



Military bagpipe music and the role of the Piobaireachd Society

John Forbes and Pipe Major Ben Duncan

March 23 2024

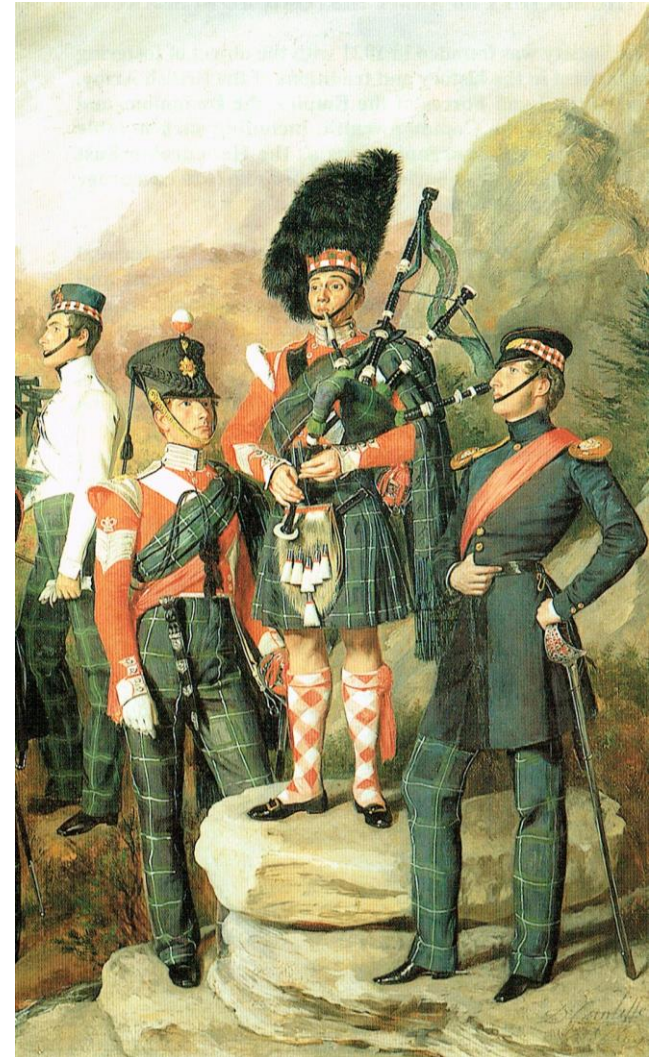
Overview



- Introduction
- Military piping tuition before 1903

The Desperate Battle

- Military piping tuition 1903 – 1959
- Discussion



Based on Diana Henderson's book

Diana Henderson

1946 - 2019



1987 Conference



The Set tunes for 1987 by John MacLellan and Seumas MacNeill

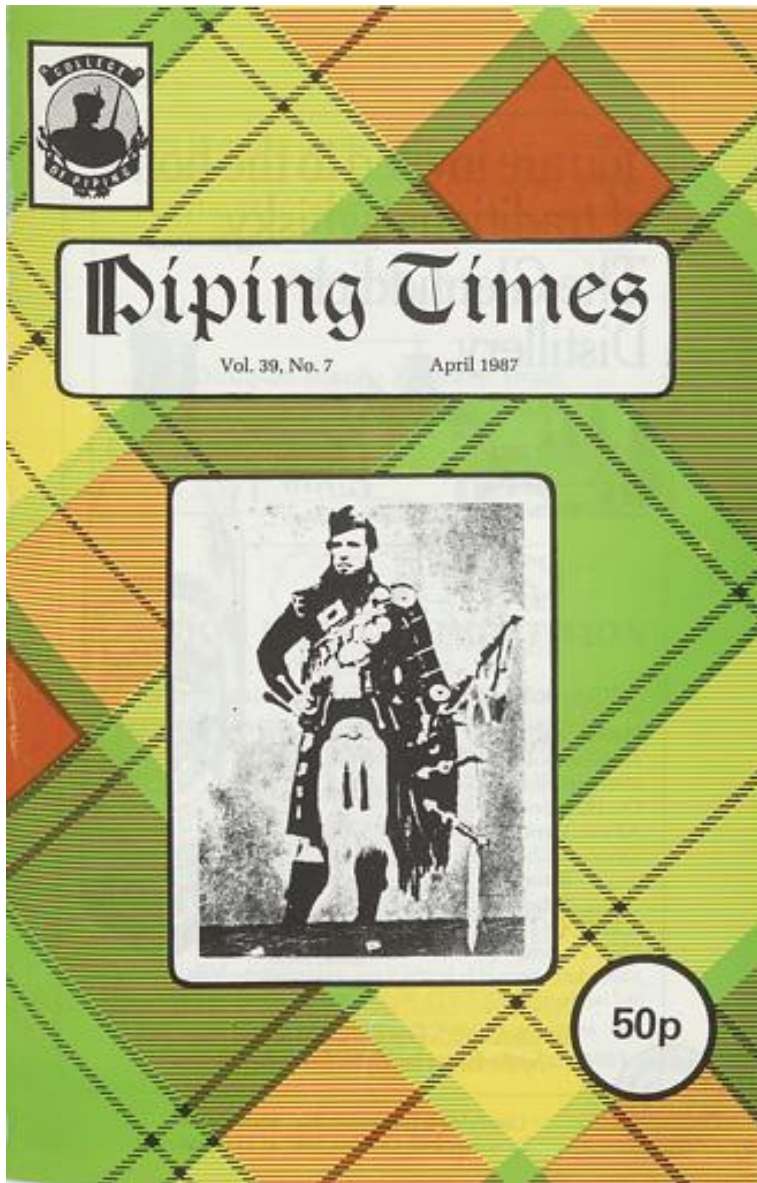
The Highland Society of London
Manuscript by Iain MacInnes

The Piobaireachd Society and the
Origins of the Army Class by Diana
Henderson

Ceol Mor and Gaelic Definitive terms
by Ronald Morrison

Some Piobaireachd thoughts of
Robert Reid by Andrew MacNeill





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THE ARMY CLASS AND THE ARMY SCHOOL OF PIPING: 1910 - 1987.

With the help of the Army and The Piobaireachd Society I am trying to compile a register of all those soldiers who attended the Army Piping Classes under the instruction of Pipe Major John MacDonald at Inverness, and under Pipe Major Ross, Pipe Major MacLeod, Captain MacLellan, Captain Pitkeathly and Captain Allan at Edinburgh Castle.

