



NOTING THE TRADITION

An Oral History Project from the National Piping Centre



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Interviewee **Colin MacLellan**

Interviewer **Howard Tindall**

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It is the 19th of March 2013, at the home of Colin MacLellan in Edinburgh with Howard Tindall interviewing for the Noting the Tradition project. Colin, thanks for inviting me into your home to do this interview. Am I right in thinking this house formerly belonged to your father, Captain John MacLellan?

It did, yes. My father bought this house in 1974 after he retired from the British Army as the Director of Army Bagpipe Music at Edinburgh Castle. We lived in a house in a place called Ramsay Garden at the bottom of the Castle Esplanade which was a large flat that came with my father's job so after he left the Army he bought this place.

So, I'm thinking that your neighbours alongside you in this elegant terraced house in Edinburgh will have built up a fine appreciation of piping over the years?

Well, put it this way, they know that we play the pipes and I think bagpipes have pretty well continuously sounded in this house since '74 with various breaks. We've never had any trouble with neighbours. We're pretty sensible about it of course. We don't play late in the evenings or anything like that. We're quite considerate and I am sure they hear it a lot but after all these years we haven't had any problems.

I'll possibly suggest to the Piping Centre that they interview your neighbours just to check on that [laughter]. So, to start us off then, can you tell me about your early days in piping and the different teachers that helped you get going?

Looking back on it all I suppose it was pretty well inevitable that I would become a piper. Of course everything in our house was concerned with piping and that kind of thing with my Dad's position in having done what he'd done in piping. I went to school at George Heriot's School at the age of five and I got started in piping at school. At Heriot's School there was a very good teacher called Jack Crichton

and I remember him coming around the classrooms doing demonstrations and he came into our classroom, and I would probably have been about the traditional age of starting, about seven years old, and he'd come in and brought a pupil with him, an advanced pupil who could play the pipes. He had this person play and he was encouraging people to take lessons, so at the end of his demonstration he asked the class who might be interested in taking lessons so, of course, I volunteered and that was my start in piping and Jack taught me all the way up until I was about sixteen years old, sixteen years of age. He was an excellent teacher and he taught many people at Heriots that became good players; Ian Speirs, Euan Anderson and several other people that were very, very good players.

Did you father teach you at all at that time?

He always had a very great interest of course. One of the reasons I think I was sent to Heriot's School was because of Jack Crichton because Jack Crichton and my father were great friends and I think it was pretty well the understanding that Jack would teach me. My father had a hands-off approach until quite late because he knew what Jack was doing with me and I suppose there was no need for any great input because father and son sometimes aren't the best, it's a bit like driving lessons. [Laughter] So I had started playing in amateur competitions about the age of fourteen, fifteen years old and I think at that point my father got involved a little bit more but up until that point he was not really involved at all.

You mention in your website that you were highly influenced by the playing of Iain MacFadyen and J D Burgess. What was it in their playing that influenced you?

These were guys of course, who were at the top of the tree at the time and I had always gone to a lot of piping competitions, even before I had started on the pipes. Of course, I'd be taken everywhere on trips with my family to piping competitions so I learnt very early on that listening was really very important. I was enthralled by the whole thing and listening to the likes of Iain and John and Hugh MacCallum

and all these people was marvellous, it really was, growing up all around it. It was quite interesting where we lived at Ramsay Garden at the Castle, it's different today because the seating stands for the Tattoo block everything out now, but we were lucky at the time because from our living room window we could actually see the Tattoo and I must be about the record holder for watching Tattoos in my time because I was totally enthralled with it. I used to sit and watch every single performance every single night for years and years so when the Tattoo went on for that month I'd see every single performance.

It's a fantastic spectacle.

Exactly, so it was all around me and growing up and hearing these highly individual players and being able to take part in that was fantastic. We went to summer schools too up in Dingwall. I was born in Dingwall when my Dad was the Regimental Sergeant Major in the Seaforth Highlanders and I'm quite proud of that fact, that I am technically a Highlander. The summer school was run by the school authority up there, I would be about fourteen or fifteen years of age then and I went up there and Iain and John were teaching up there and people like Ronald MacCallum was one of the teachers. It was a who's who of piping that taught at these schools. Donald MacPherson taught at it and John MacDougall.

Duncan Johnstone?

I don't think...Maybe Duncan was there. I came into contact with Duncan later on when I worked at the College of Piping for a short time a year or so after that. I remember Ronald MacCallum having him for a couple of weeks up there and I remember he was an excellent influence. I always remember him telling me one thing that was very, very important that I remember was that as regards the techniques, the movements at the end of things, you need to make every single thing the same way every single time. I always remembered that as a bit of advice that was good. So going to those summer schools, the competitions and all that kind of thing was a

great period. People like Patricia Henderson, Innes, Murray's wife was a student at these schools, Donald McBride was there as a student. It was a very high standard of playing in the amateur competitions at that time.

There you were right at the centre of piping with all those great figures, quite a surprise then in 1977, aged eighteen, you upped and went off to Canada. Was that quite a big step at the time?

It was, I look back now and I have a hard time even just now believing that I actually did that. What had happened was I had come out of school and I was at a bit of a loose end in a way and I remember the first job I had after school was at a place called Highland House in the Lawnmarket. It was owned by...It was a very famous Highland Bagpipe shop and I got involved there because I was at a total loose end and Gordon Stobo who owned the place had phoned up saying he was very behind with tying in the bags for the pipes and he told me that he had something like sixty-two bags or something to tie in and he asked me if I wanted to come and start doing this. He said "I'll give you £2 per bag." At that time it was quite a lot of money for tying in a bag, it doesn't sound much just now, but the problem was I didn't know how to tie in a pipe bag. I think my father was still at the Castle at the time and he came home and I said "Look, you'll need to teach me to tie in a pipe bag" and it was quite funny, his response I found astonishing because he said to me "Well, one thing you have to understand is I've never tied in a pipe bag". I said "What do you mean, you've never tied in a pipe bag" and he said "Well, you have to appreciate that I was in a position that I could get people to do it for me". So we went and got a bag and together we figured it out and I phoned Gordon the next day and went and started tying in all these bags which was fantastic because I met all kinds of people in the shop, people like Angus MacDonald, he used to come in, I think Angus was at the Castle at the time. He took me off for a week playing at the Games with himself and Gavin Stoddart which was a great experience finding out how that kind of end of it went.

