

Bill Livingstone - His Life and Music

Michael Grey

Chair Mike Cusack

Bill Livingstone and I go back many years. We go way back in terms of competition and mischief and all this kind of stuff.

I'm not going to just read you his biography because this presentation isn't about him, but Michael is a great composer. He's a great player. He's a great innovator of the Highland bagpipe.

He was fortunate enough, there are times where we see in piping and other forms of music, something happens that takes it up to another level. Like in pipe band, Alex Duthart brought the whole pipe band drumming thing to a whole other level that has continued to rise. Being a Texan and a rock and roll kid, Jimi Hendrix was the guy on the guitar for rock and roll.

Probably if we go to Piobaireachd, the efforts of John MacDonald raising the standards of playing and educating people. Of course, the technical innovations of the bagpipe through plastic reeds and all this kind of stuff that has allowed people to play well into their 60s, keep competing because they're not fighting their bagpipe all the time. I'm sure most of us gave up because we're just tired of always trying to keep the bagpipe going.

Michael was part of a pipe band that raised the level, changed things. As a young guy, he was part of that world champion 1987, 78th Fraser's Highlanders. The music they played, the panache they played, and that panache came from one guy.

That was Bill Livingstone. Michael was very, very fortunate to be under Bill's influence and tutelage most of his life. He can talk more about it than I can. Please welcome Michael.

Michael Grey

It's a great honour to be here, and I thank Bill. I think he's here as well. I know he's very glad that I'm here, and he would be very glad to know that the Piobaireachd Society invited me to talk about his life and music. I'm hoping at the end of this, or by the end of this talk, you'll come away knowing that Bill was one of a kind. That's how I always think of Bill. He was a great friend, and certainly you might want to know a little more about how I got to know or cross paths with Bill Livingstone.



Here's a great photo, and there's three of us here. The funny thing is, I picked this photo out before I knew Mike Cusack was going to be introducing me. Isn't that spooky?

That's life, though.

URLAR

When I was a kid, there was a band called the General Motors Pipe Band. It was sponsored by General Motors, which was started by Sam McLaughlin, a Scot. It was a

grade one pipe band, a really good band in Ontario. It was started in 1928. Bill Livingstone ended up being pipe major of that band, and that band was the early iteration of the 78th Fraser Highlanders.

Before I was a member, I'd go around the games as I would. My dad would take me. My dad was a piping dad of the first order and was always great to take me. He wanted me to play in the competitions, as did I, and he also wanted me to do well. At one of these games, the General Motors Pipe Band was playing the famous Mason's Apron Medley. For anyone of you that are into pipe bands, and there must be three or four in this group, you might know that medley. In any case, it just excited me to no end, and I had to find out more about this band and the man that led it.

The man that led it, Bill Livingstone, was playing solos around the games at that time. I was probably 14 or 15 years old, and there was a great rivalry with Bob Worrell. It was a strange sort of phenomenon. I don't see it anymore, where there'd be groups of people that would go, move from Strathspey and Reel when Bob played, and then when Bill played, they'd go back. They'd follow these two guys. The results were always neck and neck, and the rivalry was very healthy for piping.

In any case, Bill Livingstone was a charismatic guy. When he was invited to teach at a Captain John MacLellan summer school, I talked my parents into letting me go, and that's where I really got to know Bill a little bit, and that's where I signed on for private lessons with him at the age of 16.

I was a piper in the 48th Highlanders, and I wanted not to play music of a TA regiment, a reserve army regiment. I wanted to play the music of the General Motors, which was very innovative, had a real Irish influence. From there, the General Motors Band became the 78th Fraser Highlanders.

I joined the General Motors Band just as it slipped over the sponsorship, and laterally, I got Bill to come to the Toronto Police Pipe Band, where I was the pipe sergeant, and

he was a great and true friend to the very end. He started as a teacher, morphed into a mentor, and then, of course, into friendship.

So I'm hoping that in this little talk today, you'll find out more about William John Roderick Livingstone.



So there he is, born in 1942, piping since forever, because his father was a piper and taught him. Here he is playing three-quarter-sized pipes, as you can see, and I think he's sounding an E. His dad was the pipe major of a Royal Canadian Air Force Band. There was lots of pipe bands of the Air Force in Cape Breton during World War II.

Family Background

I'm going to give you a little bit of his family background, and I'm going to have a little fun with it. Fun for me, at least. And I'm going to zoom through this, but try and hit the salient points that are relevant to Bill.

So there's Bill. He had one brother, Ranald, who was seven years older than him, married to the lovely Lillian Chilak of Ukrainian descent. His mother comes from mixed English-German stock. His German family goes back quite a ways. He always thought, because one of his grandparents had the surname Fitz, that he was hoping he had some Judaic blood or something exotic. But DNA testing showed that was not to be. He was pretty much just Northern European.

In any case, we'll focus on his dad, William Livingston Sr.,



Old Bill, as we called him. I knew him. He died when I was about 20, 21, but I heard him play. He was a good player to the end. He didn't play Ceol Mor, but was a good fellow who came from Daly in Ayrshire, and he was the son of John.

