



The  
*Voice*

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**THE VOICE is the official  
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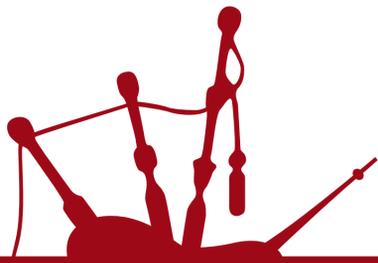
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### ON THE COVER:

Adam Clarke, 11, of the  
St. Columcille Grade 5 band.  
With proper instruction,  
young players like Adam are  
the future of the Association.

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# President's Message

By Dan Cole



The competition season is in full swing. I hope you are all playing well and having some fun while you're at it.

Some congratulations are in order...

Andrew Carlisle won this year's United States Piping Foundation against a particularly stiff crowd of opponents. Mac is surely pleased that the contest is going as well as ever. Our Professional Premier Piping contests have been well attended by our top pipers. Congratulations to Nick Hudson for winning the piobaireachd at the Virginia event and Andrew Carlisle for winning the light music and to Andrew Lewis for winning the piobaireachd event at Rhode Island and Eric Ouellette for winning the light music. Andrew came all the way from Minnesota to deliver his winning performance. Bobby Durning's recent marriage hasn't hindered his practice. Bobby was placed second in both march, strathspey and reel and hornpipe and jig event at the BC Highland Games. For those that are not aware, British Columbia is home to a number of top professionals that appear regularly in the prizes at the major gatherings in Scotland.

A special thanks goes to June Hanley for making the premier event happen. Another event will take place at the Scotland County Games in October. I understand Bill Caudill has been voraciously collecting donations for the event. Thanks, Bill!

The final event will be for the snare drummers and will take place at the AGM in November. Word on the street is a large donation is being made to supplement the already generous prize money available. Proper thanks and recognition will be given in due course.

A major prize donation is in the works for our grade 4 senior class. I was hoping to be able to announce this for this article, but the details are not yet finalized. Stay tuned!

The executive committee continues to meet on a monthly basis via conference call. I feel that this has definitely kept problems from falling through the cracks and has kept items moving to speedy resolution. If you would like to communicate a thought or idea to the EC, talk to your branch chair about getting on the agenda of one of these monthly calls.

All the best,  
Dan

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# Editorial

By John Bottomley



This edition of the Voice includes what is, in my opinion, one of the most important articles we have ever published. It is about the importance of wearing ear protection when practicing, a concept many pipers and drummers still fight.

When I first began playing, nobody had any thought about the effects of such loud instruments on our hearing, especially given the hours of practice needed to perfect our playing. The facts are in, ladies and gentlemen, and the conclusion is obvious: wear protection!

If I had known about this sort of stuff when I was young, I probably wouldn't have done anything about it because I was young, and therefore invincible and not too smart. If, however, I HAD done something, I most likely would not be able to lie in bed on a quiet night and try to resolve all the different buzzing pitches that my ears generate by themselves now: as entertaining as that can be, I'd rather have something different to do. I'd be able to hear the crickets with both ears, instead of just my right ear.

The article was written by a young man, Sam Duarte, a middle-school bagpiper who is clearly more intelligent than I was at his age; he recognizes his noninvincibility. He has gone out and taken the measurements and done the work to gather the data to make an informed decision.

With the state of hearing protection at the level it is now, there is absolutely no reason or excuse to deliberately deafen yourself. You can dampen the volume without distorting the sound. You'll be able to practice much longer, in comfort, without risking your hearing.

There is another benefit to playing with hearing protection. When you are at the games, and trying to tune your instrument with a cacophony of other players around you, the plugs can help you block all the extraneous sounds so you can better hear your own. For those who get nervous

for contests, the earplugs can also block distractions that raise your anxiety levels.

Of course, you would never go out on the boards and try something without having first practiced it at home. So there's a good reason right there to use protection, to practice "safe playing," at home. If you don't care about your hearing then you can use competitive success as a rationalization.

In any event.....just do it.

## **Bass Drum Clinic Held**

Well, not a formal one, but Sunday's Grade 2 Medley performance at Alma by the Greater Midwest Pipe Band's bass drummer, Mike Cole, was an eye-opener in many ways. Too many bass drummers go by the old system: "I'm the timekeeper. You do what I say. And I'm playing really really loud to make sure you do."

