

Military Music and the early history of the Piobaireachd Society by John Forbes and Ben Duncan.

Chair Ben Duncan

As you will all be aware the Piobaireachd Society was responsible for starting the Army School of Piping and for maintaining standards of piping in the British Army. So today John Forbes is going to give us a talk based on Diana Henderson's documentation.

A little bit about John. He is a keen amateur piper. He has been a member of the Piobairachd Society for about 10 years. He is also a member of the Royal Scottish Pipers Society and the Pinstripe Highlanders. Although he didn't start learning pipes until his mid- twenties he had always wanted to play having heard his great uncle who had been one of the pipers at the Battle of El Alamein. So a nice wee link to Army bagpipe music.

He was delighted to win fifth prize in this year's Archie Kenneth *Quaich*, so well done John. He also plays French Horn and piano, and studied music at A Level. He has worked in the environmental sector for the last 30 years. He is regularly reminded by his colleagues that bagpipes are one of Scotland's best forms of wind energy.

So without any further ado, I will pass you on to John Forbes.

John Forbes

Thank you very much Ben for that kind introduction.

It is an honour and a privilege to be here to talk to you today. I am really talking on behalf of Diana Henderson whose book is the basis for my talk. Ben mentioned that my uncle was a piper at El Alamein, and, whilst I haven't been in the military, I do have a few other connections.

My first pipe teacher was Pipe Major John Roe of the Scots Guards, and he had been taught by Willie Ross up at the Castle. After I moved to Scotland I was then taught by Rab Pinkman, Pipe Major of the KOSBs, perhaps well known for writing the tune *Itchy Fingers*.

More recently I have been taught by Andrew Frater. Andrew has been a great help, not only for learning the tunes, but also some of the history behind the tunes and the people involved. Ben also mentioned that I play the French Horn.

There is a connection there too, in that my French Horn teacher Peter Clack had been taught at Nether Hall, which is the home of the Royal Military School of Music. In fact he was the first French Horn player to win a prize there.

Nevertheless, I was a bit apprehensive about this talk, not least when John Frater said to me today that he had come up all the way from Darlington to hear what I have to say. Two things happened which gave me a bit of reassurance. The first is that I remembered that I came across some research about how much people listen at conferences. Apparently 15% of people listen very attentively, take in everything you say. Another 30% listen to some, but not necessarily all. And the other 55% after a while drift off into fantasy land.

So it is quite reassuring to me that at least 55% of you are going to enjoy what I have to say this morning.

The second thing, more seriously, is that I was delighted when Rab let me know that Ben is going to play a tune for us. He will play The Desperate Battle.

So my talk is based on Diana's book. It divides nicely into two sections. The first is military tuition after 1903. I am sure that you will all recognise that 1903 is the date when the Piobaireachd Society was formally established. Then 1903-1959, 1959 being when the Army School was formally established. During the 1903-1959 the Piobaireachd Society played a key role in what was known as the Army Class.

Everything I say which is of interest or correct you should give Diana Henderson the credit. I take full responsibility if I have made any errors or got anything wrong.

So, a little bit about Diana Henderson. Does anybody here know or remember or have met Diana Henderson? Quite a few. She was a military historian, she was also in the Territorial Army. She was a keen piper, and a member of the Piobaireachd Society. She combined those interests, and she particularly studied the role of the Piobaireachd Society in supporting tuition in the military.

How many of you might have been at the 1987 conference? You might remember that at that conference Diana gave a paper. That paper was

based on the same topic as today i.e. the role of the Piobaireachd Society in the origins of the Army Class. In the introduction to that paper, Diana mentioned two things.

First of all, that she would donate a copy, or a final draft, to the Piobaireachd Society. That is sitting on the table there. She also mentioned that she had done a lot of research in the preparation of that paper. She got in touch with people who had been on the Army Classes. She mentioned that she had taken out adverts in the Piping Times.

