

The first World Champions

Stonehouse Pipe Band

IT'S a century since Stonehouse Pipe Band claimed a proud victory in the first world championships held back in 1909 — so it's fitting that the Lanarkshire band has recently been resurrected and has a chance to share the celebrations of the centenary, which also coincide with the 110th anniversary of the group's formation.

Their proud heritage as one of the oldest surviving civilian pipe bands in Scotland stretches back to October 11, 1899, when the band was formed under pipe major Hector McInnes, accompanied by his two sons on drums, with Peter Summers as the drum major.

It grew steadily, with practices held in Townhead School, and they went on to win the title of county champions between 1902 and 1905.

Among the founding members was James Laidlaw. He recalled that the band made a name for itself at various outings throughout Scotland, under pipe major McInnes who was said to be an expert in piping and who also wrote all the band's repertoire.

The pipe band competitions at the Cowal Games in Dunoon started in 1906 with a contest for the Argyll Shield which became the World Championship.

In the early years it was only contested by military bands and 1909 was the first time civilian bands had the chance to pit themselves against the military bands.

However there was also a competition for the civilian bands with Sir Harry Lauder putting up the Lauder Shield for the winners.

Stonehouse won both the Argyll and Lauder shields at the Cowal that year. The most famous of the coveted trophies was the Argyll Shield, presented to the winners of the grade one championships, which was donated to Cowal in 1901 by Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyll, the daughter of Queen Victoria.

James Laidlaw said that in 1909 the judges were for the first time sent into tents erected for the event and so did not know which bands were playing. The prize money was fixed at £10, £7 10/-, £5, and 50/- for the contests. The



The Stonehouse Pipe Band in 1909 photographed with the Argyll Shield and Lauder Shield.

civilian bands participating were permitted to choose their own tunes for the competition. When all the participating bands had competed the bands proceeded to have a massed march around the competing field before lining up in front of the judges at the grandstand to hear the winning band announced.

James recalled with pride the moment Stonehouse were named as the winners of both the Argyll Shield and the Lauder Shield when the band members and their supporters yelled out in celebration at the result. The band repeated the feat of winning the Lauder Shield in 1910 and 1911.

Andrew MacNeill wrote of Stonehouse's success at the Cowal Games in the Piping Times stating: "The first civilian band to make a real impact was Stonehouse. Stonehouse won the World Championship shortly before the first war and they made a very good impression on everybody who heard them. The pipes were so well tuned compared to those of the city. Previously very little attention was paid to the tuning of chanters and drones."

This was undoubtedly Stonehouse Pipe Band's most successful period and they won many trophies including three Lauder Shields,

the Argyll Shield and a third place between 1909 and 1912. They then gained a second place in the Lauder Shield and won the Graham Moffat Cup in 1919.

The Argyll Shield is now awarded to grade one bands at Cowal and the Lauder Shield is awarded to grade two bands.

As well as playing in competition with other bands, Stonehouse Pipe Band performed at many social occasions throughout the village and the surrounding area. It was also involved in supporting many charity events backing the war effort in World War One. Returning soldiers would be welcomed home as heroes from the railway station, parading through the village led by the pipe band. The band also escorted sporting heroes home to celebrate victories.

Pipe major Hector McInnes served during the Great War with the Scots Guards and is recognised for his service on a plaque in Paterson Church in the village. Former band member and band past president John Dunn said Hector was a miner in his younger years and founded the band at Swinhill colliery where he worked. Originally the band wore the MacGregor dress tartan before changing to the Red Hamilton dress tartan during the 1930s.



PHOTO FEATURE
Photos: John Slavin @ designfolk.com

As I mentioned before, the actual standard of playing – technical ability, tone, tempo and delivery – was of the highest calibre and nobody stuck out a mile for the wrong reasons.

Does band size play a part in winning? I would agree that strength comes from numbers but that can have a hefty price to pay if you can't get all the pipes to the same pitch or have players of similar ability. The average playing numbers in the top six bands were 15 pipers, seven sides and five bass and tenor; whereas in the bottom six, the average was 12 pipers, four sides and three bass and tenor. In this event, we had all the permutations: big bands, small sound; small bands, big sound; large numbers playing well together; small numbers, with ragged playing; bands sounding well at the beginning – but tailing off towards the end; with yet more taking too long to settle. It is equally unusual for both piping judges to be largely in agreement results-wise – both having the same top six with one exception (as I did).

