



NOTING THE TRADITION

An Oral History Project from the National Piping Centre



Supported by
The National Lottery[®]
through the Heritage Lottery Fund



Interviewee James Begg

Interviewer Angus MacKay

Date of Interview 7th December 2012

**This interview is copyright of the National Piping Centre
Please refer to the Noting the Tradition Project Manager at
the National Piping Centre, prior to any broadcast of or
publication from this document.**

**Project Manager
Noting The Tradition
The National Piping Centre
30-34 McPhater Street
Glasgow
G4 0HW
jbeaton@thepipingcentre.co.uk**

So this is for the Noting the Tradition Project. I'm Angus MacKay and I'm here with James Begg, bagpipe maker, on the 7th of December in James' shop in Bath Street in Glasgow. The first question, James, is can you tell me a little bit about how you originally got into bagpiping?

Yeah, sure, no problem Angus. It's nice to have you in the shop today and to meet you. So, yeah, how did I get into piping? I started playing perhaps at the age of about 11 in the BB band, local BB band in Hillington, where I stayed when I was younger – that's on the south side of Glasgow – and we discovered really perhaps that the tuition there wasn't really up to what was required so at that point I was taken to the College of Piping in Otago Street in the West End of Glasgow. That's a very well known establishment and it's been on the go for many many years, but at that time it was not the building it is today. It was very rundown and I studied there for many years. Essentially it was a Monday night I would go and it was very very, particularly in the winter, very hard going because I had to get the bus from where I lived down to Govan or Sunny Govan as some people might say but I can assure you it was anything but sunny and Govan in those days was pretty rough.

Anyway, so I was a young boy of twelve, having to get myself over to Otago Street so it meant the bus down to Govan, usually raining, dark nights, onto the subway and, again, the subway was not – it was very much the older fashioned carriages that we had then whereby the gates slid shut. None of the clockwork orange or what we have again today or modern network.

So I eventually got over to Otago Street, up the stairs, across the bridge and down to get the lesson so it was a very interesting few years and I got a lot of good tuition from the likes of Duncan Johnson and Duncan MacFadyen and obviously Seumas MacNeill was there who, whilst didn't teach, was always in the

background more or less and I've known him over the years since then.

Can you tell me a little bit about each of those people who taught you?

Yeah, sure. Duncan – in fact I continued my tutelage with Duncan from the age of twelve right 'til about, trying to think, for about thirty, thirty five years on. I've lost count. I had a brief spell of a year or so I didn't go to Duncan but I eventually went back because he was such a good tutor and I got on really well with him and to be honest I went not just for the piping but his general manner. He was a great guy to be around and good fun and to show you my, what do you call it, extent of my interest in learning from him, I would go there sometimes at seven, eight in the morning. Drive over to where he was teaching then – that was maybe later on in life when I was in my twenties – he stayed in Shawlands – so I would drive over from Hillington to Shawlands at any time of the day really for a lesson so it was good stuff there, you know.

What sort of music did he teach you? Was there any particular type that he taught you?

Yeah, sure. So obviously initially at the college with Duncan and the other various like Tommy Pearston, I would get lessons periodically from all these other people as well so it was interesting to see how they taught and what they brought to the thing. So the likes of Tommy would get up and wander about the room. You think he's not listening and he's looking out the window and you're playing away and you're wondering what's Tommy up to, is he coming back, but he would come back and say you need to do that doubling better etc so it was good to see the different type of people in the piping college there but, yeah, ultimately Duncan eventually – I think I was about maybe sixteen, seventeen or he taught me piobaireachd and I think the reason I kept going was the fact that was a new subject for me

and that kept my interest going beyond all the marches, strathspeys and reels. By that time I'd already done the two Scots Guards books etc and all the strong traditional tunes that you'd want to learn and I'd played round all the Highland Games etc so I was right into it and did a lot of playing with not just with solo piping, which I probably enjoyed more, but with pipe bands as well.

You mentioned the Scots Guards there. Can you tell me what the progression was into the Scots Guards? How did you become a soldier first of all?

Well I didn't actually become a soldier. When I say the Scots Guards we're talking about the Scots Guards books. Sorry about that. But it did obviously have a very strong connection with the army, business wise, and that stemmed from Angus MacDonald who was the head instructor at Edinburgh Castle in 1980 and I went up and saw Angus when I was starting business and he was very kind to put his support to me but, again, I was very young, very inexperienced and he was very kind and encouraging.

Sorry, so what was the actual connection with the Scots Guards in terms of you – obviously there was that contact you've mentioned but then you're talking about books as well?