So I did a little bit of research of my own, and indeed in 1987 she put this advert in, asking people to get in touch. I gather that many people got in touch with information to help her with her research, but also some really positive feedback about what people had learnt, and their reminiscences, particularly of Willie Ross. That will help to inform the paper.

How did I get involved? I joined the General Committee of the Piobaireachd Society a few years ago. At my second meeting, which I think was shortly after Diana Henderson had died, one of the items on the agenda was what do with this book. The fact that Diana had died acted as a bit of a catalyst. We'd had this book, would we publish it?

In order to publish it we had to get the permission of the estate, her widower. Her widower was Professor Peter Jones. At that time he was connected to Queens College, Cambridge. It just so happened that my niece was studying at Queens College, Cambridge. So I put my hand up and volunteered to try and get in touch, and here I am today about a subject I then knew very little about.

My job was to transcribe a photocopy of the typewritten manuscript on to the computer. Peter Jones kindly edited it.

The book is structured rather like the talk today with information about the background to military tuition, and then the role of the Piobaireachd Society. And there is also a nominal roll where she has tried to identify all those who were taught through the army classes run initially by John MacDonald, then latterly by Willie Ross mainly.

As an overview, three things really struck me when I read the book.

Firstly the significant achievement of the Piobaireachd Society in helping to establish the army classes which went on to form the foundation of the Army School of Piping.

The second was the real emphasis on quality. You will see this coming through in my talk. That is not just quality in terms of the teaching, but also the standards that the players would have to achieve in order to get the qualification. And whilst it is right that we give credit to the teachers for what they achieved, and also their legacy, also there is significant input and support from a number of people, and I will touch on that in the course of the talk. It is a great achievement for which the Society can be justly proud.

I also learned quite a lot through reading the book, so I thought I would start this morning's session with a little quiz. Be assured, I am not expecting to go through all these questions with you now, but these reflect what I have learnt through reading the book. I am afraid there are no points and no prizes, and I am not expecting you to remember these as we go through the talk, but I expect that some of you will know the answers maybe to all of them, or perhaps be able to guess the right answers. I hope that through the course of the talk you will learn something from the work that Diana has done.

I suppose one difference for me is that I have access to the internet. In 1987 that didn't really exist.

I thought that we should also have a picture round. Again I expect that most of you will recognise those two pipers on the right hand side, and possibly the two on the left, but the four in the middle also played a key role in helping to establish the Army Class. We will cover their roles later on during the talk.

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So the first question in the quiz. We obviously know that various pipers were involved with the clans around Scotland. When do people think that the first reference to pipers occurred in the military records that Diana studied. Any suggestions? Maybe the century.

Audience members – Waterloo? - so 1815. 17th century?

The first records she identified were these in the 17th century. It really reflects the quality of her work as shoe points out this first one here. This

was some correspondence coming back from Sweden to the UK. That word could be Pipers, but also it could be Fifes or Whistles. It is one of those examples where there is tantalizing evidence, you're not quite sure.

And also this one here. This reference to Thomas Brown, Piper. This regiment was at the time in Edinburgh. So not quite sure if that reference is to a Highland Pipe, or perhaps a Lowland Pipe.

So the second question on my quiz. Given those dates, who do you think was the first monarch to officially recognise pipers in the British Army?

Audience member – George the 3rd?

It might surprise you to know it wasn't until Queen Victoria. It was in 1854 that pipers were officially recognised in the army. Up until that point there was a lot of piping in the army. It was done by those who could already play. They were in the army for other reasons. But it is clear from the evidence that they had significant responsibilities and duties as pipers.

So this is one example of the evidence that Diana has identified

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So you can see a lot of different tunes playing at different times of day for a lot of different key events. One of the things which is clearly obvious from this is that as well as the pipers having to learn the tunes, the rest of the regiment had at least to be able to recognise the tunes so that they could understand what each tune meant.