You'll see there his mother was Margaret Livingstone, born in the same place as Bill's dad. But there's John L. Rowan, or Rowan. And the interesting thing here, we'll just talk about this for a minute. Not that he was born on the West Coast, but look at the name. It's Rowan. Why is that the case? Why is this fellow's name Rowan?

So we look at the Ayr prison records of 1900, and we find some interesting things. There he is, 22 years old, 5'5", birthplace, residence, Cumnock. There he is. Funny, Bill writes about him in his book, and he the man about town in the kilt, and he'd play that up, his life in Canada. But there's the reason for the name change. You read that - deserting Seaforth Highlanders.

That's not such a great thing to have in your family.

So he adopted his wife's name, Livingstone. So the great famous piper Bill Livingstone, by rights, should be Bill Rowan. I was wondering what, further in this record, the penalty that is listed is he was returned to the regiment. So I wondered what happened to him. And what I found is that roughly in this time, this late Victorian time, about 10% of all soldiers in the UK and British Army were deserted.

They'd end up in The Police Gazette. It wasn't rare, but they did have either hard labour or some kind of incarceration.

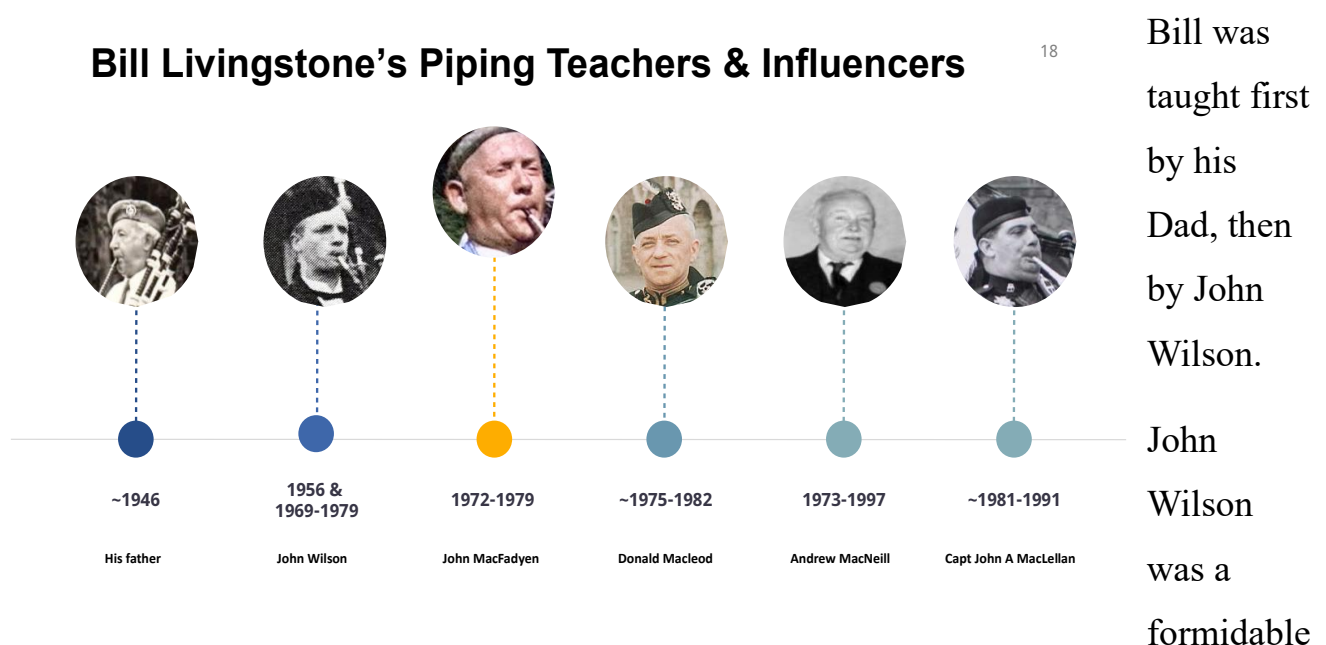
Let's go to his family, deeper. And we follow along grandparents after grandparents. They moved around Scotland. And look at this 11th great-grandfather, Sir Claude Hamilton, Lord Paisley, Dean of Dunbar, Glasgow, 1543-1621.

And so when you hit that kind of motherlode of aristocracy, you know you can pretty much guarantee you're going to find some gold. There's Lady Margaret Douglas, Baroness of Hamilton. And when I see Hamilton, there's some names, if you do any, and you'll know this perhaps, Scottish genealogy, there's some names that trigger “oh, I’d better go down that path.”

Douglas is one of them, Scobie's one, at least in Bill's part of the world, that would trigger deeper digging. And so there's Grandpappy, James IV, 14th great-grandfather, who built - I was at the castle yesterday - the Great Hall at Stirling Castle, and courtesy of that fine-looking specimen.

