many of the Maclean tunes are from Glen's 'Music of the Clan MacLean'.

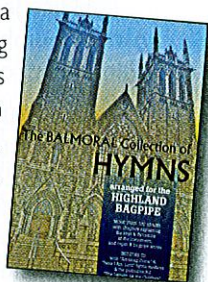
The light music has compositions by the aforementioned 'big' Donald MacLean and 'wee' Donald MacLean. One of my favourites is by 'wee' Donald, Mrs Donald MacLean, composed for his mother when they lived in Otago Street – next to where the College is now. Big Donald's famous tunes, the Heroes of St Valery and Major Manson at Clachantrushal, are included and there are other favourites including John MacColl's John MacFadyen of Melfort and Mrs Duncan MacFadyen by Donald MacLeod. MacFadyens are a sept of the MacLeans. Of the modern tunes James MacLean's march, Sir Lachlan Maclean of

Duart and Morven, 28th Chief of Clan Gillean, is particularly pleasing. The book is available from the College shop for £20 (\$30US approx.) and will be a required purchase for all those pipers who are members of the clan or affiliated to it.

Balmoral Collection of Hymns

There has been a surprising number of books published recently with hymns and psalm tunes. The problem is that unless they are pentatonic, or nearly so, they do not quite satisfy the ear. This latest work by George Balderose illustrates this difficulty. However, apart from that he has made serious errors in three of our well-known tunes Martyrdom, Doxology (the Old Hundred) and Crimond. These are three melodies which obey the simple metric rules. In the first of these, by not giving the notes their correct value, the compiler has missed two bars, the 8th and the 16th. In the second he misses out four bars. In this case he has three pause marks which perhaps indicate the three missing bars. In Crimond there are two bars of time missing, but no pause marks. However these comments should not be seen as a fatal condemnation of this publication. There will be pipers for whom it will provide much interest. The book, which comes with an accompanying CD, is very comprehensive, with tunes for every ceremonial occasion all clearly laid and easy to follow. Available from www.BalmoralSchool.org.

Dugald MacNeill



Book Re-issued

Sir,

A further edition of 'The Highland Pipe and Scottish Society' by Dr. William Donaldson is being reprinted and should be available in the autumn. I commend it to all pipers of an enquiring nature.

David Murray, via email

Worlds Prize

Sir,

We ended up taking fourth place in Grade 4a at the Worlds. We had a great run in the finals, so the bands that beat us were just straight up better! As you have said, the deeper you go into the music, the deeper the waters get. I am now going for the PDQB 4 with Iain Watson's help via Skype. I would not have been able to do this without the CoP's tuition. Thank you so much for this.

David Barrett, USA, via email

BBC Archive

Sir,

I have posted on the internet before about the vast stock of piping recordings, from probably the 1920s onwards, that the BBC must have and which have never been released. This must include a lot of video footage of great pipers which no one has ever seen other than on broadcasts by the BBC on radio/TV at the time. Recitals by great pipers, with or without video footage, would be historically and musically valuable. Young JD Burgess, for

example, or young P/M Angus MacDonald, etc, etc. The list goes on. Why should all this material never be seen by those who appreciate it, and left to rot and be thrown away by people who can't tell Angus MacDonald from a local busker? College, let's try to rectify this! Give me the head of the BBC's email and I will bother him no problem!

Nicholas Taitz, South Africa

• *You may like to write to Iain MacInnes, Piping Producer, BBC Scotland, Pacific Quay, Glasgow.*

Games Attendances

Sir,

I am disappointed and alarmed at the fall off in attendance at the wee games over the last 20 years. Twenty years ago 20 pipers would have played in the piobaireachd at Strathpeffer. In the last five or six years only six or seven have performed. Dornoch, Newtonmore, Glenfinnan, Morar suffer similarly. This is a sad situation and I don't know if anything can be done about it. It does not bode well for the small gatherings and is depressing for so many local people. The big competitions such as Oban and Inverness draw the crowds and I feel this situation is never likely to be reversed. As well as piping it must be disappointing to local people who enjoyed gatherings such as Strathpeffer with its unique setting in the grounds of Castle Leod. I fear there may not be an answer, and that

this decline in attendance may continue until only the big boys remain – that is the pattern in all small affairs. I feel it is a sad day for piping at the local level – perhaps you can illustrate my disappointment. I hope all goes well with you. I keep in touch with Willie Ross's granddaughter who lives in Devon. She has never been able to trace Willie's own pipe which seems to have disappeared, unless you know where they went. Meantime earnest regards and good tidings to the College and its good work.

Finlay MacRae MBE,
Dingwall, Ross-shire.