Sadly there is relatively little evidence, and Diana was not able to source the original documents for this, but she picked them up in other references. It is clear that the pipers had a key role, and they were very well respected by their officers. But at this time the piping tuition was done on the whole within the regiment, probably by the Pipe Major. The assumption is that those who played the pipes perhaps already played when they joined.

The first attempt to try and formalise some military tuition is now referred to as the Glenelg experiment. It was the Highland Society of London who made considerable efforts on three occasions – 1788, 1808, 1813 to try and establish formal military tuition. A lot of it focuses around one particular player who is referred to in this quote.

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Any suggestions who this would be?

Audience member – Donald Ruadh MacCrimmon.

Yes. As I understand the college on Skye had been dormant for a number of years, perhaps a number of decades. He was available. What is clear from the various petitions that were sent to people like the Duke of York by the Highland Society of London who were very keen to make sure that there was a legacy of the MacCrimmons and all he knew because of this oral tradition.

One feature of the Glenelg experiment was that they were hoping to use some barracks which had become available in Glenelg which these days is quite a remote place but at that time was on the main road to Skye. I think Donald Ruadh MacCrimmon had been living quite close by at one point. It seems that they never quite got all the pieces of the jigsaw together. They had a potential teacher, potentially the funding, but perhaps it was difficulty in obtaining the students who were going on it.

So on three occasions the Highland Society of London worked very hard to try and establish formal piping teaching. There were references to establishing a National Piping Academy and also for a Professor of Piping. That was Donald Ruadh MacCrimmon.

This is rather a nice quote. This is one of the things which brings the book to life in that there are these first hand quotes. When I read that through the first thought in my mind was wouldn't that have been brilliant to have been there and to hear this. This was I think in the Highland Society files that Alexander Campbell was there and heard Donald Ruadh MacCrimmon play after a dinner – in 1815. I think that MacCrimmon had been a bit disappointed that nothing had come of those efforts.

One of the other factors is best illustrated by an example. Who has heard of a piper called Adam Graham? One of you – fantastic. You might know the answer to my next question then, because here is an example of piper who was playing well, he was doing well in piping competitions and also was setting pipe music.

But from 1822 there are no more references to him in the competition results. There are references in the military record. The assumption is that

he may have died or emigrated. In reality what happened was that he had enlisted in the 93rd Sutherland Highlanders. In September 1822 they were sent to the West Indies. Sadly he died five years later in the West Indies. He was a very good piper. He was sent to the West Indies. It seems obvious now that he wouldn't be able to fly back to the UK to either get lessons or to compete.

Diana makes the point that over the centuries many of the Scottish regiments were posted overseas. That of course would make it more difficult for them to attend classes and also to be involved in competitions.

So if we move into the 19th century. This is when we hear the first official recognition. This was in 1854, by Queen Victoria. What this means is that this was the first time that the pipers in the regiments – only the Highland Regiments and the Guards – as additional to their Establishment. One Pipe Major was paid 1 shilling and 10 pence (1/10d) per day, and 5 pipers were paid 1/1d per day. You can see here that it applies only to the Highland Regiments and the Guards. This was partly for financial considerations. This is the first time that the costs of these appointments were officially recognised in the Establishment.

We also learn that during this century there was continuous development of Pipe Bands. Queen Victoria also played role in this which I hadn't realised because apparently there had been a bit of a dispute about which soldiers would be at the front of parades. It was Queen Victoria who determined that it would be the Pipers who were at the head of the regiments when the pipers were on parade.

Diana suggests that one of the consequences of this would be that it was quite hard for the soldiers at the back to hear and keep in time and keep in step. So they added the drums so that it was clear that the soldiers at the back could hear. I am sure that there were other factors as well, but it did lead to the development of Pipe Bands, and associated with that, more light music.

Diana also points out that it does not mean to say that there wasn't good piping at that time. And indeed here is a quote from the early 19th century clearly referring to a good performance of a Piobaireachd after a dinner.