And there's his granny, Margaret Bruce. Of course, you see Bruce, and well, who's, what's next? And then we get William the Conqueror's 28th great-grandfather. And it's funny for anyone that's in piping, of course, his 26th, I think his 26th, great-granduncle is St. Lawrence O'Toole.

VARIATION 1 SINGLING - TEACHERS



force. Just a little aside. When I'd go for lessons with him, he would take his watch off and he would set it down in front with the watch face facing him, which is probably a statement on the quality of student I showed him to be. And he would watch carefully for the hour to be up.

He then went to John MacFadyen.

For me, this information is boilerplate, but maybe you don't know. I'm going to assume that you just don't know anything about these guys, which is probably the best thing to do. He comes from a piping family. His siblings are all first-rate pipers.

His brother Ian is still alive now, just turned 90, and is just, by the way, one of my most favourite people to judge with. He's a great player, as was John. Iain and John both had a great competitive record. John published two of my personal favourite collections of music, which one of them includes the great, can we say this at the Piobaireachd Society Conference, the great 2-4 march, Hugh Alexander Lowe of Tiree. It's a fantastic tune that's on page one of his book one, I think it is.

I think here, in talking about Bill, he would want me to call out this quote.

“John MacFadyen is instrumental in changing my piping and making me whatever Piobaireachd player I am.”

But having said that, Bill also says that as a teacher, Donald McLeod was in a league of his own. He was the best teacher of Piobaireachd he ever had.

It was MacFadyen's personality and force of will and just sheer good energy that imparted to Bill the music and connected with Bill's own personality that somehow made MacFadyen especially impactful.

But, of course, Donald McLeod is a legendary master composer of both light music and Ceol Mor. His legacy is huge. Perhaps even beyond his light music, his 200-plus tutorial recordings where he demonstrates what Bill talks about, his teaching style.

Donald McLeod was a great imparter of the inner workings of the big music.

And here's Andrew MacNeil. I'm sorry, Andrew, this is the best photo I could find, or the only photo I could find, but there he is with cap beside Pipe Major Angus MacDonald, John Patrick, and it's Charlie Cochran. He was a pupil of Robert Reid.

I've read about Robert Reid. He seemed to have one of the biggest egos I've ever seen in piping. The massive ego, it's off-putting, in fact, if I was to give editorial comment on that, the man certainly had no shortage of self-importance.

But he was a great player, he delivered the goods and played great tunes, and his pupils, with perhaps the exception of this man, Andrew McNeil, were disciple-like in their similar following of teaching.

So Robert Reid was taught by John MacDougall Gillies, which we'll talk more about along the way, but it was one of those:- it's my way, this is the way the music is. I just lifted up the glass, and here it is, don't change it, this is how I got it, this is how we're playing it, and there's no intellectual dynamic in looking at alternate shapes of the tunes for Robert Reid and for pupils.

I knew Willie Connell, who was one of Robert Reid's probably best pupils, as far as the teaching went. He had 14 years with him, he worked in Reid's shop. Willie Connell, who emigrated to Ontario, judged a lot, and he was vehement in the early days, at least, of the "Cameron" way of playing.

And he talked about Robert Reid to all of us, including Bill Livingstone, that he would, the way of his teaching was, just by brute force of ignorance, he would, that's a quote actually of Willie Connell's, he would bring music, the Cameron music out.

In any case, Andrew MacNeil was not like that, according to Bill, and was very open to other styles. If you ever knew Andrew MacNeil, a sort of puckish wit, liked to have fun, in fact, I can remember, he was one of the great sheepdog men in Scotland.

Around 1985 in the A Marches at Oban, it was pouring rain. Andrew MacNeil was on the bench, and it was decided, I guess, by the panel of judges, that if there was the

slightest chance that a player was not going to figure in the prize list, they'd be whistled off or waved off. He used his sheep whistle.

I had a correspondence with Andrew as well, so I have a sense of what he was like. He had a typewriter. He lived on the island of Oransey beside Colansay. He would, I guess, type letters to the world's pipers. They are full of interesting information.

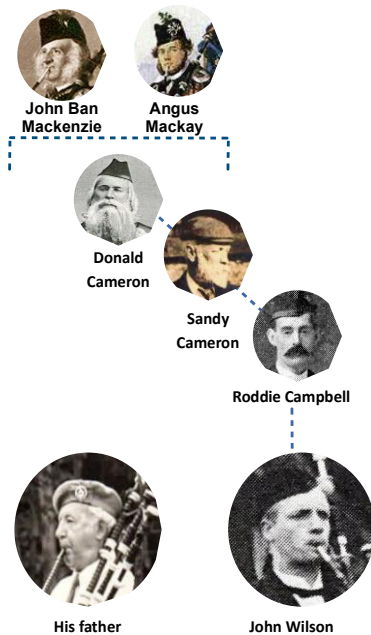
Andrew MacNeil, pupil of Robert Reid, and a great pal of Bill's. And then we have Captain John MacLellan. He took over the Army School of Piping in 1959 from the great Willie Ross. He had an incredible record of competitive piping, and of course was a master composer of piobaireachd.

His tunes are in the general repertoire, as you all know, of pipers today.

