

Piobaireachd Society Conference 2024

Introduction and Welcome – Robert Wallace

Before I do anything I have to say thanks to Derek and Sheila Fraser for setting the Conference up and getting us underway. It has been a great help having them close to the venue and so well organised.

Thanks to you all for coming. It's great to see everyone. A special welcome to our visitors from overseas – Mike Cusack here from Texas, Aaron Bryson who has come from Warsaw, Uwe Thier from Germany and Charles Finnie from Tennessee. It's great that we have that reach in the Society. Half our members are in North America actually, it's quite surprising to know.

One of our usual visitors, Margaret Thorpe, sent a message wishing us all a good conference. Margaret has been a great attender at the Society for many years. She has had to undergo a medical procedure, she is on the mend, and she is looking forward to seeing us all again in 2025.

If we look though our history it is about 100 years ago that we brought out our first book. Sherriff Grant brought out Piobaireachd Society Book 1. Here we are 100 years later, still going strong. Some of you might remember that day. It says something about the Society, how over the decades we have maintained our function as researchers, as publishers of everything to do with Piobaireachd.

I am pleased to say that we are in very healthy position. We are building up our sponsorship. Yesterday the Committee met and agreed £15,000 of sponsorship to events here and in North America. That says a lot I think for the Society. We are operating as a genuine charity. We take money in from pipers from subscriptions and from book sales, and we pass it on, back out to the piping world in competitions, recitals and teaching.

We have our annual Summer School well established now in June. It is fully booked. There are 15 places and they are all taken. Jack and I go up to Sal Mor Ostaig in Skye and do a bit of teaching, again fulfilling this function that we have to get out there and teach and generally promote the music.

We also this year took on the Silver Chanter competition which was in danger of becoming defunct. The Piping Centre had run it for a few years and they couldn't do so any longer, so the Society has agreed to take it on. It is an important fixture in the Piping calendar I am sure you will agree. The

aim of the Silver Chanter was to bring pipers back to Skye to play at the Skye Gathering in Portree, and this was seen as the cherry on the cake of that Skye week. We hope that we can continue that.

The competition will be on August 7th, at Sal Mor Ostaig. We have invited two Gold Medallists, the winners of the Senior Piobaireachd at Oban and the Clasp at Inverness, and the two winners of the Dunvegan Medal the the Jock MacDonald Clasp on Skye. We have managed t get sponsorship from a local whisky company, so with that, and our own resources, we will hopefully have a sustainable competition which will last for many years to come.

Every August for the last several years we have had our recital in Cencilia's Hall in Edinbutgh, a beautiful hall. If you have never been there you should go along to that. We invite four players to come along and play for us. There is no tuning. They come in, play their tunes and march out. It is all done and dusted in a couple of hours. It is a fine evening of Piobaireachd playing. It is on the website if you missed it last year. We all gather at the end for a refreshment before we go home.

That is just a brief run-down of where we are. I should mention that we have got this book here, Campbell Letters, by Malcolm Macrae. It sits nicely with your Kilberry book and Sidelights, and helps with getting into the minds of Archibald Campbell and James Campbell of Kilberry. It is a weighty tome, £25.