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It was clear however that by the end of the 19th century Piobaireachds were being cut short, and that there was a limited repertoire being played. There was concern about that. This quote I am sure you will mostly be familiar with. It come from a boroadsheet issued by five enthusiasts who wanted to try and address this decline. This is a broadsheet published in the Oban Times in 1902.

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Those five enthusiasts were those five, shown on the screen here.

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One of the things you will notice from that are that four out of the five are actually Captains in the Army either serving or who had been serving in the Army. James McKillop had actually had very good contacts with General Thomason. These military officers had a key role in trying to establish what became the Piobaireachd Society. Three of them were also members of the Scottish Piping Society which has now become the Royal Scottish Pipers Society.

And the photograph on the right? Any suggestions? You have got a choice of one in five. Any suggestions who that is?

This is Colin MacRae. And you will see that he has a key role in helping to establish the Army Class.

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That was the first objective when they started to establish the Piobaireachd Society. You will notice here that it refers to the study, but there is not a direct reference to teaching. That was to come at the end of 1903 when the Society recognised the importance of teaching in helping to support Piobaireachd.

It is great to hear that the Summer School this year is full, because it is a sort of legacy that teaching has been foremost in the Society since its origins. I'm slightly jumping ahead of myself as well because in December 1912 they added a specific objective in relation to supporting the teaching of suitable men to achieve the rank of Pipe Major.

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Again you see here this reference to the fact that it was Highland and Mid-Scottish regiments. That later on raised some questions when it was around expanding the support and teaching of those from elsewhere – the Lowland Regiments and across the rest of the world.

You will also be aware that one of the Society did was to establish the Set Tunes. This is the first list of Set Tunes they published.

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One of the objectives of setting tunes was make sure that they broadened the repertoire.

So, one of the other questions in my quiz – who were the first three winners of the competition in 1904?

Audience members – John MacDonald? Willie Ross? G S MacLennan?

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Famous photograph. The first three winners in 1904. All military pipers. John MacDonald won playing The Kings Taxes, G S MacLennan was 2nd playing the Lament for the Earl of Antrim, and Willie Ross played The Desperate Battle, which is why it is really nice that in a moment or two Ben will come through to play The Desperate Battle.

Ben Duncan plays The Desperate Battle.

John Forbes

Thank you so much Ben. Isn't it wonderful that for part of my presentation I get to sit and listen to such a fantastic tune.

That was in 1904. The story continues. It was in 1907 that you'll be aware that we advertised for classes. This is the advert.

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The three teachers, the three Johns. John MacDonald, John MacColl and John MacDougall-Gillies were appointed. What is important about this in the story is that) there was clear demand for the teaching, and that there was very good feedback from those who attended. That included some pipers from the Army who were given special dispensation to attend these classes.

This shows that there was a demand for teaching with high quality teachers.

In 1907 as well the demand was so much that the Piobaireachd Society, which was only a few years old at this point, couldn't afford to continue at the scale which the demand required. So the committee asked Lord Lovat who took over as president in 1907 to put forward formal proposals for tuition for military pipers. He also worked alongside another committee member, Stewart MacDougall of Lunga, another one in the photograph.

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He is an interesting character. He fought and was seriously wounded at the Battle of TelKibir in 1888, and rather sadly as you can see from that memorial plaque his son was killed in September 1914 at the start of the first world war.

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Stewart MacDougall insisted on re-enlisting in I think the Gordon Highlanders and he was killed a year later at the age of 61. It reminds us that many pipers were killed in the first world war, some of whom would have been members of the Piobairachd Society.

Either Lord Lovat, or Stewart MacDougall, or both, approached Nether Hall which is the home of the Royal Military School of Music. Fortunately at the time the Commandant of Nether Hall was Sir Alfred Balfour, a Scot. He is very significant in this story for three reasons.

First, he recognised that Nether Hall itself could not provide this tuition. It required special instructors most if not all of whom were based in Scotland. So he gives formal support to the Piobaireachd Society wanting to establish formal tuition. He was also the person who was responsible for recognising that it was not just formal tuition, but that it would lead to a qualification, the qualification of Pipe Major. Up until that point the Piobaireachd Society had just been looking to run classes in the same way they had done previously.