He made recordings of his playing. The tunes listed there are those that Bill said he went over in some significant way with Captain John MacLellan. By the time Bill connected with MacLellan, as John said, "Bill, you ask for tuition, but I think with your excellent bagpipe and technique, you will just take from the listening." So he did.

VARIATION 1 DOUBLING – TEACHING LINES

It was very educational for me to going through teachers and their lines. There's John Wilson, who follows the Cameron, the quotes Cameron line, Roddie Campbell, Sandy was taught by Sandy Cameron, from Donald Cameron, and then you see his teachers, the great John Ban MacKenzie and Angus Mackay.



Bill Livingstone

"If I have seen further it is by standing on ye
shoulders of Giants"
~Sir Isaac Newton, 1675

Now in this page that I'm going to go through, I pulled out main teachers, we know there are other influences on these pipers and their lines. In most cases, Donald Cameron is one, but let's just, for the sake of getting a sense of the background and where the music came from, let's just look at this from this level. We look at John MacFadyen, R.U. Brown. For instance, with R.U. Brown, a great well-known pupil of John MacDonald of Inverness. However, Bob Brown's, I hesitate to say Bob, I never knew him, Robert Brown's first teacher was William Fraser, who was taught by G.S. McLennan, and his next teacher, according to his obituary, was Jonathan Ewan, who was a gold medalist taught by Sandy Cameron.

So Bob Brown, likely, you could intuit from that, that he had a pretty broad background in piobaireachd.

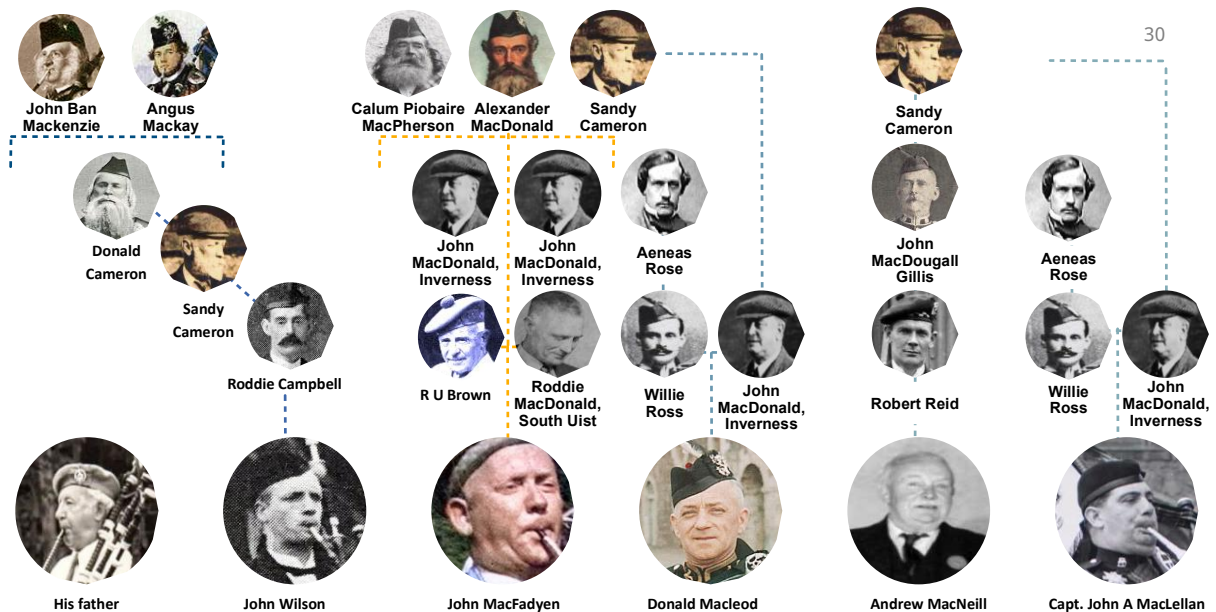
And then you see Roddy MacDonald, which is John MacDonald of South Uist's brother, he of the Glasgow police, also taught by John MacDonald of Inverness. John MacDonald of Inverness, as Archibald Campbell of Kilberry said, was unique in that he had such a broad brush of teaching that crossed all kinds of influences.

I've left out his uncle and other people, but just generally you see, look, there's John MacDonald of Inverness with Calum MacPherson, you know, that Mackay influence, his dad, and Sandy Cameron. So a very, as I say, broad background. And then Donald MacLeod.

I think Willie Ross is actually the interesting case, if you think about it, in this, in that he didn't have, he was really taught by his mother, apparently, Mary Collie, and his uncle, Aeneas Rose. And there's no great sort of wellspring of connections that I could see to, and I'm sure people in this room can educate me on his background.

Willie Ross, I think, probably is an example of a massively natural talent. To Andrew McNeil, we see with Robert Reid, John MacPherson and the Gillies, and there's Sandy Cameron again. Finally, John MacPherson, and you see, he was taught by his father as well, like so many pipers start off that way.