I am by no means officially qualified to judge, but like thousands of other pipers (and drummers), I have

my own opinions, views and with experience gleaned from years of listening to bands, I can come up with a set of results, just as easily as the next. And if we can't get the judges to agree, who is to say mine are any more wrong, or right?

I am pleased to say that I correctly predicted – first (Inveraray) and second (Ravara), (not really difficult, you could argue), but also three out of the top four and eight out of the top 10 results, (granted not in the same order). Not bad for an uncertificated supporter.

Most improved championship performance was Mauchline & District, who look like they are beginning to reap the benefit of pipe major Gordon Walker's experience.

Most lighthearted moment of the day was the little dance by Strathclyde Fire and Rescue pipe major Robert Shaw, as he changed positions with the player on his immediate right halfway through the march. It obviously did the trick as they then turned in their highest championship position.

Inveraray have since gone on to win at Cowal, making a clean sweep of wins and gaining a thoroughly

deserved promotion to grade one. They deserve the opportunity, and hopefully will go on to make a big impact – as much as they undoubtedly have over the past few years. They join a small elite group of bands who have already made the move through the grades in successive years.

Scotland, the home of piping, has struggled at all levels over many years, with very stiff opposition from primarily Irish, Canadian and Australian bands. But it would seem that the Scottish bands have finally taken up the challenge and are fighting back. Long may it continue.

Good luck to them, and to all bands who strive to better themselves in general and drumming and piping in particular. ●

Grade Two Results: 1. Inveraray & District; 2. Ravara; 3. Mauchline & District; 4. Dumfries & Galloway Police; 5. Grampian Police; 6. New Westminster Police, Canada.

My Results: 1. Inveraray & District; 2. Ravara; 3. Dumfries & Galloway Police; 4. Killeen; 5. New Westminster Police, Canada; 6. Grampian Police.

Another Stonehouse piper to have served during the Great War was Samuel Forsyth who alas was not to return from the fields of France. Private Samuel Forsyth joined the Scottish Rifles (Cameronians) 2nd Battalion on May 25, 1911, and served three years in Malta before being drafted to the battle front in

competition from other bands who had financial backing put increasing pressure on the Stonehouse band and they found it difficult to compete. Membership had dwindled by the late 1950s and they broke up several times but reformed over the years. They continued to play during the 1960s and in 1967 the pipe band

Development Trust with the idea of re-establishing the Stonehouse Pipe Band. Trust director Morag Cook helped lead the effort and through her commitment and enthusiasm succeeded in gaining the support of former members of the band and various other interested individuals. It led to the re-establishment of Stonehouse Pipe Band at their AGM on May 15, 2007, although many of the members were young people with no previous experience of playing the pipes or drums.

The newly-reformed band got a welcome boost when former member Ian Watt got in touch to say he had been storing a number of items belonging to the old band – which he was happy to return to help get the band started. The hoard included 20 metres of Red Hamilton tartan, which has since been used to dress the present band, as well as drums, a band shield and a copy of the original band constitution. They sought grant funding but the members also raised an incredible £23,000 in their first year and they also received several kind donations from supporters. With that backing the band was able to provide basic kit for the players.

Practising with chanters and drum pads the young but enthusiastic company grew from strength to strength in quality and numbers. There are now around 40 registered members. In a very short period of time the band progressed from chanter to pipes.

In 2008 the band played its first official engagements including a performance in the village for the Agricultural Show and a month later they led the gala day procession.

The band are now in great demand throughout Lanarkshire and the village can be proud of their achievements and success in such a relatively short time. The band is thriving once again under the guidance of pipe major Matthew Steele and drum sergeant Jim Schottner ably assisted by drum major George Bowie and pipe sergeant Stuart Kinniburgh.

Their commitment and success is a credit to themselves and to Stonehouse in showing what can be done when a community works together.

This year Stonehouse Pipe Band celebrates its 110th anniversary and a century since winning the World Championships in 1909. Although the past successes of the band are unlikely to be surpassed, the band is justifiably proud of its history and roots — and the future looks bright. ●



Pipe major Hector McInnes (right) with Sir Harry Lauder and home guard at the public hall, Trongate 1942.

France. He died of his wounds at the age of 22 on July 25, 1915. As a serving soldier Samuel also played the pipes in rallying his comrades in battle. As well as being commemorated in Stonehouse cemetery, Samuel is recognised for his sacrifice in Merville Communal Cemetery in Nord, France.