Certainly the connection that Angus gave me at that point was that I went on to supply the army at that time with all their pipe bags for about ten or so years so I got calls all the time. I did many big contracts with the army at that point which obviously became the mainstay in the 80s of the business. So much so, however, I was warned slightly to make sure I didn't just rely on them and that came to pass that it was probably just as well as I tried to just about gear away so if you ever didn't get the contract you weren't solely reliant on the army. It's very good to have but you have to keep your fingers in other pies.

So pipe maker and defence contractor rolled into one.

Yes, indeed so. There's various skills there to keep all that going. Obviously I had to learn. One of the major issues with all these contracts was the actual paperwork. Extremely complicated. Five copies of this, one was to go here, one was to go there and if you didn't do it right you didn't get paid either so there was all sorts of – and of course all the bags get inspected as well so I did actually have to have them inspected. There was a drawing that would show you what a pipe bag looked like, what the stitching should be and each one was thoroughly tested and eventually I had to put a stamp on it with a NATO number identifying the item so there was all this extra work, you know.

So at one point when I was in Renfield Street in the Hector Russell kiltmaker I had pipe bags everywhere. I had so many pipe bags I didn't know where to put them – there were hundreds. Of course there was the army's but everybody else's as well so it was quite a major logistical issue keeping the whole thing ticking over but we seemed to get there.

So can you tell me a bit about the progression from being a piper and getting tuition in Glasgow to then becoming a manufacturer of bagpipes? How did that come around?

Good question because I've often wondered myself how that actually got to this point but I think it was basically when I was younger, about 19, 20, I did go to University, or what was a College then but it's now termed a University, and studied mechanical engineering. A very very hard subject, didn't really like it, don't know why I did it but it was a good experience because it's always good to learn. So I eventually went from there to Grainger & Campbell and started making pipe bags with their company in Argyle Street so that was where the changeover occurred, basically I suppose just following your hobby into work and I just generally built it from there.

And did you find that you had – obviously you did but did you find that you had a talent for that line of work and maybe also more than just an average interest in it as well?

Yes, perhaps. There was the business side of it perhaps that I was obviously interested in too so the combination of selling and buying and raw products and how businesses work – because ultimately, strangely enough, people say how many jobs have you got. I've got hundreds of jobs because basically I do everything so whether it's doing the windows, sweeping the floor or meeting all sorts of people, I do have quite a variety of roles to play, as I say whether it's phoning up people and saying you owe me money or you don't owe me money, or they phone me saying I owe them money, but hopefully that's not the case. I've always hoped that the idea would be maybe I've got a good reputation, that people know I'll pay, there's no trust...through the years. I've built up that reputation so much so that even if I miss a payment people will phone me and say you haven't – like a couple of days they'll realise I haven't paid them so you can be your own worst enemy at points, yeah.

And if we can go back to again when you started in bagpipe manufacture. Can you describe a typical day of your work back then when you were starting out. You know, you come in in the morning and hang your jacket up. Tell me how your day would unfold back then.

Obviously I've had different styles of premises and so it's been built up over the years. Each day was probably a bit different but initially it was just pipe bag making. I did it all myself. I did three or four pipe bags every day solid and at that point would again – I dealt with the Strathclyde Police for twelve years solid and I suppose one of my nice things is when they won all their championships under Ian McLellan I supplied all their pipe bags for that period of time so whilst I'm not trying to imply over the years that everybody that wins the pipe band

championship has used the bags, I suspect you'd probably find that a lot have and it's been one of the nice things perhaps to be able to say well, a little over thirty two years now and even more so today it's almost bigger than it was then.

And so you would be making three to four bags a day but of course there's so much more to making a set than just that so what other aspects of manufacture would you be doing, again when you were starting out? You were saying there that you were involved with three to four bags a day and making those. What other parts of the set would you make?

So eventually after a wee while I began to make the covers and the cords. I got them in and started doing that on top and just generally over the years I've built it up. For many years it was just myself doing it and moved to Hector Russell in Renfield Street after the Robertson Street initial premises and that moved me up a gear slightly so the turnover doubled so that introduced me to more of a business like atmosphere and I learned a lot from how Hector Russell functioned. They're a big company relatively speaking and so I garnered a lot of knowledge just being in their premises and I eventually became a very good friend of John Hamilton who was very instrumental in backing me up on many occasions because I've found over the years you do need occasionally people to say can you help me and John was very good in that direction.