But you look at this page, and I think Bill is, Bill Livingstone, you might argue, also has that sort of unique background, like John MacDonald of Inverness, where you had all these people from various, different personalities, different styles, different backgrounds, and Bill, you know, it was all condensed. I like that Isaac Newton quote as well.



Bill Livingstone

"If I have seen further it is by standing on ye shoulders of Giants"
~Sir Isaac Newton, 1675

"If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants" - and so he did

He taught me that cadence. Memory plays funny tricks, maybe not.

VARIATION 1 TREBLING – PRIZES

Prizes Include:

A formidable competitor

- 11 times - The Open Piobaireachd (North American Championships) Maxville, Ontario
- The Gold Medal (The Northern Meeting, Inverness) - 1977
- March (The Argyllshire Gathering, Oban) - 1977
- Strathspey & Reel (The Argyllshire Gathering, Oban) - 1978
- The Piobaireachd Society (Canada) Gold Medal for Piobaireachd - 1978
- The Gold Medal for Piobaireachd (The Argyllshire Gathering, Oban) - 1979
- Gold Clasp (The Northern Meeting) - 1981 & 1984
- 15 times - Bar to The Piobaireachd Society (Canada) Gold Medal (former winners)
- The Glenfiddich piobaireachd winner - 2002



Bill was a formidable competitor, redoubtable as Lt Col David Murray said. To win the Open Piobaireachd at Maxville is a really big prize. It's a hard contest, it's a big contest, and it is definitely one that you keep record of. He won it eleven times. There would be thirty people in it regularly, and it is an excellent contest.

It's not listed here, but he got that sucky second prize nine times in the Gold Clasp at Inverness. Anyone who is familiar with that contest can appreciate what that means. The Highland Dancers say first runner up, which is nicer.

VARIATION 2 – TAPE SCANDAL

An interesting occurrence happened in Bill's piping life which was pivotal. In 1974 at the Northern Meeting, just at the time that the American Watergate activities were happening with Nixon, one of the judges in the Gold Medal, Captain John MacLellan, recorded secretly some of the players. The result came out. One of the people in the audience was following the contest along in her Kilberry Book. Leslie Paterson-Jones is her name by the way. Bill doesn't name her, but she can't sue a dead man, right.

In any case, she pointed out to Seamus MacNeill, that Bill had made an error in the tune.

The judges went back to the hotel, listened to the recording. Yes, that's an error. One of the judges, Major General Frank Richardson said that something had to be done, although the programme said "Judges' decision is final." No tape recorders needed.

I think a lot of people would say, well, we've just got to suck this one up and move on, don't look the other way. That's not what happened. They took away Bill's prize and moved everybody up, which caused a lot of problems. It was in the press.

Inverness “Tape Scandal”

TOP PIPERS SLAM “TAPE SCANDAL”
 The very foundations of world piping were racked by a ‘bugging scandal’ at Inverness yesterday. For on Day Two of the Northern Meeting the man who was announced as second in the Gold Medal piobaireachd competition was disqualified after the judges had listened to a taped playback of the man’s tune.

This is the program of the competition where my 9th prize in the Gold Medal contest was

THE NORTHERN MEETING, INVERNESS

Piping Competitions

THURSDAY and FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 12th and 13th 1974

In the CALEDONIAN HOTEL BALLROOM and Dr BLACK HALLS
 Riverside Entrance

THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Competition “A” Piobaireachd — Gold Medal 9.30 a.m.: Dr. Black Hall JUDGES — General F. M. Richardson Capt. John MacLellan Mr Seumas MacNeill	Competition “D” Piobaireachd — Gold Clasp 9.30 a.m.: Dr. Black Hall JUDGES — Major James Campbell Mr John MacFadyen Lt-Col. D. J. S. Murray
“B” March 9.30 a.m.: Caledonian Hotel Ballroom (Played in reverse order) JUDGES — Lt-Col. D. J. S. Murray Mr John MacFadyen Capt. I. C. Cameron	“E” Strathspey and Reel 9.30 a.m.: Caledonian Hotel Ballroom JUDGES — Major G. B. Murray Capt. D. R. MacLennan Mr Seumas MacNeill
“C” March, Strathspey & Reel — Silver Star Not before 3 p.m.: Caledonian Hotel Ballroom JUDGES — Major G. B. Murray Capt. D. R. MacLennan Capt. I. C. Cameron	Junior 2 p.m.: Dr. Black Hall “H” under 15 “G” under 18 JUDGES — N. A. MacDonald, Esq. P/M R. Hill
	“F” Jig 5 p.m.: Caledonian Hotel Ballroom JUDGES — Capt. I. C. Cameron Lt-Col. D. J. S. Murray Mr John MacFadyen Capt. John MacLellan

Competitors must present themselves 30 minutes before each competition

Prizes and Regulations
 The various Prizes and Trophies are shown on the back page with the Regulations governing each Competition.

Presentation of Prizes
 All Prize-winners and Spectators who can do so are requested to attend at the close of the final day for the Presentation of Prizes at approximately 5 p.m. in the Caledonian Hotel Ballroom.