Then after that, I went to the College of Piping because Seumas MacNeill was in need of extra teaching help and I'm not exactly sure how it happened but I found myself through there with Duncan Johnstone for almost a year I think it was and in that intervening period there was a lot of Games and competitions and all the rest of it and Canadian pipers were coming over. It was the first sort of serious wave of competing by North Americans. I think what had happened in the past was, it was very, very expensive and very difficult to come over here and compete, so there was a whole generation of pipers before them that really didn't come here and compete but were almost equally as good or equally as good, people like Bill Gilmour, Archie Cairns and people like that, Reay MacKay, but they didn't come here and compete so people like Bill Livingstone, Bob Worrall, Ed Neigh, a little bit later on Jim MacGillivray came over here to compete and I got to know these people very, very well for some reason. They were a little older than me but for some reason they clicked with me and to cut a long story short I ended up going over there when I was eighteen, just to see what was happening. It was a great experience and I fully expected it to last a summer.

Not the twenty odd years, it ended up?

Twenty two years in all at the end of that and it was never ever meant to be an absolutely permanent thing but it was surprising just how long I was over there and surprising how quick the time went.

How did you make a living in Canada?

Well, you know, it was basically through teaching and playing and from piping initially because I went over there and one of the first things I did in the summertime was I taught at the 1000 Islands School of Scottish Performing Arts which was a summer school a gentleman called George N Bealey from Brockville, Ontario organised. Seumas MacNeill had been running that summer school for some years and I think what happened was one year he couldn't go and he got my Dad to go and run it in the interim and at the time John MacKenzie from Dunblane and Archie Cairns from Ottawa were

the other piping instructors with my father. The drumming instructors were Drum Major Alex Duthart and his famous pupil, Jim Kilpatrick. So, that's one of the first things I did when I went over there and in Brockville itself which is a fairly small city, near about the size of Falkirk, there was a well-established Scottish community with quite a good pipe band, didn't compete but it was quite a good pipe band that I got involved with and actually they had piping classes set up at a community college called St Lawrence College so there were structured classes for me to teach there. Even at that point there were so many summer schools, additional summer schools and that's how I approached it.

Having been as well in the deep end of Scottish piping and then over to Canada, how did the two piping scenes compare?

Well, I found them very different in that, of course, everything in Canada seemed new and obviously different. The way that the piping competitions were run was considerably different from the traditional Highland Games that I was used to over here. Their competitions are big affairs, they are run like clockwork because they have to. The stuff to get done during the day is quite remarkable. They have six or seven different grades of piping competitions and they break down to about five grades of amateur competitions plus all the professional events. That all has to be done by noon so they get through two or three hundred competitors by noon, then they have a short break and then they start the band competitions, so it's a big band competition in the afternoon. What happens is you have the venue and you have different what you would call judging stations with all these competitions going on. You would maybe have twenty adjudicators at these things. It's very, very good but it was a bit conveyor beltish type of thing for me coming from the much less structured, more traditional type of Highland Games we have here but the playing was of a tremendously high standard. When I started playing there, all these fellows I mentioned earlier were playing and they were all playing extremely well and the standard at those Games was at least as good and probably on average higher than your average Highland Games here. These people were big stars at the time.

And making their mark over here as well.

Oh yes, they were winning in the top competitions over here so when you played in those competitions at that time, you were playing against top people.

Were you still able to come back to Scotland in the summer to go round the Games here, compete at Oban and Inverness?

I did but I didn't come as often as you might think. I always viewed trips back over here as trips back home as it were rather than trips to play in piping competitions.

You came for family rather than the competitions.

Exactly, it was important to me to be able to come back whenever I could and I came back at various times of the year, not just in the summer when the piping competitions were on. At that time things, of course, were relatively very expensive. We used the telephone a lot to keep in touch with my father and mother and sister. I remember at the time that it was about two dollars a minute I think at the time or something. I mean if you compare that to now, I think I phone back to Canada these days for about two pence a minute. The cost of these calls were probably about a hundred times more than they are now and as a young lad trying to raise the money for air fares and everything, which again I think were relatively much more expensive, was quite difficult. So I always viewed these trips back more as trips to see the family rather than a trip to play in piping competitions.

I asked partly because you feature in many of the photographs of Pipers invited over the years to compete in the Glenfiddich championship and, of course, that's prizewinners at different levels. When would you say was your most successful period in terms of competing?

I suppose it was a bit later on. As I mentioned I had started playing in competitions over there and the competition as I say was pretty tough and for two or three years I didn't figure all that much and then about 1982 I started to break through a little bit. In 1982 early on in the summer I won the Piobaireachd Society Gold Medal in Ottawa which was the Canadian Gold Medal. I was successful in winning that so I suppose that set me on the road a little bit.

That summer was quite interesting because it was about that period that they started the whole CPA (Competing Pipers' Association) and it got quite active with the grading of pipers and I was quite lucky because what had happened was that the competitions at Oban and Inverness were operating independently of one another so that year I was actually graded to play in the Silver Medal at Oban and the Gold Medal at Inverness. The week before at Oban I'd played in the Silver Medal and I played fairly well but I didn't get a prize and then a week later I went to Inverness and played in the Gold Medal and I won it. It was quite unusual I suppose to have played in the Silver Medal one week and the Gold Medal the next and be fortunate enough to win the Gold Medal. It was my second attempt at the Gold Medal; I'd had an attempt about five years previously when I was quite young, I think that was in the days before the grading when anybody could play, in the days when there were forty six or forty eight people playing the Gold Medal and all you had to do to get into it was just send your entry in. It was about 1976 or 1977, it was even before the Northern Meetings had changed into the Eden Court Theatre, it was in the Dr Black Memorial Hall, and I'd had an attempt there. I can't remember much about it other than the fact that I wasn't there to be winning any prizes. This was my first sort of serious attempt at the gold medal and I was just lucky because I played well. I remember once being told that you need three things to win a piping competition: I think this person told me (1) you need the judges to want you win which is a bit of funny thing to say; (2) you need a bit of luck; and (3) you need to play well. I don't know if it was in that order or not but that's what happened that day and that set me on the way.

Then, you know, I didn't come back to Scotland for a few years after that at competing times. I think it was Oban about four years later I came back to play at and I think to answer your question directly my most successful time was actually a little bit later on. I'd found myself going to Carleton University in Ottawa to study and it was a very, very busy period and it was a busy period of about four years in my life then and I think that four year period was quite successful.

Colin, we got interrupted there. Was there a weight of expectation given your family background?