Clan MacLean Book

Sir,

I wonder if I might be allowed to add to Dugald MacNeill's interesting review of the book 'Pipe Music of Clan Maclean'. It is the first book of Maclean pipe music to be produced for over 100 years. That alone makes it unusual, also that there are very few clan pipe music books. The Clan Maclean Heritage Trust deserves great credit for producing this excellent and attractive book – no mean feat and a huge amount of work. I do hope it will encourage other clan associations to do likewise. Heritage, history and tunes are easily lost and what better way to preserve them than in a book which includes the stories behind the tunes.

As Dugald MacNeill writes, this

book is a required purchase for all members of Clan Maclean who are interested in their own pipe music and pipers. But I would also suggest that anyone interested in pipe music and the history of pipers will gain much from adding this book to their collection.

Lt. Gen. Sir Peter Graham,
Drumoak, Aberdeenshire.

Nottingham Concert

Sir,

'The Chanter' newsletter issued by the Nottingham Scottish Association reports the finding of a 1907 'Grand Concert Programme' in their archives. The guest list at the Mechanics Hall included both the Mayor and the Sheriff of Nottingham. The audience dressed in their finery numbered 400. Readers will find interest in the list of those providing the entertainment: 'The Glasgow Select Choir, Miss Jessie B Govan (soprano), Miss Agnes Picken (contralto), Mr Peter Kerr (tenor), Mr James Johnson (bass), Mr James Scott-Skinner (violinist), P/M Ross and Corps Piper McKinnon of HM Scots Guards and the accompanist Mr Herbert G. Cross.' The programme included many photographs of Scotland, kindly lent by various railway companies. Presumably the P/M Ross is the Willie Ross of Edinburgh Castle fame. He would have been about 28 years of age at the time.

Bruce Hastings, Nottingham.

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TUNE BOOK REVIEW

Pipe Music of the Clan MacLean

Published by Clan MacLean

Heritage Trust, 2012

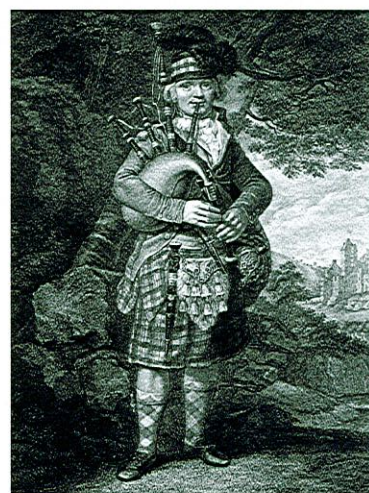
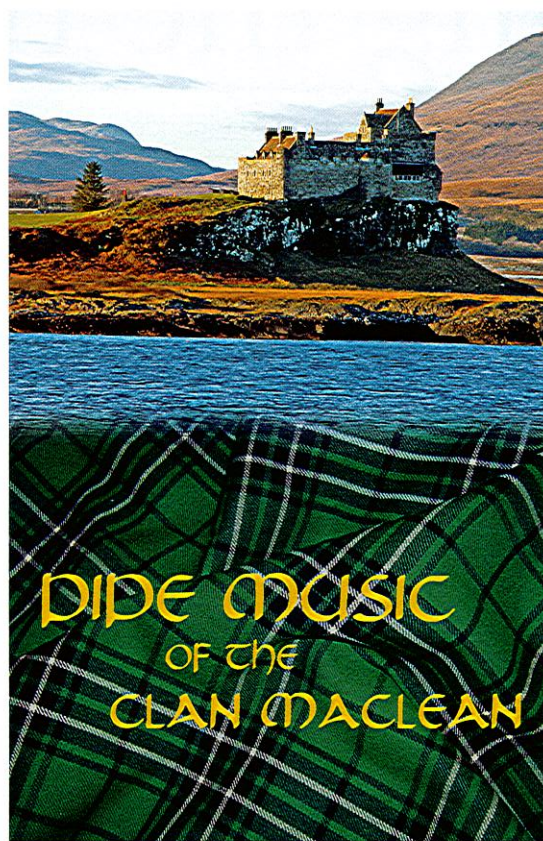
WHEN a young Neil MacLean, piper to Major Campbell of Airds, won the ceòl mór competition set up by the Highland Society of London at the Falkirk Tryst on October 14, 1783, uproar ensued. The competition had been overseen and judged by some inebriated members of the Glasgow Gaelic Club on the HSL's behalf, and MacLean, a son of Glasgow, was regarded as one of their own. The other performers rated him poorly and considered the judges to have been biased; a fix, they cried. The debacle contributed to the founding of the Highland Society of Scotland and the removing of the competition to Edinburgh the following year, heralding 60 years of relatively peaceful proceedings prior to the establishment of the Gold Medal at the Northern Meeting.

As ceòl mór controversy goes, this was relatively small change; back in the 1780s, competitors were known to dirk the bags of their rivals. But the 1783 footnote in history is significant nonetheless for drawing attention – however wryly – to the pipe music of the Clan MacLean. Delve deeper and it is clear that the Clan's contribution to the art and craft of the Highland bagpipe was (and is) tremendous indeed.