PRICE 10p

I’m just going to let you hear Bill describe this, courtesy of Allan Hamilton’s Piper’s Persuasion series.

“So, I start the memoir in 1974, at the Northern Meeting, Inverness, when I was given second prize in the Gold Medal. I had won the March, and the Strathspey and Reel, and the Jig at the same meeting.

General Frank Richardson came to me on the morning of the second day just as I was going up to the platform at the Caledonian Hotel.

“Livingstone, I have to have a word with you. You went to bed last night young man thinking that you had foxed the judges, and we can’t have it.”

I said “What in the name”. He was a Major General. He said “You made a mistake, and you thought that you had got away with it. I am going to remove you from the prize list.”

I said “I can’t stop you doing that, but if you go ahead it will cause son much trouble. You are not going to solve the problem. You are going to cause even more trouble.” And of course, it hit the fan. Headlines all over the Aberdeen P&J “Tape Scandal Rocks the Northern Meeting.”

The thing that really ticked me off about it was that I had won three light music events. Noone had ever done that before. Except Donald MacLeod, of whom people may have heard one or two things in life, who had won the MSR, and the Clasp, and the jig.

Still, I thought I was in pretty good company, and I got lost in it.

It is an interesting story, and I have tried to make it funny.

AH What was the mistake?

BL It was a mistake in the second line of the ground of the tune.

AH And did they actually remove you from the Prize List?

BL Oh yes.

AH How can they do that?

BL That was what everybody wondered.

AH They were setting a terrible precedent for themselves, were they not?

BL “Judges decisions are final”. “No tape recorders allowed.” Somebody came – I won’t name the person – to Seamus. He said “How did you enjoy the contest?” and she said “Bill Livingstone made a mistake in his tune. He left out something”

Seamus mentioned it to John MacLellan, who said “Well I made a tape recording of some of the players – under the table here. We could listen”

And so they did, and they discovered in fact that they had made a mistake.”

Prizes

The Northern Meeting “Tape Scandal”

Knowing the tone of my comments to Gen. Richardson, it’s a delicious irony to hear him speak in the newspaper report of the “sporting way” in which I took the news. Still, I did manage to keep my head down during the entire imbroglio and for this I thank John MacFadyen, my tutor at the time, who called me aside that morning and gave me succinct advice: “Keep your bloody mouth shut.” I did. How right he

MG I like this, and also it gives you an insight into John MacFadyen’s personality. He told Bill “Keep your bloody mouth shut”. Uncharacteristically, he did.

V2 DOUBLING 78th FRASER HIGHLANDERS

So just a little bit about 78th Fraser Highlanders. I don’t want to dwell on any of this, because this is the Piobaireachd Society Conference, but this was a huge part of Bill’s life. He made the band.

He was a charismatic leader and he inspired people. There is a picture of a few of us a



long time ago celebrating with the band. You see the lovely orange kilts. I am the leader of the band today, and I still regret that we don’t have those kilts, they are very distinctive.

78th Frasers was the first non-Scottish band to win the Worlds. The Live in Ireland concert was one of the first concerts to be done by pipe bands to any big scale. The crescent formation on stage, tag team solos, all that stuff.

It was also in Ulster at a time when the troubles were pretty close to the surface. I remember the band bus going through parts of the Shankhill Road and parts of the Protestant areas of Belfast, and there would be British soldiers with machine guns on the tops of trucks. It was all very surreal for us in the band. We were stationed at a little hotel at a place called Broughshane.

The hotel was closed, but they opened it up for us. They wanted to isolate us, to protect us from Belfast. Bill and Lillian would go jogging, as they did at the time. Unknown to them is that they were followed by people in the Graham Memorial Pipe Band, who were sponsoring the concert.

This concert was held at Ballymena Town Hall. I remember it being a massive stage, but we went back about ten years ago, and it was more like a High School Auditorium, so the memory plays funny tricks.

So anyways, we got back on the bus after the show in Ballymena and there must have been, again memory, but like 10 RUC guys with German Shepherds because there'd been a bomb scare on our bus, that our bus was going to be blown up.

They didn't tell us this until later, but we figured out, we're Canadian but not that stupid, and we figured out there was trouble afoot.

TAORLUATH DOUBLING – PIPE BAND PIOBAIREACHD

So I'll play a little bit of this. I had left the band by now, they weren't anywhere near as good.

Plays a segment of 78th Fraser Highlanders playing A Flame of Wrath for Squinting Patrick.

In all honesty, I never heard it until last week when I found this.

COMPOSING

Bill composed much light music, and one Piobaireachd, for his brother Ranald.

Plays a segment of Sean McKeown playing Bill's composition in memory of his brother, *For Ranald*.

And that's Bill judging. How'd you like to do that? Judging a tune he wrote and a pupil he taught.

Bill has, relative to the world of piping and drumming, piping in particular, a very big discography. Here are eight pipe band records that he was the leader of.