Well, I think there probably was. It's a question that I've often wondered about. As I say it was pretty well inevitable that I would play the pipes. My sister at the time, I've got an older sister, Christine, who's two years older than me and it was in the time in that sort of era when if you were a girl it really wasn't expected that you'd play the pipes, so playing the pipes and getting lessons wasn't an option for her whatsoever which is a real shame because had it been maybe ten years later she would have taken lessons and I am sure she would have become a good player. So, when I started to learn and all the rest of it, one thing I do remember and was quite conscious of was the fact that my father never ever placed any expectations whatsoever. There was absolutely no pressure from him to even begin lessons. When I began the lessons there was nothing from him whatsoever that there was maybe something to live up to or this type of thing but that doesn't mean to say that there wasn't kind of thing coming from other sources. I was reminded of that quite a bit in subsequent years and it never bothered me that much really but I was always conscious of the fact that being the son of Captain John MacLellan was perhaps not going to be all that easy at times although, on the other side of the coin, I had an extraordinarily privileged beginning, an extraordinarily privileged background, source of knowledge, tuition, help that was absolutely tremendous to be able to have that.

So there was a great deal of positives?

Oh, definitely, and I was very lucky that way but as a result, yes, I did feel a certain pressure to succeed, yes.

I hesitated to ask you the question in case you were bored with being asked that question but then it is a question that a lot of people, it goes through the minds of people knowing your family background. You mentioned that the beginning of the 1990s was a good period with the Silver Chanter at Dunvegan Castle several times and the Gold Medal at Oban. I wanted to ask if your preference was for piobaireachd over the light music or the other way round when it came to competitions?

I don't think I had a preference for piobaireachd over light music. I think I was a little bit more successful playing piobaireachd than I was playing light music. It was something that I became very interested in later on and I suppose that's the same for a lot of people. I remember my first piobaireachd lessons, I was a little bit confused and it came to me a little bit late and it took me a long time to grow into the music but as I got older and as I began teaching myself I was understanding the tunes more and more.

After I went to Canada I got very interested because then I was separated from my father, of course, teaching-wise and he would send over cassette tapes particularly when the tunes would come out for the competitions he would always make up the tape, not just for me, it was one tape they used of all the set tunes with tuition on it and pretty well everybody that was getting tuition from him at the time would get this one tape. That was my source of tuition so I would learn these tunes from this tape and do what he said on the tapes.

Then I would be back here on trips and he would teach me here in this room and it was very, very interesting because you learnt the tunes first of all and then you came to him for the lessons. The lessons were not a traditional lesson in the sense of sitting down, he would let you come up here and start playing the tunes and he'd be elsewhere in the house listening and then after a while you play two or three of the tunes, he would come in and I remember him quite clearly coming in

and saying “Well, let’s sit down and listen to some other people playing”. He had this tremendous collection of tape music which is still here and he would say “Who do you want to hear playing that”? I’d say, “I don’t know, how about Robert Brown” and he would go to his collection of cassette tapes, he had them all indexed and catalogued and he would get the tape of Brown playing and we would sit there and listen to it. He would say “Do you like the way that’s done, what do you like about that”? We would put the tunes together like that so it was a very sort of flexible way of doing things. I was amazed at this tape collection; literally he could say who do you want to hear playing it and he would have it, he would have somebody playing that tune.

I would imagine when the College of Piping hears about this tape collection, maybe they’re aware of it, that they might be interested in copies and the School of Scottish Studies.

Well, exactly and some of the material is out there already and that’s one of my projects in the very near future, to try and make some of the stuff available because I think I’ve got digital recordings now of him playing up to about one hundred and thirty Piobaireachds I think from start to finish on the Pipes.

That’s a fantastic resource.

Plus about I think several hundred hours of recordings of other people’s playing as well which have yet to be digitised so there’s a lot of work to be done.

The tapes that he would record for the list of tunes for Oban and Inverness, are those tapes still in good shape?

Yes, they’re still here. I’ve got them and I still refer to those quite a bit in my teaching so it is a fantastic resource to have.

Absolutely, and one of the non-piping details in your biography is what you mentioned, that you in fact went to Carleton University

in Ottawa in the early nineties to study Political Science. What was the background to becoming what is at times known as a mature student because you would have been in your early thirties possibly?

That's right. It was in about 1988, 1989, and what happened was I had moved up to Glengarry County which is a Scottish community about fifty miles east of Ottawa and there I was teaching Piping in three high schools for the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry County School Board and in addition to that they had a weekend school on a Saturday morning and this was a very successful set up. I taught there for almost ten years and I got involved in the education aspect of piping. They were the first School Board in the world to have academic credit for piping so that goes back a long time and so I got involved in teaching piping in schools. Then I said to myself, you know, I'd like to become a teacher. I just got this idea that apart from just teaching the pipes, I would like to teach so then I said to myself that I would have to go to university so I went to Carleton University. I studied Political Science there and got that degree and then I went to do a teaching degree at Brock University, St Catharines. That was fantastic, it was a great experience at the time and it went off fine. I actually did a little bit of teaching in Glengarry County in primary schools.

In the interim, I had to give up my position teaching piping in order to do all this and they sort of got through that on an interim basis with people filling in. Then when I went back and after I'd taught there, maybe they didn't think I was a very good primary schoolteacher because they asked me to teach piping again [laughter] which I was actually glad to do because teaching school was tremendously demanding. It was a lot of work, a lot of preparation obviously and in piping, there's less of that because obviously a lot of what you teach is what you know yourself and passing it on. So I ended up teaching piping again but that's what that whole aspect of my life was, doing that studying, and I'm awfully glad I did that, it was a great thing to be able to do.

As you say, it was a quite a busy period for you because I understand on the composing side at that time you won first prize in an international composing competition for piobaireachd held by Clan Donald, Canada. Had you been doing much composing before that success?

Well, it's funny you should ask that, no, I am not a composer at all and I wish I was. I think if you compose you have a sort of natural bent to it and things come to you. That's the whole thing about it, a tune starts going off in your head and you go and write the first part of it down on a scrap of paper, and then you develop it. That's never happened with me at all. I've only composed two things in my lifetime. I hope to turn my hand at it a little bit more. One was an arrangement of the Piper's Bonnet Jig which I did when I was about sixteen years old and which I'd left on a scrap of paper in the College of Piping. After I went to Canada I bought Duncan Johnstone's new book and I was astonished to see my Jig in there and it actually hadn't been finished. So I was delighted to see it in there but Duncan probably had little means of getting hold of me to ask for it to go in the book and it wasn't right as a result of that because it wasn't finished. It's subsequently been published in about five different books and it still hasn't been published correctly as a result of that one thing.