And the skills that are involved in bag manufacture and then doing the covers, who taught you those skills? How did you learn them?

I suppose it was just slightly self taught. There's a degree of knowing slightly how they work but obviously most of the bags I make are individual. That's why if they go to somebody else and they say it's not quite the same but obviously it's not going to be because they haven't made it. They're trying to imply – you get the skin from the same place. If everything's the same

why is it not the same product and that's obviously where I come into it. It's very much like my friend, Roddy MacLeod, who's the Piping Centre Director and people keep on coming in to me and saying can I have a bag like Roddy's or can I have a such and such like Roddy's but what they don't really understand is they can have every gadget under the sun like Roddy, including his pipes, but they'll not sound like him. So that's the thing I was trying to imply there.

But yeah, ultimately what I've tried to do and Gordon behind here who's keeping very quiet at the moment, he obviously is good at making the pipes so he's added to the business. I've brought two or three people, it's all kind of family orientated, and they've all come in and given me a hand just because it's almost now impossible to do what I would have done initially.

Okay. Just maybe moving on now to some of the more – to aspects of the instrument itself. Stradivarius and Steinway are big names in violin and piano. Are there any big historical names that are associated with bagpiping or does it not really work that way?

Yeah, you've got the same names, the likes of R.G. Lawrie. I see them all the time – buy and sell them all the time. You've got Henderson pipes. So because we're based in Glasgow here I will see these pipes more so than say the pipes made in Edinburgh – so you've got the McPhersons of Edinburgh, Glens – so I think if you had a shop in Edinburgh you're more likely to see them there. Actually I tend to see companies like these, like Granger & Campbell or all the local people, even Hector Russell from the 50s from Greenock or all these well known manufacturers, Duncan McRae, but Lawries are obviously prolific and very good quality. You've got Henderson as I say, R.G. Hardie which for many years produced pipes so there's certain brand makes which you see all the time. You recognise them, you know exactly what you've got and obviously I'm hoping that Begg bagpipes will be along that line and the main

aspect I've been trying to promote is that everything I do is by hand and individually made so people are getting a very bespoke item but hopefully not expensive because people when you say bespoke they think it's more expensive but it's not. For what you're getting I don't think it is. It's good value.

So if a customer was to walk in off the street tomorrow morning and say, hello, I'd like a set of pipes. What's the process that you would go through to determine what the correct size would be? How do you assess how to get them the correct set of pipes?

Exactly. There's a process whereby I'll more or less now know whether someone's going to buy a set or not. You can tell the minute they walk through the door and if we don't sell a set within five minutes I could be there for half an hour and they won't buy a set. There's a certain time period you know you're going to sell it or you're not.

So what are the signs that let you know if you're going to make a sale?

It's just intuition. I just know who is and who isn't. Then of course I then say to them what type of pipes, what do you want to pay, what's your criteria here, are you just beginning to play or are you more experienced or where are you going to play so I generally ask various questions and that way I can gauge what they want, you know, do you want a silver set or maybe the wives come in as well so it's managing the – it's almost like a show, you've got to manage – the wife's almost as important as the guy because she could make or break the deal as well and sometimes they do. [Laughter] I've found it far better usually man to man because you cut to the chase here.

So how does that work if it's a female customer?

Well, it's a different ballgame there altogether, yeah. Very much so, yeah.

How do you deal with that?

Well, again – we're just short of Christmas so there'll be ladies in trying to buy things for their husbands and are obviously looking for what CD or what book or whatever but, yeah, it's just a totally different way you approach it perhaps, you know.

Okay. Can you tell me what, in your opinion, marks out a set of pipes as having a particularly good or special sound? What is it that would make a set of pipes a special set of pipes?

That's quite a hard thing to say, isn't it. I think it comes down to personal taste there. I quite like a nice mellow sweet tone. To give you an analogy, I had a two sets of older sets, one was Henderson, one was Lawrie's. I've still got the Lawrie's. I decided to sell the Henderson's for some strange reason but I realised I could only play one at a time. I thought it was ridiculous having this set here just lying in the house and not doing much but the reason, whilst I enjoyed the Henderson set and it had a big huge Ferrari sound, it was a wee bit too – well, I don't know – I just went for the Lawrie's. It was a wee bit lighter weight but more mellow. The Henderson were really nice too but I just personally preferred the Lawrie set and, again, it comes down to which chanter you use and I've used mainly the Naill chanters but what I have discovered really over the years, whilst you do experiment the strange thing is you always go back to virtually what you had to begin with. Initially you think well that sounds okay but really after a couple of months you think let's go back to what we had.