That's as behind the times as a mullet. The bass drum is capable of much more. It is part of the musical effect of the band, which includes some basic timekeeping duties, but adds accents, different tonalities (it shouldn't sound the same every time you strike it), and in short, contributes what we piobaireachders call "lights and shades" to a band performance.

Mike, who played a season with Inveraray and trained their current bass drummer, clearly gets it. When the band had finished, I found myself hoping that other drummers had been listening, and learning. Folks, the days of "thumpthumpthump" are over. It's long past time to get with the program.

This is a recording of the performance..... Medley.



# Semiquavers

## Captain John A MacLellan MBE Memorial Dinner Recital 2015

This year, the Trust has decided to hold the Dinner/Recital on Saturday 29th August, which is the weekend between the Argyllshire Gathering and the Northern Meeting (and also during the Edinburgh International Festival) - a date which we hope will allow the many international friends who have expressed great interest in attending but who so far have not been able to.

This year our recitalists, who will each play one of Captain MacLellan's piobaireachd compositions, are Willie McCallum, Faye Henderson, Iain Speirs, and David Wilton. The Fear an Tighe is Euan Anderson, and the Adjudicator is Ronald McShannon, assisted by Peter McCalister (reader).

Tickets at £35.00, which include the first class dinner, are available now, and can be had by emailing to Colin MacLellan at [colin@pipereeds.com](mailto:colin@pipereeds.com), or calling at 07528377704. Colin will be happy to send them out by post and collect either by Paypal or by check. The event, as usual, is being held at The Royal Scots Club, Abercromby Place, Edinburgh.

The organizers do hope you will be able to attend, or simply learn about the event through this notice. The cost of holding the Dinner is far in excess of the ticket price, and so the Trust's thanks are due to Glenfiddich Piping and Fiddle for their generous sponsorship and also for including them on their list of competitions this year and in the future.



Lanark and District Pipe Band visited New York City for the Tartan Week Parade and festivities.

Photo by Claire B. Marcus.

**Extreme weather** on Friday had its way with a number of trees at Ithaca, but Saturday was perfect. Tyler Destremps playing for Patrick Regan.



Iain Minnear's shoes after the morning at Loch Norman. He volunteered to step in extra mud for the picture but journalistic integrity won out.





## Pipe-Major Sandy Jones Invitational



The 13th Annual Pipe-Major Sandy Jones Invitational, in conjunction with the Charleston Indoor Games, were held on Saturday February 21st 2015, at the Citadel, in Charleston, South Carolina.

The Adjudicator was James McIntosh, MBE. Grace Washam won the *Scott-Vollrath Piobaireachd Trophy 2015* playing Lament for Donald Duaghal Mackay.

Next year and thereafter both events will be held on the first weekend in March. The 2016 date is March 5th.

*The Competitors in the SJI 2015, left-to-Right: Laureano Thomas-Sanchez, Chance Bell Grace Washam, Gabriel Nierman. Overall winner: Grace Washam. Photo: Graham C. Scott*

## The Rhode Island Highlanders,

under the leadership of P/M Debbie Kane, took advantage of the West Point Tattoo to get some early runs in.



## John Bottomley

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# Snare Basics: Practicing? Just Hit Whatever's There!

By Ed Best

I wanted to address a concern that I hear voiced frequently by new drummers as they are making the transition from lessons to band playing.

I constantly hear some variation of “I have a tough time going from the practice pad to the drum” or “The drum feels so different.” Much time has been spent to make the practicing feel as much like playing on the drum as possible. New practice pads are constantly being developed with new materials to try to emulate the drum's feel as much as possible. Everyone is concerned with the height of the table and chair they use to practice with; to get it to the optimum height and angle.



Get used to playing on ANY surface!

I have a simple solution that will seem counterintuitive, but hear me out. To assist in the transition from practice pad to drum, stop focusing on the specifics of what the drum feels like. All the “optimal” practice isn't preparing anyone for the real world of what really happens. Instead of trying to make your pad more like a drum, focus on playing on LOTS of different surfaces from the beginning.