While I have a complete list of those who attended from the 56th Wartime Piping Course (from the 12th March to the 7th April 1945) to date, I should be very interested to hear from anyone who attended the 1913 - 1914 Class at Inverness, the Classes at Edinburgh from 1927 - 1936, and the month long Wartime Classes from 1939 to 1945.

Dr. D.M. Henderson.



**THE ORIGINS OF THE
MUSICAL INSTRUCTION
OF ARMY PIPERS AND
THE ROLL OF THE
PIOBAIREACHD SOCIETY
IN THE FORMATION OF
"ARMY CLASS" AND THE
ARMY SCHOOL OF PIPING.**

Dr Diana M Henderson, 1987



Contents



Foreword

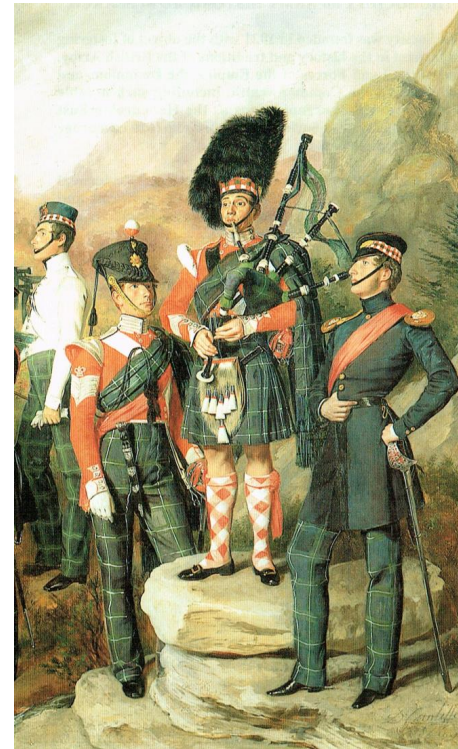
Editor's Introduction

- 1 **Aims**
- 2 **The Military Background: The Army of the 17th Century and the Scots serving abroad**
- 3 **The 18th Century and the First Proposals for formal Military Tuition**
- 4 **19th Century Developments and Further Attempts to Organize Formal Military Teaching**
- 5 **The 20th Century and The Work of the Piobaireachd Society**

Annex: Nominal Roll of the Army Class

About the Author

Acknowledgments



A quiz!