The whole story of the piobaireachd composing competition is a fit funny actually. What had happened during that period, as I say, it was a tremendously busy period but unfortunately, very unfortunately, my father became very unwell during that period and he had, of course, always been composing since I think about 1961 was the first tune that he composed. Anyway, I'd come over in February on one of those trips, I mentioned earlier I used to make trips not during the summer, you know, but to see family and all the rest of it, and he was unwell. It would have been 1991 I believe in February and I came across to see him and at the time he was composing a piobaireachd which turned out to be his last tune. It was for a composing competition that was being run by Clan Donald, Canada, and it was to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the

death of Sir John A MacDonalld, Canada's first Prime Minister. So, when I got home, my Dad had been working away at this tune which was nearing completion and he finished it off. He actually talked to me quite a bit about composing tunes and I'd got interested in finding out how he went about it and all that kind of thing.

In these composing competitions you submit the score anonymously, it doesn't have your name on it or anything like that and you normally submit a recording, mostly on the practice chanter, to the competition organisers who send it off to whoever they've got appointed to judge it, they don't know whose tune they are evaluating of course and my Dad had asked me because he was unwell "Will you record this tune?" I said that of course I would and he took me through the tune and showed me how he wanted it played and I got out the practice chanter and recorded the tune so that was fine. Then a couple of days later my mother came up to me and she said "You know your father is not that pleased with the recording you made of that tune" and I was astonished you know. I said "What's wrong with it"? "Well, I think he wants it on the Pipes" she said. "Oh", said I. So I went to see my Dad who was in bed at the time because he was really quite unwell by this time and I said to him "Look, Dad, what do you think of that recording that I made"? He said "Oh, it's fine, very good, excellent, yes" and I leaned over to him and said "Do you not think it would be better if it was on the pipes" and he said "Oh, I don't know, I never thought of that, that would be grand". So I stuck the music up on the wall in his room and a couple of goes later we had the recording of it on the pipes.

Then I left to go back to Canada and I sort of said to myself that maybe I should have a go at making a piobaireachd. I was full of enthusiasm about it at the time because he'd showed me and I remembered what he'd said to me "Look, if you can, compose the second variation, the first variation after the ground, compose that first, every tune has to have a really good first variation after the ground" and I think that was the impetus for it so I thought let's try this out and see what we come up with and I ended up making a tune. Some of it was composed here, I was going to Glasgow on the train,

and it wasn't quite 'back of the fag packet' stuff but it wasn't far off it. It was on a scrap of paper and I finished it off in Canada and then I said to myself "You should enter it for this competition too." So I put it in and I assumed that my father's tune was going to win the competition and to be really honest he assumed that too because he wasn't that kind of person but he was used to winning these piobaireachd competitions, composing competitions, and I thought "Och, it would be really nice if maybe I could get a third prize or fourth prize or something" to go alongside his.

Then, very unfortunately, my father died and I put the tune in and I came back here. It was a bit sad because the night before my Dad's funeral there was a phone call here to the house and there were various family members gathered here and it was Andrew Berthoff on the phone from Canada, the Editor of the Piper and Drummer magazine and they'd actually been running the administrative side of the competition for Clan Donald, Canada. Andrew came on the phone. He said "Look, I know this is a bad time but I've just been told the result of this piobaireachd composing competition" and I said "Oh well, that's great, so I take it that my father's tune is the winning tune"? He said "No, yours is the winning tune". I was a bit sad and happy but that's how that tune came about.

He would most probably have been proud that you won.

Oh, absolutely but, you know, as a teacher, he was one of these people, I remember Bill Livingstone, he went for long periods of time to John MacFadyen for tuition, telling me once that John Macfadyen is such a great teacher and one of the marks of a great teacher is when you're playing or under tuition that person can somehow get you to play better than you thought possible yourself. Now, my father was like that. He really inspired you to great heights so I am sure he would have been delighted at that. Later on, my mother told me that just before he died he was going on a sort of tour all over Scotland and my dad drove, this was only about two weeks before he died, it was a bit funny because they went and visited people and on the way back in the car the piping programme came on the radio.

This would be BBC Scotland every Wednesday night, Seumas MacNeill probably?

Yes, exactly, the piping programme came on with me on the radio playing a piobaireachd and my mother had told me that he turned round and said “You know, Colin is a very, very good player” so I thought that was quite nice because he wasn’t the kind of person to come and tell you that himself.

Interestingly, when we were talking about piobaireachd composition there I wanted to get your views on a statement of Seumas MacNeill in his book on piobaireachd and I quote “It’s very much easier to compose a iobaireachd than any other type of Pipe tune, and like the Emperor’s clothes, it can be passed off if presented with enough confidence”. I was wondering what your own views on this are recognising that Mr MacNeill had a reputation for occasionally being provocative.

It’s funny you should say that because I read that myself the other day. I was going through some Piping Times and I think in some respects there is a lot of truth in what he says there. I think you can...I often have joked, well, maybe not joked, but when the set tunes have come out, I look at some of them and it’s easy being an armchair critic and it’s easy to be critical but I look at some of the tunes that are set from time to time and whoever’s in my company I’ll turn round and say “You know, we could compose a better tune than that in the next ten minutes”.

Is that because you think they are formulaic?

Yes, but I think then that quote from Seumas saying that something pretty ordinary can be produced pretty easily is true. I think anybody can come up with a piobaireachd that sounds not bad; I think it’s very difficult to come up with something very special and I think there’s a great deal of difference. With a light music tune, if it’s not special then it’s very, very ordinary but you can sit back and listen to an

ordinary piobaireachd and it sounds perfectly nice but maybe it doesn't grab you, it doesn't have you on the edge of your seat. But I think he's probably right. I think it's not that hard to compose something that's just ordinary. One of the things that was nice about that tune, the one tune that Clan Donald won, Salute for Sir John A MacDonald, I was given the opportunity to play that at a ceremony in Kingston, Ontario, at Cataraqui Cemetery, and the Prime Minister of Canada at the time was there, Brian Mulroney, and I talked to him at some length about the tune and the playing of it. I played the tune in its entirety at that ceremony. He was very interested in it and very complimentary and he talked about bagpipes and piobaireachd and it was great meeting him. I'd read about Brian Mulroney once that he said if every Canadian could have talked to him for five minutes he'd be Prime Minister for life and I found that to be true. [Laughter] So it was a fantastic experience for me getting to meet him.

At this time, early 1990s, I think you recorded on the CD series "The World's Greatest Pipers" and one of the tunes that I particularly like on that CD is Lament for Ruairidh Mòr. Could you tell us a little bit more about that tune?