I have never had a problem going from pad to drum. As I think back as to why this is true, I realized something. I was always playing on every surface in the house. I also had multiple drum pads that I rotated through. I had various practice locations throughout the house and beyond. Let me explain: I had an old Remo tunable pad that was very loud, but when you used it over a period of time it got softer and softer. I had a Hugh Cameron Medium pad, I had a old rubber homemade pad that was lifeless and crumbling. I practiced my rolls on my pillow and my mattress. I would place a blanket over my practice pad. I played on an old generic mylar snare drum head on a beat up drum kit, as well as on the dented 20-year-old heads on the toms. I played on the kitchen counter, dining room table, and the buffet (yes, my mum was mad). I was how we would dust the living room sofa. I even practiced on the backs and shoulders of my friends to give them a “drumstick massage.” I also played with the pad in my lap, I used a big leather sling and no leg rest so the drum moved as I marched, I was in the back seat of my parents' car on long

road trips (very cramped arm space), I stood at the table, sat in low chairs at high tables, borrowed harnesses that couldn't adjust in time for a show, etc. I think you get the idea. I have no doubt that many of you reading this have similar experiences.

So, instead of trying to simulate the EXACT experience of playing on the drum via a high tech drum pad, and a drum stand that can adjust to 20 different variable angles to match your exact body type, let's focus on making the beginning DRUMMER adaptable to a variety of situations.

Real life scenarios:

- 1 Drum head breaks just before a contest. You have time to change it, but not to get it up to full tension. Therefore, you have a softer head to play on. It reacts differently than the drum you've been playing on all month leading up to today. It's similar to the situation in which you have to end up borrowing a drum. It may not be set up exactly the way you are used to. But you have to go on and make it work.
- 2 Your harness has a bolt crack in it just before you go on. It is an easy fix later but now you have to borrow a harness from a person who is WAY shorter/taller than you.
- 3 You are playing in a pub setting and the appreciative crowd is larger than anticipated, therefore your arm space is much more limited that you normally prefer to have.

Each of the above scenarios has really happened, and they will happen again. The more our new drummers get used to only one way of doing things, the less likely they are to be successful.

So, my main suggestion is to concentrate on practicing on as many different types of surfaces and locations as possible, right away! And continue it throughout your drumming career.

But, maybe skip playing on your mum's dining room table...



# Piping Basics: Go on Strike

By John Bottomley

There is probably a hole in your playing. I'm just guessing, but it's a guess based on (far too) many years of experience. If you miss a piece of technique, it's probably a strike of some sort.

We pipers practice our gracenotes a lot, or we should. We don't seem to practice our strikes nearly as much. In listening to even the finest players in the world I've noticed the pattern that every movement is perfect, with the exception of strikes, which are literally hit or miss.

Here's what Captain OCD would do to fix this. Start by playing up the scale with strikes on each note. I like to do four on each note just to get the consistency and control that I want. I also play the strikes a little too slowly, to ensure that they are clean. As I get more proficient I begin to speed up the strike until it sounds like it's supposed to.

Of course on D, I would play strikes both to Low G and to C. And on High A, there are times when you will want to play the strike by sliding your thumb down, sometimes by sliding it up, and sometimes alternating. So....practice them all!

The next step, after you have gained consistent strikes, is to play them in the context of different rhythms.

In a 2/4 march, the strike has to start on the beat. Often the strike happens after a short note. In this case, Captain OCD (let's be honest, that's me) likes to play from the short note to the just first G gracenote of the strike, which is easy to play in rhythm, and alternate the single gracenote version with a full strike. Make sure that the G gracenote occurs in the same rhythmic spot in both versions. *Strike 1* illustrates this. Do this slowly, using a metronome to make sure that your foot is not lying about the beat. Gradually add context by introducing the long note in front of this two-note grouping until it's comfortable.

## Strike 1



There are special considerations in 6/8 march and jig strikes; it is way to easy to lose rhythm and tighten your fingers up on the strike. As we professional bodybuilders often do in the gym, you can create an isolation exercise to work on this. If, for example, you are playing a jig with the F-E-E group, and the Low A-C-C group, isolate those two groups from the rest of the tune so that you can devote total concentration to playing them relaxed and rhythmically. Again a metronome can be useful here. Set it so it only plays the first note and the third note of each group, because this will keep you from getting too mechanical in your approach to jiggling. Keep your hands soft and relaxed so you are not fighting against your own resistance.

It takes very little time to work strikes. In two minutes you can hit the chanter hundreds of times. Another two minutes or so and you've worked in your rhythmic contexts. It's a few minutes well spent, on the practice chanter or the pipes.