- When was the first reference to military piping in official military records?
- Who was the first monarch to officially recognise military pipers?
- Who, *“after a few glasses of his own good today, seized the pipe.... commenced Failte Phriannsa in tones that spoke to the ear and affected the heart?”*
- Who were the three winners at Oban in 1904?
- Who, or what, was *“rooted to the spot in amazement”* by the Irish pipes being played on Salisbury plain?
- Whose brother was one of the pupils in the first Army Class which took place in 1910/11?
- How many pupils did Willie Ross teach:
 - From 1919 to 1939
 - From 1939 to 1945

A picture round...



Early references to pipers in the military



1629: details of the establishment and pay of Mackay's regiment amongst which appears '*dryen Drummschlagern und Pfiefern*'

"...the last solitary piper of Mackay's Highlanders blew long and loudly on the great warpipe of the North" 1635

A record of Dumbarton's Regiment muster in April 1679 shows, '*Piper Major Alexander Wallace*'

A piper's duties



Order Book of the Argyll or Western Fencible Regiment

The two Pipers are to take Duty day about and are to play the following tunes viz:-

- Gathering - Coagive na Shea (War or Peace)
- Revellee - Glais Vair (Finger Lock)
- The Troop- Boadach na Brigishin (Carles with the Breeks)
- Retreat- Gilly Christie (Cell or Chapel of Christ)
- Tatoo- Mollach Defshit Mahary (Mary's Praise).'

An old order book of the 72nd' (Seaforth Highlanders)

- Daybreak (Reveille) - The MacRae's March
- Gathering or Turn Out - Tulloch Ard
- Failte (Salute) - Mackenzie's Salute
- Slow March - Fingal's Weeping
- Quick Step - -Castle Donan
- Charge - Cabar Feidh
- Stimulus (during the engagement) - Battle of Strome
- Lament - Mackenzie's Lament
- Sunset - The Mackenzie's March
- Tattoo - Head of The High Bridge
- Warning before Dinner - Battle of Glenshiel
- During Dinner - Battle of Sheriffmuir.



The Glenelg project



“After a few glasses of his own good tody he seized the Pipe - put on his hat (his usual custom) - breathed into the bag - tuned the drones to the chanter - gave a prelude in a style of brilliance that flashed like lightening and commenced Failte Phriannsah, in tones that spoke to the ear and affected the heart.

Thro' the whole of his fine Salute he showed a masterly command of the instrument: ... the effects he produces by this means are admirable - there is not a sound lost - not the quickest appogiaturra, how rapid so ever the movement of the variation - and the regular return to the subject or theme of the piece is in fine contrast with the more intricate passages.”

Are the talents of MacCrummin doomed to decay in solitude?

Adam Graham



Pipe Major, the Ross-shire Militia

1811 - 3rd prize Highland Society aged 23

1820 won the “Sporran Mollach”

1821 won the Prize Pipe

1818/21 Prizes for “setting Pipe Music scientifically”

1822 Enlisted in 93rd Sutherland Highlanders



Developments in the 19th Century



- Official recognition of Pipe Major and Pipers in Highland Regiments and the Guards
- Pipe bands
- Light music



“old McLean the Pipe Major played Lord Lovat's Lament most beautifully. I suppose this will be the last time the old fellow will play at Mess and I am very sorry he is leaving the Regiment” Colonel J.W. Wedderburn 1852

Beginning of the 20th century



‘To those who have an interest in Highland Music, it is at once apparent that the Piobaireachd, which is the true and ancient music of the Highland Bagpipe, is in a languishing and tottering condition.’



The five enthusiasts

Captain Colin William MacRae.

Captain John Campbell, younger of
Kilberry,

Captain Charles Alexander Hugh
Maclean of Pennycross,

Captain Kenneth MacKenzie
Cameron.

James Mackillop, junior, of
Polmont





The objectives of the Society

“Encouragement, study and playing of Piobaireachd Music on the Highland Bagpipe.”