You have a lot of very knowledgeable customers at the shop. You have customers who are championship pipers so they're going to know exactly what they want out of a set of pipes so

how do you go about meeting their expectations? If they come in they'll have a particular sound in mind. How do you go about meeting that expectation?

Well you're quite right. The trouble is – well not the trouble – I do have a lot of top players. Now these aren't always the best people to deal with because they are far more troublesome, they know they want this, they want that, so really, I shouldn't say but – .

No, I think but what you're saying when you say troublesome you mean they're able to be honest with you because they know that you'll understand what they want.

Yeah, and I know what they want as well because obviously you deal with them all the time but it does get from a supplying somebody something and the trouble is they're not always correct but I have to say, yeah, you're spot on because you don't want to obviously alienate them but sometimes you just say, well – they've been very few occasions like that but eventually you do have to because basically it comes down to people who are maybe just going through a bad patch and they're blaming everything bar themselves, it's this, it's that, it's the reed, it's the chanter so as a business you can't afford to start saying well just have another one, just have another one. If you had that ethos then you wouldn't be in business long so there's a fine dividing line between catering for people's whims and keeping a business afloat, you know.

So there's kind of a process of discussion and negotiation that goes on with certainly the more knowledgeable customers to arrive at where they want to get.

Yeah. I very much – I treat them differently to other customers.

And you'll take more time I suppose with them.

Perhaps more time or more I would sort of think well that's for so and so. He knows he wants this or I'm aware of what they're personal – because obviously the difficulty is – every individual has a different preference. No two are the same again but over the years we seem to have done quite well I think and maintained that core group of people that you need obviously because with them, you know, you need them to say whether they – we talked about Chris Armstrong the other day. People like him saying..., I had a good meeting with him last year because I was aware that a lot of the guys he was sending round to me for the band were coming back and saying to me this isn't right, that's not right and I'm saying well it is right, it's you that's wrong so after two or three of this I thought, wait a minute, Chris is going to think what am I supplying here so I actually went round and saw him and I said can I have a quick word. By the way I just thought I'd let you know that this is the situation here and he said yeah, you're quite right. I'm glad you told me. I can see that as well that these guys are just being, not difficult, but due to their lack of knowledge are giving you a false image, you know.

It's annoying when you're supplying something that's good and they don't realise it and it's giving you a bad feedback. So I'm still dealing with the Scottish Power this year ahead and it's worked out really well just because of one brief conversation.

So if you've sold a set of pipes to someone and they would like a tweak made to the pipes, can you give me an example of the sort of tweak that you would make to change the sound.

Yes. Obviously I'm seeing pipes every day all day and very quickly can see the problem that most customers don't see. They tend to be like taking the pipes to a mechanic and getting them fixed. So it's very easy for me to advise them what they could do to improve. They might want to do it then but we could do it later on so I generally say we can do this for you up

to a certain price – it's going to cost you that – or you can do more. So I can just look at them and say what are you wanting to do.

So for instance, some examples might be you said maybe reducing the bag.

Yes, indeed.

What effect does that have on the sound, if any, or under what circumstances would you suggest, okay, that bag needs to be reduced?

Yeah, sure. Not always smaller, some people need bigger ones but generally smaller. All that does is makes it more comfortable for the player. So basically what I'm trying to do mainly is make it fit like a glove. When something doesn't fit it's very uncomfortable to play so they break it right down to the bottom, start at the bottom and work the way up and I do have many customers who keep on coming back.

One guy who plays at a very well known dinner and I started maybe ten years ago with him and what I quite liked about him, he only comes in every year for this Burns thing and over the various years I've consistently made him better. He has the potential to be good but when I first saw him it was pretty awful so we changed the chanter, we changed the reeds, did almost everything eventually but it's taken a long long time so it's quite pleasing from my point of view that when he strikes up now what a difference. And I'm sure if you went back and heard him when he first started, it was shocking.

Big difference.

Yeah, very much so.

And what other tweaks or what sorts of other amendments might you make to a set?

Amendments – well we can obviously rebore – Gordon there's very good at just reboring – sometimes you get the drones locking off, mainly the wood changes, warps and it becomes very sticky so we do that. Any small job like that or – what else – we virtually do anything like new ferules, new mounts, just any repairs we can certainly do. And this is when it comes back to doing everything by hand. You can very easily do these things if you're doing it that way.