He also had to set some of the criteria for who would attend the courses. And for that he worked along with the Piobaireachd Society. Later on that would be taken on by the Army as such.

So he put together this proposal. One of the other key figures in this was Sir Spencer Ewart. He held a very senior position at the War Office. He was a member of both the Piobaireachd Society and the Royal Scottish Pipers Society. He had also fought at El Al Kabir, so he knew Stewart MacDougall. They also both knew John MacDonald who was also associated with the Camerons.

Sir Spencer Ewart was also able to overcome some of the challenges, because it was very unusual for a private society to work alongside the Army in providing this sort of tuition. One of the things they had to do was to raise the funding. So they put forward this proposal. They were asking for £200. And then there was Sir Ian Hamilton, another Scot who was at that point Adjutant General of the Army. You can see that he had met the financial secretary to the War Office, and he endorsed the proposal.

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There was a rather dry reply that you can see from this quote

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And you can see that it was horse that was transfixed and surprised by the piping.

It is these little anecdotes that you can see from the correspondence that really shows the efforts the Piobairachd Society went to to try and get these classes going. They were coming against various challenges.

And you can see a very astute move by the Piobaireachd Society. There was a key meeting in 1910. This was organised by Edward Ward. He was a member of the Piobaireachd Society, but he was also Secretary to the War Office. It was a very astute move, so whilst he organised it and invited people, he did not actually attend himself. So it wasn't quite an official meeting. It actually took place in Lord Lovat's house in London.

And what you have here are representatives of the Piobaireachd Society – Lord Lovat, Colin MacRae, Stewart MacDougall, Balfour, and Spencer-Stewart. By this time Spencer-Stewart had become Adjutant General of the Army. So it brought together all those key people.

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On the right hand side of the picture you see cap badges of the seven regiments that were presented there.

Two actually declined the invitation. The reason they did that was that they did not really see the need. They said we've got Pipe Majors, surely that is good enough. But all the other regiments recognised, and they were mostly subscribers to the Piobaireachd Society, that there would be real value in having formal classes. They concluded, and they wrote out in the minutes, giving the authority to establish what became the first Army Class at the end of 1910. They appointed John MacDonald to run that class.

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This slide answers another question. You can see at the top there. The first class was a three month class. It was attended by these six students, one of whom is Alex Ross, who was Willie Ross's brother who went on to be one of the other pipe majors in the Scots Guards. This course apparently took place at Fort George in Inverness. Apparently John MacDonald had wanted it to take place in Edinburgh, but the officers thought that there were too many opportunities to be tempted by the devil.

The examinations took place in Edinburgh. The Piobaireachd Society provided the examiners, which was one of the agreements which came out of that meeting in 1910.

I mentioned a few moments ago that they had applied for £200 of funding. At one point the War Office was only willing to offer £20. In the end they offered £40, and they were only willing to cover the costs for three people to attend, emphasising their willingness to concentrate on candidates from the Highland Regiments and the Guards.

The Piobaireachd Society, at its own expense, immediately offered to cover the costs of the other three, and also increased the payment to John MacDonald from £40 to £60. It is recognised that at the time the Piobaireachd Society did not have much resources, so it was a significant investment.

Out of those six, only two passed the exam, the two from the Scots Guards. Perhaps the best player who was deferred was deferred because he had

failed the theory and examination for the structure of Piobaireachd element of it. He was deferred to attend on the next course.

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On this next slide you can see some of the emphasis on the quality. This was on the next class, also a three month class. Some feedback there from John MacDonald, but clearly recognising the value of the class. What is also interesting here is the feedback from Nether Hall, responsible for the Royal Military School of Music, endorsing the fact that we were setting high standards. Shortly afterwards the course moved from three months to six months, recognising the importance of needing more time to teach the students.