Added winter 1903

“one of the objects of the Society should inevitably be the appointment of Piobaireachd teachers in different parts of Scotland”

Added December 1912

‘To assist Highland mid Scottish Regiments in the training of suitable men for the rank of Pipe Major.’



The first set tunes

The tunes for next year's competition will be -

- 'The Desperate Battle';
- 'The King's Taxes';
- 'Lament for Macleod of Macleod';
- 'The Earl of Seaforth's Salute';
- 'The Groat';
- 'Lament for the Earl of Antrim'.





Lord Lovat



Stewart MacDougall of Lunga



Royal Military School of Music



Sir Alfred Balfour

Securing the funding

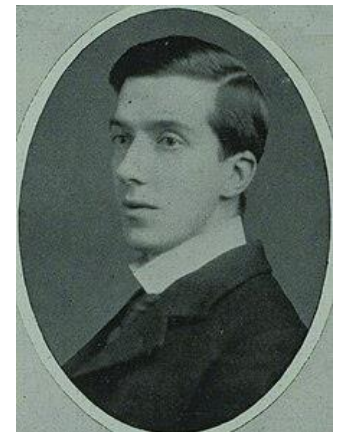


'From the rapt, ecstatic attention with which you listened to the Irish Pipes being played by an Englishman on Salisbury Plain last Monday I am sure you will view this proposal with favour.'

Adjutant General, Sir Ian Hamilton of the Gordon Highlanders to Francis Acland, the Financial Secretary at the War Office



Acland replied: *'I should like a little financial advice first. Certainly the Police Horse I was riding appeared rooted to the spot in amazement & I am not surprised.'*



A key meeting – 1910



The first Army Class – 1910/11

- Sergeant A. Ross, 1st Battalion Scots Guards;
- Corporal A. MacKimm, 2nd Battalion Scots Guards;
- Lance Corporal J. Wright, 2nd Battalion the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders;
- Lance Corporal William Harvie, 1st Battalion Gordon Highlanders;
- Piper John Smith, 2nd Battalion Highland Light Infantry;
- Lance Corporal John Haywood, 2nd Battalion Seaforth Highlanders.





A commitment to quality

'I must say that the individual players in the Army are in a sorrowful state and I have no doubt that the result of the tuition given here will in a very few years improve matters greatly.'

John MacDonald April 1911

'I am glad the Board set a high standard, it increases the value of the certificate and will eventually lead to a great improvement in the Pipe playing in the Army - which at present, I understand, is not very highly thought of by the experts and judges of this art.'

Colonel Somerville, Kneeler Hall



Defining the syllabus

'I propose having the examination to last two or probably three days this year - I think the men shd. know a lot about the theory of music also the construction of Piobaireachd. They will also have to hand in lists of a least 10 Piobaireachd each & to play probably 3 of them. They will also probably have to be able to play 18 or 20 marches & the same number of reels also strathspeys and to play a lot of them at the exam.

I think one whole day will be given to pipe playing.'

Colin Macrae to John MacDonald - March 1912

A valuable asset!

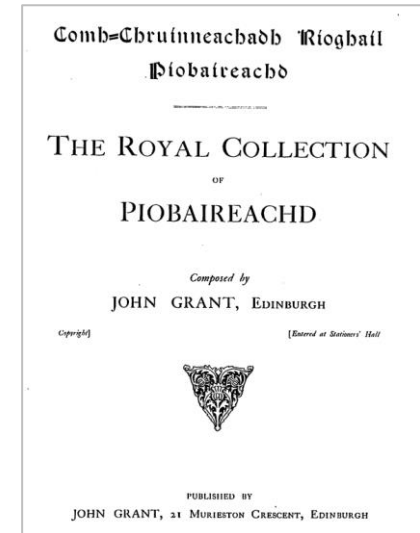
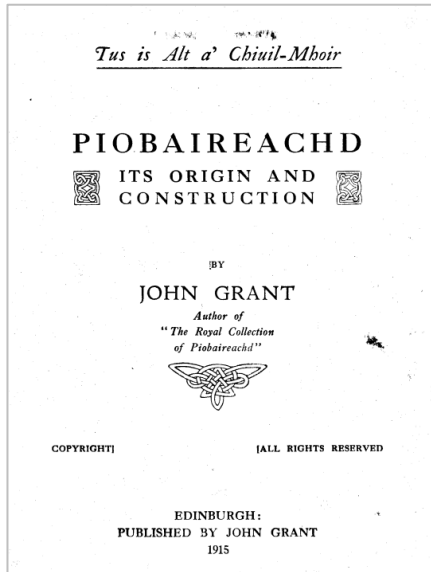