And I'm very much picking up that there's no point in someone dropping off their set of pipes with a note of what they think's wrong. Obviously you've got to watch them playing the pipes in front of you and it's as much an assessment of the player as it is of the pipes because it's one thing – two parts of the same thing if you like.

That's right. It's all very well saying but you've got to look at the player too and you've got to be very careful what you say to the player because sometimes it can just be the way they're blowing so I can pick them up and they sound fine and they pick them up and they don't sound fine so it just tells you it's just inexperience from their point of view. It's them that's doing something not quite right. So I'll just say to them could you gently blow that harder or we'll alter that reed to suit you, you know, if the reed's too hard for them, that type of area.

So there's a multitude of things every day. It's not the same problem for every person so that's where I hope I can pinpoint that for them and assess it.

I was just going to ask you – you mentioned, or we've discussed, Scottish bagpipe manufacturers and we've talked a little bit about the customers here in Scotland. Can you tell me a little bit about any overseas customers you have

and maybe where they're based and what they're using the pipes for, if it's band or solo playing or events, dinners.

Sure. There's a wide variety of different types of customers abroad as well. You've got the older generation so that, again, you have to cope with they're not getting any younger most of them. We're talking about America, Australia, New Zealand and yet of course a lot of these guys now because of air travel we're getting a lot more influence from abroad than we perhaps used to have in the past so I'm now almost meeting these customers from wherever say in August when they come over for the various championships or solo events so it's a far closer – the world, as they say, has got smaller and I can very much see that and that's where piping's changed and so the Scottish scene is being influenced very much by what they're doing abroad now.

In what ways?

Again, to give you an analogy, when I first started doing the pipe bags every bag I did was a straight neck so you've got straight necks and you've got swan necks and to be honest there's not a huge difference between them but just a subtle preference again so every bag I did was straight. Now, every bag I do is swan so, again, that's totally stemmed from the foreign influence and from my point of view it's slightly harder to do the swan, it can make it more... It's just slightly more work and it's difficult to keep the bag tight but we do that and that's what people want.

It's just different techniques, different ways of doing things.

Yeah, but it's a fashion almost.

And what about the non-English speaking part of the world or the majority of the world. Do you have customers from non-English speaking countries or indeed countries that

didn't have a Scots diaspora in them. I'm thinking perhaps of possibly France or somewhere like Japan or something.

Yes. Due to the internet perhaps as well I will deal with Russia, Sweden, Holland, all these countries you've mentioned there and it just generally stems from an interest in Scottish culture. Sometimes they're interested in kits and bagpipes so particularly in Glasgow here you'll get, again, different types of tourists so they all come in for different reasons and it's my job to make sure that they don't walk out of the shop without buying something and I'm not just here to be a tourist information person so, again, that's where the business side of it has to work. The shop's obviously expensive and to run it it takes time.

Bt yeah, the point I was going to mention there as well was language can be a problem. You do get a lot of people from say even Argentina recently. They come in and they don't speak English so that can be quite a challenge to but most of the time they do strangely enough or they have someone with them that can speak English so sometimes it works but sometimes it can be very challenging just to deal with them.

That was an interesting example you gave there at the end, an Argentine interest in buying pipes. Is that was for a band?

Yes. A lot of people I don't think realise how many bands are in all these out of the way – there's Mexico, there's Argentina. So South America does have pipe bands out there which we're probably not aware of but, yeah, there's a few and they're all quite keen. Whilst you've maybe got the Commonwealth countries that you'd expect, it's now spreading far further beyond that.

How do you see – to go back a little bit, you mentioned earlier a number of manufacturers names and there's clearly a very strong base of bagpipe manufacture in

Scotland, whether that's on the bigger scale or the bespoke, handmade craft scale but how do you perceive the future say in thirty years time? What do you think the profile will be of bagpipe manufacturers – the mix between the bespoke makers and the large scale manufacturers?

Well that's right. The difficulty with piping in many respects is it's a very small industry. There's not a huge lot of money to be made by anyone. I keep on saying I don't have the Rolls Royce at the door. I should have but don't. So it's more a lifestyle business so anybody out there who's trying to make money I'm sure they'll find that the amount of work there's easier ways of doing it. So this is where the piping world gets very easily put down the wrong avenue and I think this is where it's important that we take the wrong step one way and maybe years later it'll show up and it's a bad idea so now with the mass produced bagpipes, and there's quite a lot of companies doing it, my worry would be perhaps in a few years time they won't be able to keep up that level to keep it all going. It's bound to stop. It did in the 50s back then. Obviously money was tighter then, we've got a far bigger financial money in the back pocket now than a lot of people have so there are people who will go out and buy another set and so so but I'm sure with the volume that's getting made today, it can't keep going.