It's an ancient air. One of those, I think it would be termed as middle music, Ceòl Meadhonach, I'm not sure whether that is the right Gaelic pronunciation, but it's very close to Piobaireachd, It's an ancient air composed in the time of the Great Clan Chief, Ruairidh Mòr MacLeod. An ancient traditional air. I don't believe it's published anywhere but my father used to play it in his recitals and I was greatly taken with it in the same way that you were and so I decided to put that on the recording. But very close to piobaireachd.

Some of the tunes you chose for that CD, one is your own composition, some are your father's compositions and some of his arrangements but when it came to the piobaireachd, you chose The Battle of the Pass of Crieff and I am wondering why that tune rather than one of your father's own piobaireachd compositions?

Well, that's a bit of a difficult question to answer. The choice of piobaireachd on the CD is one that you make. I had wanted to play a tune that nobody had heard me playing before and that recording I believe is the only time anybody has heard me playing The Battle of the Pass of Crieff. It wasn't a tune I ever played in competitions and I think I just sat back and I said "Right, let's get a tune here that nobody has ever heard me play before" and that was the rationale of putting it on that album. I got the call from Lismore to do it and I was greatly honoured to be asked to be on that series. All my piping heroes, people I looked up to, were on that series.

It's a great series.

It really is and I sort of had to shake my head a little bit and say this wasn't something that I was not going to do. To be on that series with those kinds of people was something that I would have aspired to but never dreamed that I would have the opportunity of doing that. So, I think the choice of the piobaireachd was to get something nobody had heard me play and it was the right length, the right type of tune, or so I thought. Unfortunately, I didn't do very much research on what had been recorded in the series before because John MacDougall's album has got The Battle of the Pass of Crieff on it. If I had known that I would have picked something else.

I was thinking maybe, say, The Phantom Piper of Corrieyairack that your father composed just to give it a wider audience, you know, in terms of recording?

At that time, that tune, The Phantom Pier of Corrieyairack had been set a couple of times so I knew it and I was playing it. In fact, I think it was around that time when it was set I asked myself if there was any point learning the other set tunes because if I was a betting man I would say that I would be getting this tune to play but then I thought, well, there was always an unwritten rule in those competitions at Oban and Inverness that you don't get the tune at Oban that you get at Inverness so I thought to myself "Well at Oban you'll definitely get it to play but you can't get it at Inverness" so I was going to have to

learn the others. [Laughter] So I don't know, I think I had it in mind, I've always had in mind to be able to put out my father's compositions, they're all published but there's very few recordings of them and I have it in mind and it will happen very soon that a new book along with a CD or digital sound files of all thirteen of the tunes he composed will be issued in a collection. So, I think that was probably the reason I didn't want to do it at that time.

That is interesting and I think it takes us on to Captain John A MacLellan MBE Memorial Trust. Can you tell us the background to the Trust being established?

Yes, What happened of course was that, as I mentioned my father had died very suddenly in April 1991 and he was sixty-nine years of age. Obviously, in his lifetime, he had done such an immense amount of work and research and had left all this material so my mother had discussed the possibility of setting up a Trust that would continue in some way the encouragement of his work. It was set up around, I think it was in the middle nineties, and we ran a piobaireachd composing competition which was the first item of business which was won by a gentleman called James Hood and the funny thing about what you would call modern piobaireachd composition is, and I'm sure they find this too in the realms of classical music, I don't know what it is but I think there is a certain attitude or a sort of convention that if it was composed in this time that we live in it can't be as good as the tunes that were composed three or four hundred years ago. The Piobaireachd Society has tried at various times to encourage the playing of these tunes and they've set them at Oban and Inverness as a separate entity in terms of them being this year we're going to have modern tunes which I think is a laudable goal but I think it is possibly slightly misguided in that what I believe they should be doing is taking the best of the tunes and selling them as stand up alone tunes with all the other tunes because Pipe Major MacLeod and my father and various other people had composed excellent tunes which are in awe honestly, they're way better compositions than some of the ordinary material that we were referring to earlier on. It's certainly head and shoulders above so it's

not a question of them not being at that standard so if periodically these tunes were just set alongside all the other good tunes instead of sort of being categorised as a bit of a novelty by saying “Oh, we’re going to have modern tunes this year” . What happened was I had gone up to play a couple of times at the Donald MacLeod Memorial competition.

In Stornoway?

In Stornoway, yes, and as a result of that, sometime previously I had learnt a couple of his tunes as well.

And in that competition there is a requirement is that his tunes are included in the repertoire and it keeps them current and gives them that wider audience.

That’s right. You learn and you play one of his piobaireachds, I began to see... and I played in it early on, about the first couple of years it was instituted, but then I began to see the influence that competition had in promoting Pipe Major MacLeod’s tunes because these top class pipers who were learning them I began to realise were starting to go off and teach these tunes to their pupils. Then I saw pipe band concerts such as Simon Fraser University were playing them.

They used Field of Gold, I think.

That’s exactly right and so I said to myself you know this competition is the seed that is spreading Donald MacLeod’s tunes a bit further. Were it not for the Donald MacLeod competition these tunes would still be firmly closed within the pages of his books and this is something that had happened to my father’s tunes although any time any were played people who received them and listened to them were very impressed with them that’s all; but nobody was learning them.

More recently, the Trust in 2011 held a Piobaireachd recital and dinner here in Edinburgh and another one is due to be held this year. Can you tell us a bit about these events and the set up?

What I decided to do because of the direct influence which I observed the Donald MacLeod competition having that we had to get these tunes played in front of people so I said to myself that perhaps we just don't want to have another copycat competition, you know, I'd like to have this done in the correct setting where the tunes can be appreciated. So what I decided...I always very much liked the setting and the format of the Silver Chanter.

Up at Dunvegan Castle?

I thought you know if we had something like that but incorporated the whole thing as a dinner and one thing led to another and I thought that's a pretty good idea. We had the first one about eighteen months ago which was very successful; it was a bit of a black tie event. We had top players at it and we made sure that everything was done as well as it could have been done. We recorded the event and we had a medal struck, a commemorative medal to whoever's tune was chosen... not necessarily in a strictly competitive sense of being the best tune, it was probably awarded more because it was a recital dinner, as a sort of artistic presentation. I mean, whoever's adjudicating this event I am certainly not going to tell them how to go about judging it but I think probably the understanding is that it is for an artistic presentation of the interpretation of the tune.