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# Bass & Tenor Basics: Tenor and Bass Hacks

By Linda Hall

## (Tips and tricks to make life as a tenor or bass drummer easier)

Prepare a set of tenor strings. Cut and tie them to the correct length. Then remove them from your sticks and put them in your sporran or the vest or jacket pocket of your uniform. If your string ever wears thin and breaks at the last minute before a performance, you'll have one all ready to replace it!

Tennis racket wrap makes a perfect grip for bass sticks. It typically comes premeasured. One length which is intended for one tennis racket is the correct length for a pair of bass sticks. Unroll it, cut it in half, and wrap the shaft of each bass stick with one half for a comfortable, slip-free grip.

When putting on a new set of tenor strings, do not remove the old ones. Just slide them down. Put on the new ones, and compare the length with the old ones. When you get the length adjusted perfectly, then you can remove the old strings.



Try putting strings on your bass sticks up at the top of the shaft by the fur. Then lace the strings on your fingers as a tenor drummer would. Unlike strings at the bottom of the shaft looped around your wrists, this method will allow you the freedom to move the shaft of the stick away from the palm of your hand and back again for a more finessed strike on the drum. And if you accidentally strike the hoop of the drum or lose your grip, the stick will stay securely attached to your hand.

In a tenor corps with multiple tones, write with a sharpie on the bottom head of each tenor drum the drummer's name and the note to which the drum should be tuned. This will avoid confusion during last minute tuning. It is especially helpful if you have several drums of the same diameter.

Put a drum key on a key ring with a lobster style clasp or carabiner, and hang it from your sporran chain on games day. You will never have to hunt for your drum key again!

A standard X-style keyboard stand from a music store makes a great bass drum stand. It is adjustable to several heights and folds flat for easy transport. It has rubber end caps so it won't scratch the drum. And it only costs \$20 to \$30!

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# How to Play Nice, the Reader's Digest, all Resource Version

By John Bottomley

Previous articles have focused on mental and physical preparation to help you give your best performances. What was planned as a long series of articles has been subverted by a gentleman named Dr. Noa Kageyama. The bum.

Dr. Kageyama has done what I was doing, but he is doing it far better. Rather than give advice that is second-best at best, here is the link to his website. Of course he wants to sell his book, but he also sends free emails fairly regularly. Check it out at [www.bulletproofmusician.com](http://www.bulletproofmusician.com).

Another website that is doing a fantastic job of opening doors to different ideas, in the piobaireachd arena at least, is <http://altpibroch.com>. This is hosted by David Hester, and includes thoughtful articles on different styles of playing, increasing piobaireachd audiences, and the future of piobaireachd, by writers ranging from Mr. Hester himself on up to top players like Willie McCallum.

And as long as we are on the subject of internet resources, don't overlook Brett Tidswell's site, [www.schoolofpiping.com](http://www.schoolofpiping.com). Brett has won the R.U. Brown Gold Medal a record 12 times, as well as piloting a Grade 1 band to the Australian Championship. He publishes a free downloadable magazine, available through the website.

So browse the internet (not at work of course) and take advantage of the expertise available. Continue to be careful of YouTube posts, because anybody and his brother can put a video up, whether it's any good or not!



Brett Tidswell, principal of the School of Piping.



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# North Coast Pipe Band



**Picture of North Coast Pipe Band of Cleveland in Perth, Scotland (circa 1990). First US Pipe Band to place in the World Championships**

L to R Top Row – Standing

**Sandy Tryk (Piper):** Sandy was a well known piper, and played the pipes in a special performance with The Cleveland Orchestra when he was at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU). Sandy is a physics and chemistry professor at The University of Tokyo. He played for the **Tokyo Pipe Band** in the New York St. Patrick's Day Parade, the only American in the band.

**Bonnie Ross (Rhythm Tenor) & Ed Ross (Snare Drummer):** Both commuted from Western Pennsylvania to play for the band. While Bonnie died very young, she and her husband Ed were known to all as a drumming duo dedicated to traditional music.

**Michael McBride (Lead Drummer):** Scripted all drum scores for the band, formerly drummer for the Cleveland rock n' roll band, **The Raspberries**. A dedicated father, his ancestors emigrated via Canada from County Down.