So perhaps from your point of view small is beautiful and small is sustainable.

Exactly, yeah. Very much so. I would not like to be doing what some of them are doing because to churn out X amount of bagpipes every week and have to make X amount to keep you floating, I don't think it's a very attractive proposition.

Are you aware of any young bagpipe makers coming through?

Certainly I would say there's a lot of young people learning bagpipes, which slightly surprises me as well, with all the other things that you could be doing, but yeah, there's a very strong youth movement and I see that obviously from the likes of Inveraray Pipe Band and from Boghall Pipe Bands. I went out there a couple of years ago and did a wee lesson for the Boghall. They've got so many bands. I think it was the juvenile band, did a wee talk with them, but you could see out there it was a hundred youngsters all learning so I was very impressed by the level of (a) work that was going into it and the commitment from the youngsters.

It's quite common. Not just the two I've mentioned there but there's far more people doing that then, again, you would anticipate.

And is it the case then that inevitably from X number of pipers you will get one or two people who'll go into the business of bagpipe making? Does that tend to be how people get into the business, they start playing and then I imagine a small number become bagpipe makers.

Sure but in the past, strangely, like Gordon there is a very good example. A lot of the turners weren't bagpipe players and this is where the likes of companies maybe need somebody like myself or if you look at Hardie's, Bob Hardie or John Weatherstone who were pipers but not necessarily turners so there was a lot of turners that didn't actually play.

I presume you're talking about people who turn the wood that goes into making drones and chanters.

Exactly. They were skilled at what they did but didn't necessarily have the interest in playing but I think it probably helps, you know.

Sort of just to bring it full circle, when we started talking I asked you about your own introduction to piping and you were talking about when you'd been learning to play. Can you tell me a little bit about your own playing since then and up to date. Have you been a member of a band or have you been more of a solo piper and do you have any other activities such as judging possibly or anything like that?

Again, I've personally done all of these things to varying levels. Pipe bands were very good when I was younger. It got me round the country in good company and I discovered beer tents, sadly, and your... so I managed to get to a fairly good Grade One standard. I played with a couple of Grade One bands.

Which bands were they?

I played with the Babcock Renfrew at that point under Ian MacLeod which was a very interesting experience. Ian obviously was a very well known pipe major with the Lothian and Borders Police. He was very much a fatherly figure really so I more or less did anything he asked and I didn't argue much. He wasn't the type of person you would – he had his opinions, you would put it like that, which is fine because that's what you need in a pipe major, isn't it.

I did a lot of solo piping. That's where I met a lot of the top players and I still know a lot of them now. People like Fred Morrison or Roddy. All these people were playing at the time I was playing. Sadly I used to go with Roddy round various games. I had a great time up in Uist with him – at about eighteen he took me up there but always going with Roddy was never a good idea because I was always at least second if not third, fourth. He was always winning, you know, but we had a good time and I realised at that point how committed he was to practice which maybe wasn't my forte. It was good fun so we did that.

I also did a bit of folk band playing as well. This was before perhaps folk bands as we have now. Everyone's in one now, you know. So I played a wee bit with the Clutha folk group which were well known – one of the oldest folk groups in Glasgow and if not Scotland.

Is that a group related to the pub of the same name?

Well the pub's taken their name I think but I think Clutha just means, I can't remember now, but it's general generic term for the Glasgow something... I can't remember offhand what it relates to but it's a very traditional Clyde built type name. So I've done that side and obviously as well travelled the world so there's not really many aspects of the playing side I haven't seen or been involved in.

And have you ever done any judging?

I've done once or twice. Yeah, I've dabbled in that.

How did you find that?

Well, I'm not sure if I would do it again that often. I found it quite a challenge actually. It does question your own ability actually. What you thought you knew doesn't always – and it's very intense as well. It's quite a hard job to keep your concentration but ultimately also I'm not the type of person – I didn't like giving – I felt sorry for the person who was third and should I have given him first and then of course if you do meet them you feel a bit guilty about the result so maybe judging is again for a certain type of person that maybe would like to do that. I'm not saying I wouldn't do it but I perhaps didn't find it – maybe occasionally it's fine but it's not something perhaps I'd want to do every week I don't think.

Stick to making and playing.

Exactly, and advising rather than judging others, you know.

Okay. Well thank you very much for taking the time to speak to me. That was very very interesting. Thanks a lot.

Thanks Angus. Thank you.