So the second one is going to be on June the 8th of this year and we've got Murray Henderson who, as you probably know, was the recipient of the first medal and Murray has since retired from competing, though he did once before, and, of course, I suppose if you retire once and then come back people might think you might come back again. So, I contacted Murray and I said we would be really pleased if he would see fit to play one more time and he had a think about that and he said "Well, no, I think I've hung up the competitive thing for good" and so I said "Well, will you come and judge it"? One of the

people we invited to play was Iain Speirs and Iain is receiving guidance from Murray these days and so Murray had said he wouldn't feel comfortable about adjudicating it with Iain playing so he's going to come as our guest and we've invited Faye, his daughter, gold medallist Faye, and Gordon Walker, Iain Speirs and Stuart Liddell so it's quite a line-up.

And some night! Unfortunately, I missed that 2011 recital but in fact I remember Murray Henderson talking very positively about it and he felt that it was an excellent showcase for some of the modern piobaireachd compositions that you say perhaps aren't getting the exposure and he felt in that context your father's composition, Edinburgh Piobaireachd, could hold its own at any level of competition and composition.

I think that's true. I think the tune that my father's piobaireachd composition is most closely associated with popularly I think, is The Phantom Piper of Corrieyairack and it is an excellent tune. It's the one that has probably received the most exposure because it was set, it was the recipient of an award called The Saltire Society Award in 1963 and the story behind it is a good story, it's a bit of ghost story and it catches the imagination besides being an excellent tune. The Edinburgh Piobaireachd is...

What is the story behind The Phantom Piper – as long as it doesn't take two or three hours? [Laughter]

No, no, no, it'll take two or three minutes. The Corrieyairack Pass is in the Great Glen towards Fort Augustus where my father grew up which is just coincidental and the story is that there's a legend apparently in the Great Glen that if the pipes are sounded by the Phantom Piper it means that Montrose's Army is about to march again. So, the story is that in 1957 there was a route march being led by Colonel David Murray, Cameron Highlanders, from close to Inverness I think right down to the Fort Augustus area. There were two pipers and one of them was Iain MacFadyen, I don't know who the other one was, but Iain was doing national service at the time,

he'd have been about twenty years of age and the weather was dreadful, it was a day like today, it was sleeting and snowing. Colonel Murray who was in charge of the whole thing had told the pipers not to play and what happens as you get to the base camp the cooks listen for the pipes and as soon as they hear the pipes they put on the soup and the rations and all that kind of thing. So they were doing this route march and when they got back to camp all the soup and food was ready which must have taken some time to prepare and Colonel Murray apparently had said "How you know our arrival was imminent?" and they said "Well, we heard the pipes coming". Of course, no pipes because of the weather and that's the story behind the tune.

A good ghost story as you say. You mentioned recording and publishing your father's complete piobaireachd compositions. When do you think that might be completed and available?

It will be available as soon as I get the thirteen tunes recorded and it will be from the recital dinner so we will have all thirteen of them from different players with their permission. When the players come and play at the recital, they come and we've asked permission to record the tunes and those recordings of the tunes are not actually the property of the Trust, they remain the property of the players and the Trust will ask them if they are willing to have these recordings go out in that format.

So, for example, Murray Henderson's playing of the Edinburgh Piobaireachd two years ago, Faye Henderson this year and I think you said she has The Phantom Piper.

That's exactly right, so hopefully the publication will go out with all these different people playing all of the tunes which I think will be pretty interesting and I think it will be a couple of years until we are able to do that but that's what we've got in mind.

Great. Colin, I've been concentrating more on your Solo Piping but I know you've also led Bands in Canada and in Scotland. Can you tell us a bit about your involvement in Pipe Bands?

The pipe bands for me were always a sort of lighter side of the piping kind of thing. I was always interested in pipe bands. I'd never really played in a pipe band before I went to Canada. I played in the school pipe band at Heriot's which was quite a decent little band but when I went to Canada I got involved in the piping competitions where, as I said, there were always big pipe band competitions in the afternoon and at the time there were good pipe bands in Ontario. The City of Toronto Pipe Band was quite a famous band at the time and it was one of the first to come over here and win a prize at the World Pipe Band Championship. The Guelph Pipe Band led by Ed Neigh, St Thomas Police Pipe Band, Gordon Tuck's Band.

78th.

78th grew out of the City of Toronto a little bit later on but at the time Bill Livingstone had just taken over the City of Toronto Pipe Band and they were playing some really, really interesting medleys which were centred around piobaireachd excerpts. One was The Desperate Battle Medley and the next one was MacIntosh's Lament and I'd heard this and I said this was something I would like to do. So I lived in Brockville, Ontario which is about four hours east of Toronto so I was going down that four hours for a band practice. I didn't do it every week or anything like that, probably about twice a month and that was a great experience, learning from everything that was going on in the band. That was the first Grade One band I played with. I used to do a lot of competing down in the eastern United States because it was as close to the City of Toronto area as where I lived which was Brockville. So then I got friendly with several of their players down there and there was a Grade One Band got started up called the Parlin and District Pipe Band which came up and won second in the North American Championships. I played with them. A great friend of mine called Jimmy Bell was Pipe Major.

Then later on Scott MacAulay who later became, sadly it's the late Scott MacAulay, he died a few years ago, came up to the Ottawa area and he was a tremendous influence there and we started a pipe band together called the Dunvegan Pipe Band which started off in Grade Two and went into Grade One. It was at the time that the 78th Fraser Highlanders were at their sort of peak when they won the Worlds Championship. So we got all the players together in Ottawa and had that Band which only lasted three or four years, there just weren't enough players in Ottawa to sustain it and the high point of the Dunvegan Pipe Band was when we actually tied with the 78th Fraser Highlanders in piping in one competition.

Then in the school system that I taught in, Glengarry County, the band there when I first started getting involved in about 1986 was a Grade Four band and through the teaching in the schools and the Saturday School, it was a rural area, so the student tended to stay in the area because they were all involved in big dairy farms in the area, eventually that band became a top Grade Two band that won all of the prizes in Grade Two. And then, a little bit after that, I was persuaded to join the 78th Fraser Highlanders and so I started going back down to Toronto again and that was great fun. My wife, Jenny Hazzard, also played in the band at the time. I played for three or four years with the 78th at that time and they were very strong at the time. In those three or four years we were quite lucky because we didn't lose a competition in North America and we got a couple of prizes at the Worlds Championship. We did a lot of concerts with the Band, live concerts so that was a great experience.

There was a view perhaps that more in the past that playing in a band wasn't good for a solo piper. What's your own view on that?