In November 1918 the Hamilton Advertiser described the World War One victory celebrations in Stonehouse as follows: “On receipt of the news that the armistice had been signed steps were immediately taken to celebrate the great event. An impromptu pipe band was formed of soldiers and civilians who paraded the streets followed by cheering crowds.”

Hector’s son Hector McInnes is understood to have travelled to Detroit in the United States to establish the Ford Pipe Band. Other members of the world championship winning band included the Sorbie brothers, Dan and John. They emigrated to the United States to work in the mines of Wyoming in 1910. Dan, formerly a miner in Stonehouse is thought to have either joined or formed the Gillespie Pipe Band in Illinois.

The pipe band began to decline around the outbreak of the Second World War. Fierce

were photographed at Stonehouse Cross and were recorded as a grade four band.

Perhaps the most famous former member of Stonehouse Pipe Band, drummer Arthur Cook, played in the latter stages of band’s illustrious history.

He joined at the age of 11 before moving on to play for a host of other pipe bands including Shotts and Dykehead and the Lothian and Borders Police band. Arthur won many titles in his career but none greater than the RSPBA World Solo Drumming Championship in 1988. He was successful in winning many other events including various placings at the World Championships and runner-up in the World Solo Drumming Champion of Champions contest.

Stonehouse Pipe Band continued to make regular visits to the Cowal Games throughout the 1970s but disbanded formally in 1977. The junior pipe band thrived for a while but a lack of support and its senior pipers retiring or moving to other bands led to the band’s demise.

It was almost 30 years before a successful effort was made to resurrect the band. In 2006 former local councillor, Fred McDermid, approached the recently-formed Stonehouse

Scottish traditional grounds

PART 3: Bonnie Annie — 1100 1101

8

15. **Bonnie Annie. March** By Daniel Ross.

The image shows a musical score for 'Bonnie Annie. March' by Daniel Ross. It consists of three staves of music. The top staff is the main melody, the middle staff is the first ending, and the bottom staff is the second ending. The music is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The score includes various musical notations such as eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and repeat signs.

THIS is the most popular ground in Scottish traditional music. In 2007, I introduced it to the BA (Scottish Music) syllabus for first-year students at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama. In their Listening Skills viva exam, I sing the first part of a traditional-sounding tune; the student has to sing back a second part built on the same ground. The fact that they find this improvisation exercise relatively easy with the ground of *Bonnie Annie* suggested to me that it enters a traditional musician's subconscious at an early age, or is particularly brain-friendly.

After the Listening Skills exam this year, I resolved to gather some data so that this series of articles would be based on hard evidence,

Example 1. Bonnie Annie — March. David Glen's *Collection of Highland Bagpipe Music, Part 9* (Edinburgh c.1893) p. 8. The similarity with Example 2 below, especially the 2nd part, suggests that Ross adapted an English tune to the Highland pipes.

rather than my subjective impression as a performer and listener. My research revealed that 1100 1101 forms the harmonic backbone of 28% of the music on the CD *The World Pipe Band Championships 2008* (vol. 1); 31% of the dance tunes published by Patrick McDonald in 1784; and 37% of the Cape Breton fiddle repertoire published in *The DunGreen Collection* (1996).¹

Although it has been the most popular ground in *ceòl beag* for over 200 years, the same cannot be said of lowland music. In William Dixon's manuscript from Northumberland

(1733–38), three other grounds occur more frequently:

- 1110 1100 43% (Part 5)
- 1011 1011 23% (Part 1, Issue 38)
- 1111 1100 18% (Part 9)

The ground we are dealing with here, 1100 1101, forms the backbone of only 10% of Dixon's variation sets.

Examples are found in continental sources reaching back to the fourteenth-century, but it does not appear to have taken root anywhere as vigorously as in Gaelic Scotland. The earliest example I have found is a royal wedding

Example 2. Red-House. Henry Playford (London 1695, 1703) *The Dancing Master*. Reproduced from the 12th edition (1703) in Glasgow Mitchell Library. "Red-House" first appeared in the 9th edition of 1695.

Red-House. Longways for as many as will.

The image shows a handwritten musical score for 'Red-House'. It consists of three staves of music. The title 'Red-House.' is written at the top left, and 'Longways for as many as will.' is written at the top center. The music is written in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a common time signature (C). The score includes various musical notations such as eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and repeat signs. At the top right, there are some decorative symbols: three circles above three crescent moons.