**A.G. Lee (Piper):** A talented player who commuted from Irwin, PA to play for the band. Married to piper Debbie Lee, he and his family got involved in his own band as Pipe Major of **Allegheny & District**, eventually forming the **Seton Hill University Pipe Band** in 2007.

**Peter Strozniak (Piper):** Educated at Edinboro University, Peter moved to Lake County and became a journalist for The News Herald. He is now a dedicated father and business owner living in Painesville, Ohio.

**Neil Conway (Bass Drummer):** Band Manager; Attorney, lives in Painesville, Ohio with his wife Maureen and their four children. His paternal ancestors hail from Doona, Ballycroy, County Mayo. Neil won the Canadian Open Bass Drum Championship in 1994.

**Michael McCoy (Piper):** Michael holds a PhD and specializes in fiber optics. He is a Grade I soloist originally part of the merger with the **Western Reserve Pipe Band** and known for playing jigs and reels at giddy tempos to accompany Irish dancers. Michael grew up as a West Side Irish American Club member and piping instructor. He now lives in Minnesota where he was recently wed .

**Bruce Greig (Piper):** Bruce lives in Willowick and is currently Pipe Major of the **Irish American Club – East Side Pipes and Drums**. He also performs solo, most recently for the Rose of Tralee Northern Ohio crowning.

**Lynne Lofton (Piper):** A local ceramic artist, mother and talented piper, Lynne originally played for an all-female pipe corps in Chicago. Educated at Northern Illinois University, she lives in Chagrin Falls, Ohio. Lynne still plays for the **North Coast Pipe Band**.

**Michael Crawley (Snare Drummer):** is now performing with **Mary's Lane**. The multi-talented musician plays side drums, bagpipes, guitar, and sings with this well-known local ensemble. His father, the late John Crawley, was the founder and Pipe Major of the **87th Pipes and Drums**, Cleveland. As a young man, he attended the Piping College in Glasgow, Scotland. All the Crawley children play in the band; that is, John Crawley, Michael Crawley, Kathleen Donnelly and son-in-law Mark Donnelly, and Marie Diamond.

**Jason Beard (Piper):** Jason was considered a prodigy when he transitioned to bagpiper at the highest level while still in high school. He still plays solo events, including performances at his children's school. He is a dedicated father and partner in The Bear Group Ltd., educated at Ohio State University.

**Andrew McChesney (Snare Drummer):** Andy's family hails from Paisley, Scotland. The talented artisan specializes in tile and he plays bass drum for The Great Lakes Pipe Band.



L to R – Kneeling

**Debbie Loach (Snare Drummer):** Debbie was a high school student who went on to make percussion her life's ambition with **The Louisiana Philharmonic** and **Nashville Symphony Orchestra**.

**Fran Vitek (Swinging Tenor):** A friend to all, Frank was a very popular band member since he began in 1965. He played a special hand painted drum with Celtic designs dating to the founding of the **Caledonian Pipe Band** in 1948. Frank also won the CA-AM games and numerous other solo Championships.

**Clark Abercrombie (Piper):** A Grade I soloist and dedicated father, Clark went on to play in several Canadian Grade 1 Pipe Bands, including the **78th Fraser Highlanders of Toronto**, former World Champions in Grade 1.

**Barry Conway (Pipe Sergeant):** Father of three and partner in Conway Greene Co., Barry was educated at John Carroll University and Cleveland State University. He is Pipe Major of **The Great Lakes Pipe Band**, which played at Cleveland's hosting of the National American Gaelic Games.

**Jerry Gibson (Piper):** Jerry was the owner and founder of Gibson & Sons Bagpipes. He is the pipe maker who made the **North Coast Pipe Band's** bagpipes in his garage in Eastlake. He is credited with the band's amazing sound. A former piper in **The Seaforth Highlanders Scottish Regiment**, Jerry's pipes are available every year at The Irish Cultural Festival in Berea, Ohio.

**Doug Ross (Pipe Major):** Doug was the **North Coast Pipe Band's** leader and composer. He and his father, the late **Donald Ross**, the late **Noel Slagle**, and former Pipe Major **Dick Finnigan** commuted to Canada to play for The North American Champion, the **Clan MacFarlane** of St. Catharines, Ontario. They eventually brought a level of piping instruction to the Cleveland area. Doug formed the **North Coast Pipe Band**. The band represented the Irish America Club – East Side and wore the Ancient MacPherson tartan. Doug eventually became a piping judge.