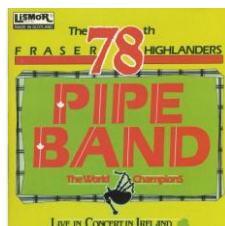
Discography: 78th Fraser Highlanders



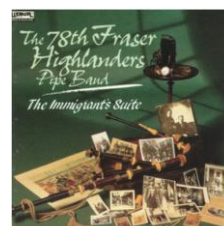
1984



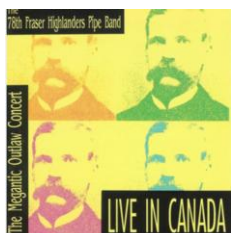
1986



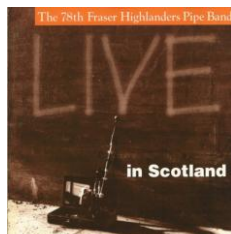
1987



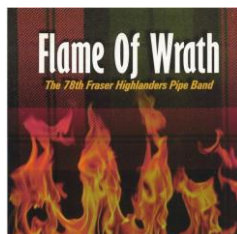
1990



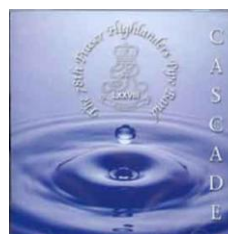
1992



1994



1998



2003

And again, 1987, that was the biggest selling pure pipe band record of all time to this day. Also his solos, like his teachers Donald McLeod and John McClellan, he left his Piobaireachd diaries where he also includes a lot of editorial talk. You'll be familiar because they're all on the Piobaireachd Society site, thanks to Jack.

CRUNLUATH SINGLING – OTHER MUSICAL INTERESTS

Bill was a rock and roll piano player, self-taught, and had loved old, like real hardcore rock and roll, like Little Richard. I mean, the pioneers of rock and roll, that stuff really spoke to him. But he loved, I mean, this is actually a playlist from his celebration of life, and you got a sense of, these are all tunes that he loved.

I remember him telling a story of driving through, way back from Oban, and Scott McCauley was in the backseat. Lillian, his wife, was in the front, and they listened to *When You Were Sweet Sixteen* by Finbar Fury, the Furies, and they all cried. I thought that was really poignant.

CRUNLUATH DOUBLING – HOME LIFE

Bill and Lillian, I think, are the example of an amazingly close-knit and loving relationship. They were symbiotic, and Lillian still grieves very deeply the loss of Bill. They never had kids, and Bill writes about that a little bit, but they lived a very rich life.

CRUNLUATH A MACH

Bill's Book – Preposterous – and his clinical depression

A little bit about Bill's book. Bill talks about his clinical depression. He talks about how this, he dealt with depression pretty much his whole life, and he saw a psychiatrist from the age of 24 and got help with it, and he finally found the right medication that allowed him to drink deeper from the well of life. He was definitely a high-functioning, depressive person.

I just think of me as a young guy in the 70s and what a idiot I was, if I only knew. What I mean by that is, that the band, the guys in the band, would have had more empathy, had they and I known about what he was dealing with.

Teaching

If you're a piper, I think you're a missionary. You must teach people, and you must impart what you know. And Bill did that, and there's pioneer "tag teamers," I don't mind saying that, because we were. What I mean by tag team, it really is an excuse for the, if you do a band concert, for the band to tune up. So you haul out people who don't mind playing jigs and reels on a stage by themselves, and when that one guy plays three minutes, the other guy joins them, and the other guy exits the stage, like a tag team, sort of.

Bill did not like teaching, we were talking at breakfast today, teaching beginners. I don't mind teaching beginner pipers, or even from the scale. He wouldn't, oh, he wouldn't have it.

Also, someone that didn't have good mitts, as he would say, there's not much I can do with the ham-fisted, I can hear him say that. Ham-fisted was his line for people that just didn't have, as he would say, the physical talent.

Bill and Piobaireachd

Bill never thought piobaireachd was anything but great music. It wasn't mystical, it wasn't anything that had some kind of god-like secret password elements to it, it was just music. And that was it. And you talk about that, and he'd get annoyed, this is early, when people would put some kind of cloak of something more than what it was to Ceol Mor.

And yet, as he got older, we talked, we talked probably three times a week on the phone, sometimes an hour, and we'd talk about, you know, is there life after death, is there a God, and things like that, and are you afraid of dying? And, because Bill was, from this time he hit puberty, he was a terrible hypochondriac, he was always going to die, that pain in his, you know, I've got cancer, I've got this, I've got that.

I had sent him a note saying my cat had died. Lillian and Bill loved animals, and he sent this note.

He said, writing from Barbados.

“Stories of kittie’s passing are so sad, it's happened to us so often that I feel I want to forget it. At least now, Mike, you'll have room in your home and your heart for our two beauties if they outlive us. Meanwhile, the birthday tributes are pouring in from folks I don't really know, pretty wonderful. I'm sorry for Dewey leaving you, they sometimes just go. It's lovely here, boozy lunch at a tapas restaurant. The owner remembers us very well. Eating while watching, 180 degree view of the rolling Caribbean, almost mystical.”