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Also at this time, 1912, this was one of the roles that Colin MacRae played. He worked with John Macdonald to help establish the syllabus, and you will see that feeds through to the syllabus which is still taught today at the Army School. The examination took place over three days at least. So MacRae had a key role in establishing the syllabus and the form of the examination.

In 1913 John MacDonald had been offered an opportunity apparently in Winnipeg. He asked Sherriff Grant about it. Fortunately Sherriff Grant persuaded him to stay, and to carry on to teach the Piobaireachd Society course. Henderson points out that, had he taken that, there might not have been another teacher of that quality and standard available at the time, because Willie Ross was still a full time officer in the Army. She said that, had he not stayed, it is possible that it might have floundered at that time.

Fortunately he did stay. The next course, half way through, moved to Edinburgh. But on the outbreak of the First World War the classes stopped, and John MacDonald was called back up.

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Towards the end of the War it appears that some classes were taught by Pipe Major John Grant in Edinburgh. You can see from this information that he was very keen and very dedicated to support Piobaireachd. Apparently he wrote two poems about Piobaireachd both of which were published in the Oban Times.

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Clearly you can see towards the end he was aiming to help to reverse the decline. Two of the students met J P Grant on the streets in Edinburgh and apparently complained about the quality of the teaching. I gather they were more advanced students, because the Music Committee met and dismissed John Grant.

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You can see from those two quotes, the first one from John Grant, and the second one from Sherriff Grant, although people supported the decision, it is clear that it wasn't handled very well. You can see that in Sherriff Grant's view the fault really lay with the people who had appointed him. Diana could not find any evidence, in either the Piobaireachd Society files, or the War Office files, about how he was appointed.

I think there was another talk at the Piobaireachd Society Conference, I think that Jack might have been chairing it, where this was discussed briefly, and it was possible that he had been appointed by Nether Hall. Again we need to recognise that they might not have had the expertise to make the appointment.

But anyway, having dismissed him, Willie Ross had been invalided out of the Army. He was then appointed, initially on a one year contract, for the Piobaireachd Society is still hoping to get John MacDonald to come back. By this time he was working as a salesman for the whisky industry. Lord Lovat played a key role here. He made sure that Willie Ross was appointed Pipe Major of the Lovat Scouts which helped to make the whole thing viable.

As you probably know the teaching then moved to the Castle, still very strongly supported by the Piobaireachd Society.

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You see here the blackboard – apparently we paid for the blackboard – as we paid for the rent and supported a lot of the work. It is also clear that relations between the Piobaireachd Society and the Army were very good, went from strength to strength, and good feedback from the pupils. And also good feedback from the Army. This was something that the

Piobaireachd Society can take a lot of credit for. Clearly it depends on the quality of the teaching and the work done behind the scenes.

It is nice to get such positive feedback about the work that we had been doing.

Over the next few years it really was a remarkable achievement. Diana found a lot of people spoke highly of the training they had received from Willie Ross. So, the answer to one of the other questions is that between 1919 and 1939 he taught 112 pupils.

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At the outbreak of the Second World War you can see this massive expansion in demand. At that point they went down to one month courses, teaching 700 pupils. This included pupils from across the world – South Africa, and the rest of the Commonwealth anyway.

After the war, it settled down a bit. But there was some difficulty. The Army wanted an increase in the quantity, but the Piobaireachd Society wanted to focus on the quality. Also Willie Ross was getting quite old. In 1958 things came to a head when Willie Ross was not well. The Piobaireachd Society wanted to continue to support him in retirement, but couldn't afford to pay for an instructor as well as a pension for Willie Ross.

At that point they asked Major David Murray to put forward proposals, and those proposals led to the establishment of the Army School of Piping.

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This is a picture on the right of Willie Ross's memorial dinner. The Piobaireachd was responsible for putting forward Willie Ross to get his M.B.E. in recognition of all the work that he had done. While I was researching this talk I came across a short video which came from a Pathe Newsreel from the Second World War.