Missing from Picture

**Dan Rabkewych (Piper / Drum Major):** Educated at Baldwin Wallace College and a career employee at Sherwin-Williams. Dan explored the art of Drum Major as few Americans do to near perfection as North American, Canadian and US Open Drum Major Champion.

**David Daye (Piper):** Known for his unusual talent in speed and expression for jigs and reels. David moved to performing with Uilleann Pipes solo and playing in Ceili bands professionally.

**Dick Finnegan (Piper):** Former Piper Major and lifelong bagpiper, Dick is now with The Irish American Club, East Side, Inc.



The North Coast Pipe Band brought Pipe Major and Composer Terry Tully to Cleveland for a workshop. Terry played for the St. Laurence O'Toole Pipe Band of Tallaght, Ireland. His band won the World Championship in 2010, and is known for their green kilts. They were founded during the Easter Rebellion to establish bagpipes as a statement of Irish Culture. Their membership included several members of the Easter Rising including Patrick Pearse, Thomas Clarke, and Frank Cahill. The band took part in the funerals of Thomas Ashe, Michael Collins, O'Donovan Rossa, and Arthur Griffith.

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# To Plug, or Not To Plug?

By Sam Duarte

*Editor's note: The following few paragraphs serve to indicate the rigorous nature of the research done by Mr. Duarte. The link to his full paper is at the end of the article, and I urge all pipers and drummers to check it out.*

Should Great Highland Bagpipe players use ear protection when practicing, to avoid hearing loss and/or damage? Compared to other instruments there is little research published on bagpipe decibel (dBA) levels and the risk of noise-related hearing loss for pipers. My research on noise related hearing loss in pipers has the potential to provide information not readily available, as well as provide information that can be applicable to other musicians, and even other professions and activities.

I used a decibel meter to measure dBA levels at pipe band events and practices. I measured individual sound levels, group sound levels, and the sound levels of pipers and drummers together. I also measured sound levels on practice chanters in addition to full bagpipes. The purpose of this data collection was not to determine which band is the loudest, compare indoor and outdoor sound levels, or find the absolute loudest sound a bagpipe can make, but rather to determine a range of noise levels players might be exposed to during practice and/or performance.

Two different US governmental agencies, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) both provide sound level guidelines to avoid hearing loss; NIOSH has the more conservative recommendations. The guidelines are dependent on both sound level and duration. I discovered that the sound levels produced by individual pipers on full bagpipes and pipe bands exceed safe levels according to both organizations, considering the duration of typical practice times. Pipers should use earplugs. However, for musicians the correct type of earplug is extremely important. Musicians' earplugs should have flat attenuation, equal at all frequencies, and not too much overall attenuation, so that the sounds heard are uncompromised.

## **Research Plan**

I will use a BAFX Products - Decibel Meter / Sound Level Reader to measure the decibel level produced by full Great Highland Bagpipes, bagpipe practice chanters, bagpipe goose and full pipe bands (multiple players) to see if they exceed recommended levels for the frequencies produced.



*Willie knows earplugs.*

Measurement will be made both at the distance of spectators, and at the point of the bagpipe player (or center point of a pipe band). I will then compare these decibel levels to tables with frequency and exposure time to see at what duration of exposure at tested levels ear protection would be recommended.

I will make my tests in several venues. I will visit the Longs Peak Scottish-Irish Highland Festival in Estes Park to take readings from a variety of different spectator areas. I will also visit practices of local pipe bands to measure the levels of the entire band playing together, and of individual pipers when they play alone. I will measure the decibel levels of the band and individuals on both the practice chanters and full bagpipes, because both are regularly used at practices. Testing different pipers and testing in more than one venue will provide more reliable results and take into account the possibility of individual variation.



I will not be directly testing human subjects in any way, only testing decibel levels at already existing practices and performances open to public access. I will not be testing humans for hearing loss, ask them to perform tasks they are not already performing and regularly perform at practices and performances, survey them regarding symptoms of, or opinions on, hearing loss, and will collect absolutely no personal information of any kind. All data collected will be the available to any impartial observer, although at smaller venues there may be unintentional interaction (possibly questions on their part) initiated by the pipers playing the bagpipes I will be testing.