I grew up in the era where that was very much believed. In fact, when I was sixteen or seventeen several of the people I have mentioned were playing in the Muirheads Band under Bob Hardie at that time. People like Donald McBride, Scott MacAulay, other Canadian people, Michael MacDonald, Kelly Todd, a lot of these people had

been coming over and taking lessons from Bob Hardie and landed up in the Muirheads Band. I wanted to do that and Bob Hardie asked me as a young promising player to come and join the Band and I was all excited and came back to the house and said “Bob Hardie’s asked me to play in the Band” and when I told my father there was a bit of a shake of the head. He said “Mmm, no, that’ll ruin your solo piping career” and so that was the end of that. But it has been proved emphatically that that is not the case. There have been so many cases.

Jack Lee.

It’s endless and in actual fact my experience is that they helped keep you playing at a high level. It was much more of a help than a hindrance and, of course, Bill Livingstone to this day is still, I believe, the only person in history to have won the Grade One Worlds Piping Championship as Pipe Major and the Clasp at Inverness. That’s an idea that has been proven not to be correct.

These days I think you play in the Spirit of Scotland Band that Roddy MacLeod gets together?

That’s right. We played, of course, in the Worlds Championship and that was a tremendous thing. That was one of the experiences that I’ll never forget, getting together and being able to do that, playing at that sort of level. Having a week with all these top people who, of course, you knew very well from the competitions but it brought home to me how little time we actually all got to spend. At these competitions you have a bit of a laugh and joke but that’s all it is and you get a week to spend with them. We all went away know each other a lot better than we did in the past and it was a great thing. At various times the Band gets together very, very occasionally, it’s a difficult project to pull together. We’ve done a couple of concerts and things like that and we’re always talking about doing something. Something’ll happen.

Yes, I think it’s great to see the Spirit of Scotland Band formed up of all these well-known faces, Willie MacCallum and many

other sort of top flight pipers in their ranks. When the band is only getting together and only able to practice a week together before, say, the Worlds can you really hope to compete against Simon Fraser, Field Marshal Montgomery?

I think in reality you can't. I think you can get to a certain level but I think you have to respect the fact that the calibre of player in those Bands is equally as high and they are practising every single week and in the lead up to the Worlds every single day and I think inevitably there's only a certain level you'll get up to no matter how good the players are. Of course I had a lot of experience...When I came back to Scotland here I was invited to be the Pipe Major of the Lothian and Borders Police Pipe Band who were in poor shape at the time and had just been demoted to Grade Two for the first time in history. So, I know at that level and I was happy to be able to get them re-established again in Grade One but I know just what it takes running a regular Grade One band and the type of work and commitment required.

Week in, week out.

Yes, and the effort it takes. So, if you go to the very top of the Grade where you've got the Simon Frasers, the St Laurence O'Tooles, the Scottish Powers and all those types of bands, inevitably I think that those bands would always come out on top of something like the Spirit of Scotland.

I think another thing is it shows the prejudice that band playing is bad for solo pipers is disproven when you see the quality of solo players that join that band.

Very much so and one of the things that I find very interesting in the Spirit of Scotland was in actual fact it's the playing of the band and the tone of the band actually far surpasses the level I thought that it would get to. I think we all wondered, I mean, we didn't know, that week at the Worlds, we all wondered what it would be like, and my major concern was that I thought the playing would be fine,

everybody's obviously good players, and I always thought almost all the band had pretty extensive band experience. It wasn't just a collection of solo pipers getting together to try and make a band. I thought the tone would be a problem and I thought that getting and maintaining a solid Grade One Pipe Band sound would be a problem. As it turned out that was the least of the problems. The tone was fairly easy to get. The music was tremendous and the first few days we were able to get all the music out, rehearse it, and, of course, it was all learnt in advance and really there were no problems at all. Certainly the level the band played at was very high indeed.

You moved back to Scotland I think in 1999 after twenty years or so in Canada, the move back, was that Piping related?

Very much so. As I mentioned earlier I'd spent all these years in Canada and I hadn't ever really meant it to be a permanent thing and I was surprised how long it lasted. Jenny and I had decided to come back to Scotland, we'd made that decision, and then one day, out of the blue, I got a phone call from Roddy MacLeod at the Piping Centre. The Piping Centre had only been running a few short years at that time and he said that they were looking to establish a degree programme at RSAMD (Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama) now known as the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. He asked would I be interested in coming and helping with the set-up of that, the creation of that, and I jumped at that. I thought that was a great thing and I was able to help a great deal in setting that up and be part of a team there of people who were tremendously enthusiastic. We all learnt from one another – Greg Wilson, Gordon Walker was there at the time, Roddy himself, Dougie Pincock, Willie Morrison was there. It was fantastic, we wrote the tutor book together, we all had input into that and various projects getting the Piping Centre off the ground.

If you compare the Scottish scene back, say, in late 1970s or thereabouts when you left Scotland and twenty five years later with the National Piping Centre coming along, this BA Scottish Music Piping Degree, do you feel that the piping scene has

become healthier with these development, something positive, something you welcomed?

Oh, yes, it was a completely different set up altogether. Things had become far more advanced than they were and the seeds of all those things I suppose were planted many years before that. Things like the Institute of Piping were organised by the Army School of Piping, the College of Piping, the Piobaireachd Society in the early seventies and all that kind of the business of piping in school, the involvement of the RSPBA and just I think the general popularisation of the bagpipes worldwide has just grown to this sort of explosion of what we see now of Piping Live! the World Championship being possibly the biggest event in Scotland, including the Cup Final and all the rest of it.

And it's on for a week leading up to the Worlds.

I mean there's no end to it which is absolutely fantastic and that means more and more pipers and competitive piping in Scotland. We have so many pipers playing and unfortunately we haven't dealt with the infrastructure of the traditional Highland Games, of being able to accommodate that so that's a bit of a problem but it's a happy problem.

Soon after you came back you were appointed President of the Competing Pipers' Association. If you think about any of the initiatives and developments at that time, is there any that you particularly focus on?

Becoming the President of CPA was one of the things that I hadn't planned for when I came back and somebody had asked me if I would be interested in doing this. I said yes, that I would, there were various things going on at the time that I was interested in getting involved with. I think during the time that I was the President of CPA we managed to establish B graded competitions formally for pretty well the first time I mean competitions up to that point had, even when I was still here in the middle seventies, an A Piobaireachd and a B

Piobaireachd type of thing in just a couple of competitions but now we had so many pipers, that the Duncan Johnstone competition was one of the first big formal B Grade competitions and that was a tremendous success. The Competing Pipers' Association and the Piping Centre collaborated on that and that's been running now for fifteen or sixteen years now. Then we were able to get the help of the Glenfiddich to start a circuit of B Grade competitions at the traditional Highland Games which I think was a very, very successful move in that it began to put a little bit of the infrastructure I talked about in place.