Acknowledging this contribution, the late Lieutenant Colonel Donald MacLean and The National Piping Centre's James Beaton have lovingly and painstakingly assembled an attractive volume in homage to the legacy of the Clan's pipers, spanning three centuries and a vast canon of music. *Pipe Music of the Clan MacLean* is a comprehensive collection bringing together a wide range of tunes and tune idioms, all composed, arranged or in other ways concerned with the MacLean or Mull theme. It features many of the classics of the modern competition light music repertoire, including John MacFadyen of Melfort, Major Manson of Clachantrushal and Bessie MacIntyre, and some less well-known gems now seeing the light of day, such as Calum Beaton and the wee two-parter *Lady MacLean*, composed by the great pipemaker and editor David Glen.

The work is prefaced with an overview of the official pipers to Clan MacLean and several well known medal winners associated with the Clan, from the founding of the Clan MacLean Association in 1899 to the present day. This includes some familiar names and faces, including Pipe Major Willie MacLean of Badenoch (1913-1932), Iain MacFadyen (1987-1991) and the present office-bearer, James MacLean.

The work is appended with an article by Iain MacInnes which provides a historical overview of the Rankins, pipers to the MacLeans of Duart and latterly of Coll up until the early 19th century. Founders of one of the earliest known 'colleges' of piping in Kilbrennan, Isle of Mull, the Rankins were one of the Big Three piping families of the 17th and 18th centuries: equal in rank and prestige to the MacCrimmons and MacArthurs of Skye, and immortalised in contemporary song. MacInnes's work updates and supersedes folklorist Henry Whyte's 1907 essay on Rankin history; so in



addition to the breadth of music collected, the present work also makes a major scholarly contribution to our knowledge and understanding of the MacLean/Rankin piping legacy.

In between these two strong and illuminating historical overviews, we find the tunes, 76 in total, and these are set out according to type: the light music first, consisting of several idioms of march, proceeding to airs, strathspeys, reels, jigs and a hornpipe composed for Colonel Donald MacLean himself by Pipe Major Gordon Walker. Among many notable tunes in this part of the collection is Simon McKerrrell's recent award-winning 6/8 march, *Duart Gathering 2012*, composed to mark the centenary of the repossession of Duart Castle by the Clan's 26th chief, Sir Fitzroy MacLean; so rest assured the collection is a true reflection of MacLean-centred music right up to the present day.

There follows 13 tunes in the pibroch idiom, and even here we find a mix of old and new. The majority of the pibrochs are drawn largely from publications like David Glen's *Music of the Clan MacLean* (1900) and the Piobaireachd Society's second series beginning in 1925, featuring classics of the idiom such as *The MacLeans' March*, *MacLean of Coll's War Galley*, *Hector MacLean's Warning*, *Lament for Red Hector of the Battles* (the Hector in question being a MacLean and a hero of the Battle of Harlaw in 1411) and no less than three gathering tunes ascribed to the MacLeans, full of characteristic fire and oscillation between consonance and dissonance. Underpinning the timeliness of this publication and the quality of its settings, Pipe Major Brian Donaldson recently won a

competition in honour of the Duart centenary, playing the *MacLeans' Gathering no. 2*. The collection doesn't just include the classics, however; several recent pibroch compositions bearing a MacLean theme are included, such as William Barrie's *The Sounds of Mull*, Hugh MacFarlane's *Lament for the Piper of Lewis* (for Big Donald MacLean) and the prolific Ronald I. Maclean's *Culloden – the Aftermath*.

When the Clan MacLean Heritage Trust commissioned the present work in 2005, it was envisaged from the beginning that it would include a selection of pieces from Glen's 1900 *Music of the Clan MacLean*, suitably updated with more recent repertoire. This was music to my ears, as I have always been fascinated by the pibrochs contained in Clan MacLean, gleaned by Glen from the playing of John Johnston of Coll and including works appearing nowhere else, such as *Cas air Amhaich a Thighearna Chol* (*MacLean of Coll Putting his Foot on the Neck of his Enemy*) and *Chlaidheamh Mór Iain Ghairbh* (*John Garve MacLean of Coll's Broadsword*). Sadly these particular tunes do not appear in the present work, and I would regard their exclusion as a missed opportunity to introduce these unique musical artefacts to a new generation of pibroch players hungry for the stuff of repertoires and stylistic variety. However, it does not detract from the breadth, quality and scholarship of the collection as a whole.

Pipe Music of the Clan MacLean is a valuable addition to the library of any piper looking for repertoire or historical context. The tunes are varied and elicit a rich narrative, showcasing the legacy of the MacLeans as a hugely influential force in piping's past, present and future. ● JOSH DICKSON