VIDEO of WILLIE ROSS TEACHING FROM THE CASTLE

That's a brilliant clip of John Burgess playing so well and at such a young age.

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In terms of the legacy, obviously John Burgess and also the Roe brothers (top right of the picture), one of whom was my first teacher.

Also in terms of the legacy, when I visited Ben in preparation for this talk, he pointed out his Pipe Major's certificate on the wall. The first thing I wanted to point out to you is that he got distinction for the playing, and also for the theory. I am sure that we will all have heard that in his playing. But also we noted that the course covers the same syllabus that Colin MacRae created away back in 1912. Also the certificate is still signed by the president of the Piobaireachd Society.

In Diana's book she points out that it is almost unique that a private Society has such a role in appointing a military position. That's Jack's signature there, and it is great the Rab is still involved in the examinations.

So, what's next? We have got to the point that we have transcribed and edited the document. We need to complete the proof reading, then finalise the photographs then publish it.

SLIDE

As you can see from the quote I have shared it with Major Rowan, and it is encouraging to get such positive feedback. I do hope that what I have covered today has whetted your appetite and that you will be amongst the first people to buy it and read it.

Thank you very much indeed.

Ben Duncan

I think that you will all agree that it is a very interesting subject and John has clearly done a lot of work, so thanks John.

At this point we will open up. Does anybody have any questions for John?

John Frater How are relations currently with the rest of Army music?

JF I might ask Rab to comment on this in a minute, but it is great that Ben has just joined the General Committee of the Piobaireachd Society, so we have a former Pipe Major involved, and Rab remains involved with the Army School and the examinations.

Robert Wallace Regarding the relationship between the piping and the rest of Army music, maybe Ben can answer that better than me.

BD It is probably better than it ever was before. I think that the general improved understanding of general musical education and bands switching to B flat chanters doesn't rub them up the wrong way so much. It is probably better than it ever was. There still is a little bit of a snobbery goes on, but it is very friendly snobbery.

Jack Taylor Can I ask something supplementary to that. There was a concern at one time that piping tuition might move down to England. Does that still exist?

BD I believe they are still trying, and they try every few years – it is all money-saving stuff – to try and stick it down with the School of Ceremonial. That is where they wanted to put it. So not at Nether Hall, but down at the Drill Wing, where they teach the Fifes and Drums. They will certainly keep trying and trying and trying, but once they move it from its home in Edinburgh it will struggle to stay afloat. Tough times in the Army I think.

RW I will say that I am going down to do the passing out next week, myself, Callum Moffat and Gordon Walker. There are ten pipers forward for that. Gordon Rowan is tremendously keen on perpetrating the association with the Society. It is very healthy. The banners which fly have the Society logo on the other side. He is very keen on it. I don't know who his successor is going to be. Ben, you will maybe know more about that.

BD Ross McCrindle.

RW I would just like to ask if the tradition of playing the Piobaireachd at the Officers Mess is still there.

BD It still happens. Certainly in the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards a dinner night is made up of an MSR clockwise round the table, a Piobaireachd anticlockwise round the table, then a medley selection clockwise round the table. The purpose of that is to let the Officers see both sides of the banners. The Officers like to see both sides. It is still very much part of the tradition.

JF A nice story Rab Pinkman told me. When he used to play Piobaireachds, if there were lots of English Officers around the table not likely to enjoy it. Apparently you used to have to wait until after the Piobaireachd before you

could go and use the facilities, so he would choose the longest possible tune if there were lots of English there.

You mentioned that I did a bit of work. Nether Hall was established in the 1850s. Apparently there had been an incident in the Crimean War where the pipers played the National Anthem and made such a mess of it. There was no unanimity. And that was one of the words John Roe used to use when he was trying to get the band to play together.

I've seen the coffee arrive. I do hope that you have enjoyed the talk. And we should once again thank Ben for his fantastic performance.