So that's Bill, he went full circle. I think in the end, he did believe that there were some mystical elements to piobaireahcd. It certainly made his life, and he'd be so happy for you to hear some of his story today.

Thank you.

MC I was listening to the Flame of Wrath of with John MacFadyen playing it, that you posted on YouTube, which, I have to admit, is my favourite, the way he plays that first variation.

When I was living with John MacFadyen General Motors Pipe Band played at Schotts. MacFadyen was judging. They threw a variation of a Piobaireachd in there.

MG Macintosh's Lament.

I'm in the car going back with MacFadyen, and I said, what did you think of that?

“Well,” he said, “I wrote on the sheet it was a prostitution of bagpipe music”.

I asked Bill about that, and he just howled. He thought that was the funniest thing. That was one of his great mentors, but he knew he just pushed a button there and had fun with it.

That is part of Bill's personality.

Questions for Michael?

Alan Hamilton. Bill would have a favourite Piobaireachd. But a separate question is, what Piobaireachd did he make a fantastic job of? What was his favorite performance?

MG One of his favourite tunes was Lament for the Earl of Antrim, which I think, Rob, that's what he won the Glenfiddich with.

RW I was robbed that day.

MG I think that the Lament for the Laird of Anapool is probably the one that speaks to him the most. It's a monster of a tune.

Peter McCalister You mentioned that he had all these musical influences. Some of them were very didactic. This is the way it is. When he was teaching, had he absorbed that and was he didactic, or was he saying, listen, there are various ways this can go? What was it like?

MG It was like that. He would give the footnote on where this came from. You can do it this way or that way, but I recommend this way because it's more acceptable. He would give the competition view, the judge's filter on that. So, no, he was very open. But he was a lawyer, right? He was a lawyer and he worked for himself. He had two or three lawyers. He was a busy guy, really busy.

So sometimes, in lessons, if he wanted to go through six tunes, say, he would play the first line of every variation. It was condensed.

Q What was the advice he gave most?

MG That's a good question. He always said play as if you are the best player in the park, play as if you own the tune, I'd have to think more about that, but that is what comes to mind right away.

RW Did he ever talk about talcum powder?

MG You know what, he got mad at me once, well more than once. I have to say that in a long life friendships go up and down sometimes. When I left the Frasers to take over Peel Regional Police Pipe Band, I will admittedly say that our friendship over the years was – not fraught – but it was brittle. It wasn't warm. We came to - as Bill would say – a *rapprochement*. After three or four years it was all good.

Talcum powder? I talked to him about just being a poser with that, using it just as a show. He would say absolutely not. I don't know how people do that. If I put talcum powder my fingers would slide off the chanter.

RW The other thing he did was to move the tape on the chanter without stopping playing. There would be the big cloud of talc go up, and then he'd move some tape.

MG Where has all that gone now? At the Falkirk Tryst competition in 1981 – there is a video on YouTube of it – he had a terrible problem with the bag slipping when he played. He had this brand new sheepskin bag, and he left it without the cover, because with the cover it would slip. They were having kittens about this. It was an insult, an affront to the event, the audience and the instrument.

Q What is your favourite memory?

MG That's a good question. The one that jumps to mind which is the one I should probably use right away is this. When we finally made up after this rocky period I have described, it was at Rab Ha's in the Merchant City. We had had a few beers, and we were sitting talking. And we said we loved each other. And we hugged. And that was it.

Thanks for making me say that!

Duncan MacGillivray Would it be fair to say that he wasn't a safe player?

MG Not with pipe bands, no. But with solo piping? I've never seen anyone practice as much as he did. He would go to Inverness. He would hole up in the Glen Mhor

Hotel and play for three hours. I don't think I have ever done that in my life. Well obviously.

RW Just one memory of Bill. When he got the medal at Oban in 1977 we were all in the Tartan Tavern after the contest. The place was going like a fair. Half way through the night the door opens, and it was Bill and someone else, maybe Ranald his brother. He looked in the door. I caught his eye and said "Come on in Bill, you won the medal!". No, no he said, I've got the Games tomorrow. And he was away.

What he brought I think to piping was professionalism. He had come all that way from North America. He'd given up his work and time. Home based guys suddenly woke up. We suddenly woke up to the fact that you couldn't go the pub on the first night, or you'd be a wreck on the second day. And these guys, like Bill, were winning the money. Bill deserves due credit for bringing that professional touch to the solo piping scene.

MG He was very serious. John MacFadyen was a very forthright, bold player, wasn't he. He was definitely like that. He hated slow piobaireachd, which he believed is too common today. He thought that we are playing piobaireachd far too slowly on the boards, far too slow, far too careful, too syrupy. You can hear him say these words.

DM That speaks as much as his medal almost. We all know that on many occasions the second place perhaps should have been first. I think that folk who are second don't get enough credit sometimes. Nine seconds in the Clasp is terrific.

MG That's right. John Hanning the New Zealand Gold Medallist said that if you were second, someone on the bench had you first. But there was someone there who didn't want you first.

Thanks very much.