I will test the decibel level of my own bagpipe, practice chanter, and bagpipe goose during my regular daily practice, and will not do any tasks I don't already perform on a daily basis, or do those tasks any longer than I regularly do them. I will be monitored by my parents during data collection and I will have earplugs available if at any time the noise level produces sound levels above Penn State's "Rule of Thumb" for determining the need for hearing protection ("A good 'rule of thumb' for determining if your work area or activity requires hearing protection is as follows. If you have difficulty hearing

or understanding a 'normal' tone of voice at a distance of about three feet, noise levels are probably exceeding safe levels and you should be using hearing protection") or above levels indicated on the decibel charts for safe exposure. I have consulted an audiologist about my plan and she has approved it and will be supplying appropriate earplugs in my correct size, in case they are needed. All activities at which I will take measurements are activities normally open to public access. In addition, the exposure to sound will be brief, and OSHA guidelines allow greater decibel levels when the exposure is for shorter times. I will be doing my testing for short periods, not entire band practices. Finally, I will not test the sound levels of any pipe bands or pipers while they are playing in bars or pubs or any other venue unsuitable for a 12 year old.

**Research Question**

Should Great Highland Bagpipe players use ear protection when practicing, to avoid hearing loss and/or damage?

**Purpose Statement**

Hearing well is important for communication and quality of life, but it is especially important for musicians. I am

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learning to play the bagpipes, a difficult instrument that requires hours of practice, and I would like to know if my hearing (and that of other pipers) should be protected during practice and performances. I will determine not only what level bagpipes and pipe bands perform and practice at, I will then research to discover if and how long exposure to those levels is safe. I will be able to compare my findings to other instruments with published decibel levels to apply my findings to those instruments as well. My research will not only be relevant to pipers, but to other musicians and also to the listening public, and even has application for people who work in noisy environments or have noisy pastimes, law enforcement and military personnel.

**Hypothesis**

I predict that the sound output from Great Highland Bagpipes will reach a decibel level above the level at which ear protection is recommended by Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) and/or National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) for the periods of exposure during practice.

Read Mr. Duarte’s full research paper here:  
[johnbottomleybagpipes.com/SamScienceFairReport2014.pdf](http://johnbottomleybagpipes.com/SamScienceFairReport2014.pdf)



**Murreeds**

By John Bottomley

Recent import from Ireland Alastair Murray, now of Pittsburgh, has been making a name for himself on the boards as a fine player of piobaireachd, and he is making a name for himself as a maker of fine pipe chanter reeds as well. I recently tried a batch of six reeds, and found all of them to be well made and quite vibrant on the top hand.

The pitch remains quite stable over the course of a practice, and when I stop playing for a few minutes and pick the pipe back up, simulating a contest condition, the reed comes back up quickly, minimizing the amount of time needed for retuning.

As the saying goes, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. And in this case, I liked the pie enough that I will be using the Murreed in my next recording.

Here is a short sample of how the reed sounded in my MacLeod chanter:  
[johnbottomleybagpipes.com/laggan6\\_15.wav](http://johnbottomleybagpipes.com/laggan6_15.wav)





## Branch Notes

### Metro Branch Report

The Metro Branch wishes all a successful competition season!

### Southwest Branch Report

The summer is gearing up in the Southwest branch, with a number of events being presented in the coming months.

The Lyon College Celtic Arts Summer School will be held on June 14-19 in Batesville, Arkansas. Study piping and drumming with some of the world's best instructors, including Willie McCallum, Jimmy Bell and others! On campus housing with room and board is \$850; Day student fees are \$650, with discounts for groups and students under 18. For more information, contact Jimmy Bell at [james.bell@lyon.edu](mailto:james.bell@lyon.edu) or visit the website at [web.lyon.edu/groups/shp/summerschool/index.htm](http://web.lyon.edu/groups/shp/summerschool/index.htm)

The Red Stick Regional Piping and Drumming Competition will be held in Baton Rouge July 25, for Grades 1-5 in both piping and drumming. This indoor air-conditioned event will be judged by Jerry Finegan, Chris Apps, Jon Quigg and Marc Dubois. New this year will be a micro-band competition and piping duets, separate drumming workshops for side and midsection held Saturday afternoon and both piping and drumming workshops held Sunday morning. For more information, contact Rosemary John at [rhsjohn@cox.net](mailto:rhsjohn@cox.net), or visit the website at [www.CSBR.org](http://www.CSBR.org), and click on the Red Stick Regional link for registration forms and info.