Of course, all these kind of developments just lead to an encouragement of everything so a few years later after my tenure at CPA expired they had now to deal with the fact that they have to do exactly the same now with C grade and you have C grade now and part of the problem is that the Highland Games are not prepared, I am not sure they even want all these pipers at their games. They have them because they recognise that they all want to enter but the infrastructure is just not there and the expense and the money. I mean you have to have more teams of judges, you have to have more stewards, you have to have more boards and it is something that we need to address. But, as I say, it's a good problem and it's marvellous to see all these young players playing at such a level even in the C grade competitions. I judged at the Duncan Johnstone competition a couple of weeks ago and, you know, the top young people in the C grade would have been knocking on prizes for A grade prizes in the seventies, most certainly.

You've become involved in reed making as a business and you're also involved with the Ayrfire Chanter. How did you get into this business side of piping?

What had happened...That was another kind of legacy of the influence my father always had on me. Away, way back when I was a teenager, he made reeds and the reason he got into it was because literally at the time the standard of reed making was very poor and he couldn't buy a reed. My grandfather was a very handy guy and he made the tools

and he said “Right, let’s make reeds”. He taught me to make reeds and I actually used to have the odd lesson from him and afterwards he would sit me down and tell me to make a whole lot of reeds to pay for the lessons. [Laughter] When I went to Canada I made reeds as well for many years there and after my time at the Piping Centre was up I taught piping at the Edinburgh Academy for about seven years and then I started up the reed making business again. I enjoy it, a spin-off of the reed making is the development of the Ayrfire Chanter. It’s about a year now since we did that in conjunction with Brian Mulhearn of Ayrshire Bagpipes and that’s a pretty exciting thing to get involved with. The chanter is pretty good; it’s won quite a few competitions already and is well accepted.

I was reading recently that Iain Speirs has been using one of your reeds for competitions for several years and he, of course, has had great success in winning the overall Glenfiddich last year, so how much satisfaction do you get let’s say as a craftsman when you see one of your products associated with this level of success.

Obviously it’s nice thing to happen. Iain was able to come round here and get fixed up and I think possibly the reed he’s been playing is a few years old now but I think it’s obviously very gratifying that somebody will play your products and hopefully with that type of performer and that type of success on it. I’m more concerned with just satisfying the ordinary customer with a good product. I think that’s where the real measure of your abilities come. But there are...There are many, many expert players playing with my reeds which is very gratifying.

A few years ago the Eagle Pipers’ Society in Edinburgh I think was resurrected. Can you tell us a bit about the Society and your own involvement?

It started off quite informally when I was a teenager, we used to go to the Highland Pipers’ Society here in Edinburgh and then as we got a wee bit older the Eagle Pipers’ Society and the Highland Pipers’ Society still exists in Edinburgh in a very small capacity and still

meets from time to time. But what happened in Scotland, piping societies have generally gone on the wane a little bit and I think it's basically because a lot more people play in pipe bands now and playing in pipe bands mean that you have to go to one or two pipe band practices a week and I think part of the reason that piping societies are having a little bit of a tough time existing is that people just don't have an extra night of the week like they used to. When I started going to the Eagle Pipers hardly anybody played in a band who would go to the Society. A few years ago Iain Speirs, Euan Anderson and myself got together and said it would be nice if we just went and had a tune somewhere and we decided why don't we start up the Eagle Pipers again. We thought if we get a dozen people to turn up at it that would be great and we started it off again and I must say we've been very surprised at the response because we've had some terrific evenings and terrific events. It's going strong and we've managed to resurrect the Society and there's been a tremendous amount of interest both in Edinburgh and in Scotland and overseas as well. We've got a tremendous membership roll. We've got over three hundred members which is quite exceptional really.

You meet about twice a month is it?

We meet twice a month at the Scots Guards Club in Haymarket, every second Tuesday evening at eight o'clock and we're very grateful to the Scots Guards Association for providing us with that facility because it's quite difficult these days to get premises that's on a donated basis and they're very, very happy to let us have the place which is great. Jimmy Banks who is the Chairman of the Club is very good at letting us have it.

Your wife, Jenny Hazzard, is well-known in piping circles and I believe you also have a son and daughter who are pipers as well. Are they based in Scotland or Canada?

Both my son and daughter are in Canada. My daughter Emily Kate is twenty eight and she plays with the Grade One Toronto Police Pipe Band with Pipe Major Iain MacDonald, and Bill Livingstone is in that

band as well. It's somewhat ironic that Bill and Emily Kate have a generational thing because I used to be in pipe bands with him and Michael Grey. Emily Kate works for the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce in Toronto and she is also doing a post-graduate degree. My son, Iain, is thirty. He lives in Ottawa and he is in the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa Pipe Band.

So the MacLellan Hazzard piping dynasty is now transatlantic and international and expanding.

It is and I make as many trips over to Canada as I can. It's a sort of reverse, of course, now that I'm back in Scotland. I am over in Canada probably about three times a year to see them and they come over here periodically. Piping is one of the things that keeps everybody together.

We've covered a lot of ground this morning in a short period of time. Is there anything we haven't discussed that you would like to pick up on?

I think the things that we've talked about have been very thorough and expansive and I think we've covered just about everything.

So, when you look back to you at aged eighteen leaving Scotland for what sounds like this gap year in Canada, did you ever envisage that your life in piping might develop the way it has?

I think I've always been the type of person that doesn't look too far into the future. I take things as they come and one thing leads to another. One of the things perhaps that we haven't talked about that much is the fact that now having been retired from competitive piping for about five years I now judge quite a bit and I think everybody who starts to judge begins to learn very quickly, your period of learning perhaps only starts in a way, and, of course, if you're judging piping it's the best seat in the house and it just brings home to you how much there is to learn, how much you actually add to your knowledge and thus to your own playing by sitting down and judging Piping. I've

always felt that I've been very lucky in the position that I've been in. I've been given extraordinary opportunities and extraordinary experiences through Piping and I don't have any terrific plans for the future apart from taking things as I always have. Things happen as they come along and what I want to do is to continue teaching piping. I teach piping a little bit and I want to keep playing and being involved in piping and enjoying the whole experience of piping, seeing where it leads to and what everybody achieves and develops. It's very, very interesting watching it all go on.

I think it's clear from our discussion that, as you say, you've got a lot from piping, you've put a lot back into piping and still do so I'm very grateful to you for sharing that with us today Colin.

I'm very happy too and I've enjoyed the interview tremendously. Thank you very much for considering me to do that.