“Now as to the other matter I will give you my personal opinion as you ask for it. From our point of view I can't properly express how strongly I feel that we want you in this country: if there were six of you instead of one we could occupy all your time;”

J. P. Grant to John MacDonald
1912/13



Pipe Major John Grant



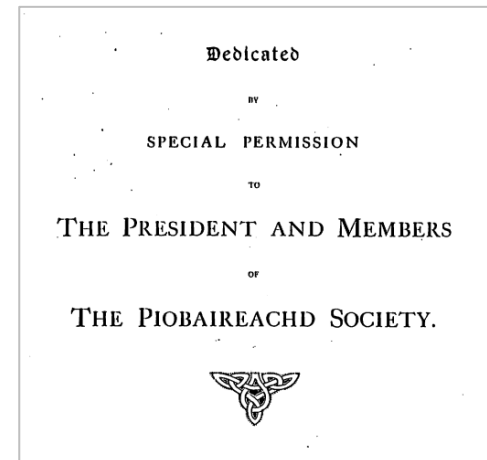
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*This ancient art goes on,
 Age after age inspiring,
 Father and son.
 I see a bright star shining
 That leads me onto praise
 An art that was declining
 I've laboured hard to raise.*



<https://pmjohngrant.com/>

John Grant, Edinburgh



Pipe Major John Grant (2)



'The Music Committee took the class out of my hands in the middle of the course without giving me a chance to complete it, or to speak for myself.'

Pipe Major John Grant

'I think we all feel sorry for Grant ... Speaking for myself I could not honestly sit by & allow him to be one of the Society's instructors because I know perfectly well that he isn't up to the standard we must have and can get. I feel that he has been ill used over his sudden dismissal, but the fault lies with whoever put him there & I haven't yet found anyone who will own to having done it. I hope he will feel gratified by this token of the P.S. thanks for his war time work for us.'

Sherrif J. P. Grant of Rothiemurchus



Between the wars

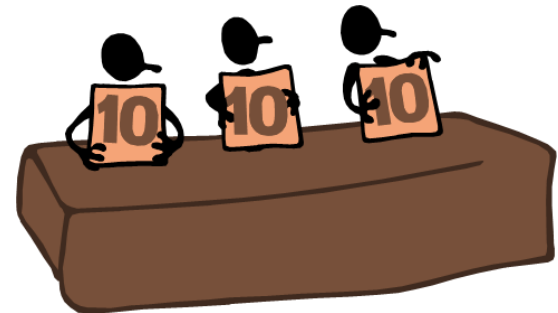


I was very soon introduced to Piobaireachd, and we were more or less expected to learn one in one or two days. ... They were all taught by ear from Willie Ross, all off the fingers and when we learned the tune we wrote it into our books and it had to be exactly as Willie gave it to us.' John Slattery 1922



Positive feedback

‘Commands both at home and abroad (have expressed)... a unanimously favourable opinion on the training given at the course , and a strong desire that the facilities afforded may be continued. In this opinion the (Army) Council concur, and desire to record their appreciation of the work done by the Society to maintain and advance the standard of piping in the Army’ 1927