Silver Thistle Pipes and Drums of Austin, Texas is traveling to the Worlds this August!! The band will compete the weekend prior to the Worlds at North Berwick and Perth, then gear up for Glasgow Green. Contributions are welcome! Visit [www.silverthistle.org](http://www.silverthistle.org) to see how you can participate, and wish them luck!

The 2015 ScotFest will be held in Tulsa, Oklahoma from September 18-20, with solo piping and drumming competitions, as well as pipe band competitions, in Grades 1-5. For more information, please contact Cody Wagnon at [piping@okscotfest.com](mailto:piping@okscotfest.com), or visit their website at [okscotfest.com](http://okscotfest.com).

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The 54th Central Texas Scottish Gathering of the Clans & Highland Games are being held on November 14 & 15, 2015 at Pace Park in Salado, Texas. Sponsored by the Central Texas Area Museum, the Gathering is the oldest Highland Games in Texas. For more information please go to [www.saladoscottishfestival.com](http://www.saladoscottishfestival.com) or check us on Facebook Central Texas Area Museum. Solo Piping, Drumming, and band events will all be held; the entry forms are being updated and will be emailed out by September 1, 2015. Questions regarding the competition events may be emailed to Rosa Adams at [rosepipes@aol.com](mailto:rosepipes@aol.com).

We hope that everyone in the Southwest Branch can find plenty of area activities to participate in. Have a great summer!

Rosemary John  
Southwest Branch Secretary



# Report for the Executive Secretary

By Sheldon Hamblin

There have been three additions to the Ensemble Judge panel. They are Linda Hall, Eric MacNeill and Allan MacKenzie. Congratulations to all and thank you for serving our association.

**AGM 2015 Location:** Will be held by the Mid Atlantic branch / EC. This will be held Friday, November 13, Saturday November 14th and then the Judges seminar on Sunday, November 15th, 2015. This year we will have a band workshop, a reed-manipulating workshop, as well as other very interesting events still in the works. There will be vendors' tables for Friday night and all day Saturday. We are doing this in an effort to increase our membership turnout at the annual meeting. This will be held at the Holiday Inn, Inner Harbor, Baltimore, MD. See advertisement in this issue of the "Voice."

This year's notification of the AGM will be sent by snail mail, as it has been in the past. However, on this notice will also be instructions to go to the website for the bios on the nominated officers, and the ballots will be sent electronically. Please make sure your email as well as your snail mail addresses are up to date. This is the only way we have to contact you.

In the future, all communications will be done by email. This is an ongoing effort to save the association funds as mailing, as well as publication of the Voice have become cost prohibitive.

## **Nominations are needed**

This year the Executive Committee offices up for election are:

- Treasurer
- Executive Secretary
- Officer at Large position 1

The Executive Committee is a big responsibility and these nominations should not be taken lightly. Depending upon the specific executive office position one should plan on spending between one and ten hours per week on

EUSPBA business. In addition, the prospective nominees should possess good communication skills, access to the Internet and email during business days. Knowledge of EUSPBA rules, policies, and procedures and a willingness to participate in meetings, both computer and on location. All interested candidates must be members in good standing of the EUSPBA. If you are interested in running for the office, you may nominate yourself.

If you would like to nominate someone for any open executive committee office, please contact your branch representative as soon as possible.

## **Upgrade Requests**

Please do not assume you will automatically be regraded (solo or band). If you feel you are ready, look for the instructions when I mail out the annual general meeting information. Please follow all directions and get them in on time. Midseason upgrades are reviewed for Florida branch members and those members making exceptional strides. All other upgrades are reviewed in early December, and the requests must be in to me no later than November 1, as instructed on the form, available on the website. Letters from your instructors are welcome and encouraged. If you have any problem downloading the form from the web, please contact me and I will assist you. Do not wait until the last minute.

The meetings of the Executive Committee along with the branch chairs and chair of the music board continue, usually by email, Internet contact when necessary.

As always, please feel free to email me with any questions. I do answer phone calls, but usually I can give you a better, more accurate answer by email.

*Respectfully Submitted,*  
Sheldon C. Hamblin  
Executive Secretary, EUSPBA  
Tada Gan Iarracht



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