A remarkable achievement



1919 – 1939, 112 pupils

1939 - 1945, 700 pupils





Some famous names



Donald MacLeod

John MacLellan

Evan MacRae

Andrew Pitkeathly

Donald MacLean

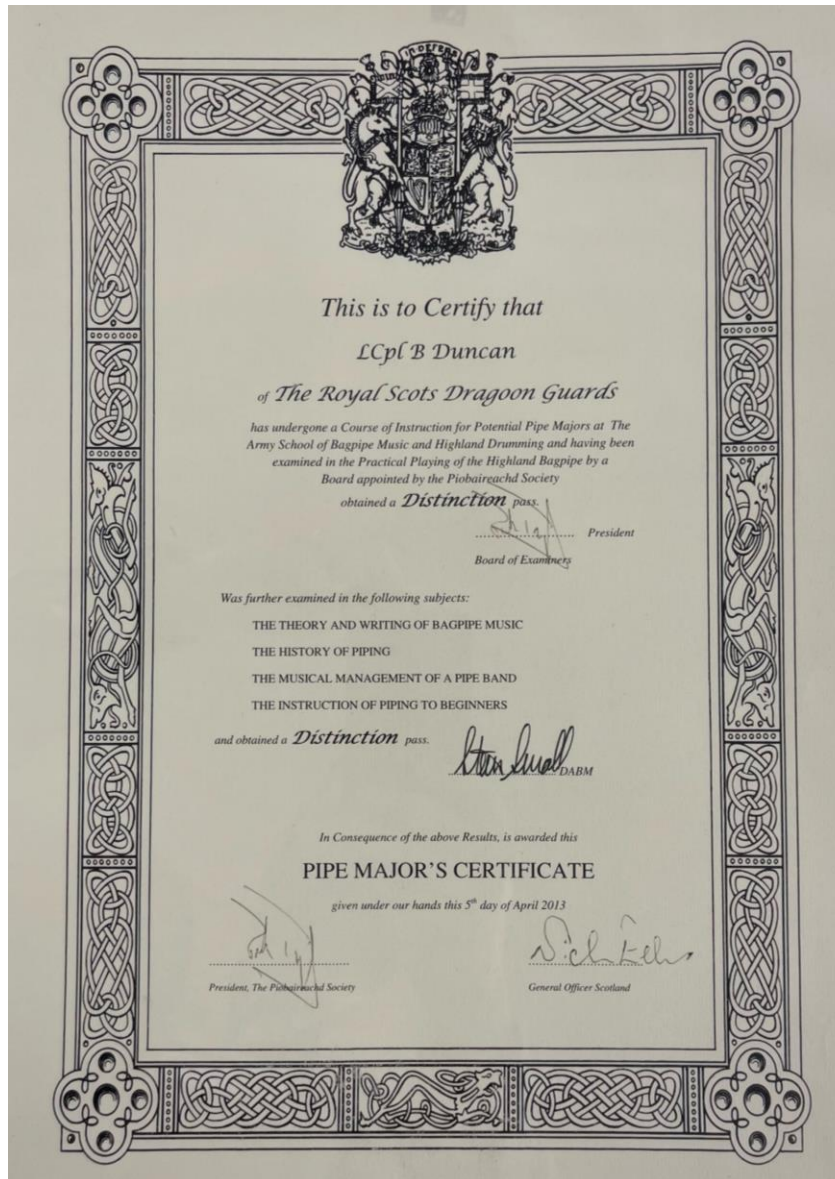
Roe Brothers

George Stoddart

John D. Burgess



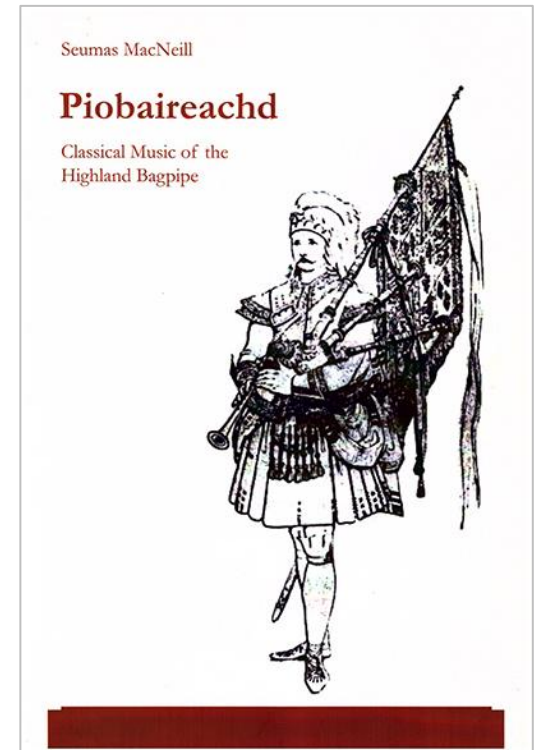
A lasting legacy



What next



- Proof reading
- Photographs
- Publication



“We had a look over the book with no observations – other than its fantastic.” Major Gordon Rowan, MBE

Discussion

