

# Words and Music

## Winter 2015

### So You Want to Take Your Band to Scotland

*Scott MacDonald, L.A. Scots Pipe Band  
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*Scott MacDonald is the President and Senior Pipe Major of the Los Angeles Scots Pipe Band, and was Pipe Major of the band from 1993 through 2006.*

I have been asked to write about the experiences of the Los Angeles Scots traveling to Scotland and what bands should consider before making this commitment.

I first will say that I never imagined that I would have been part of an organization that has traveled to compete against the very best in Scotland several times over the

### New Bylaws and Contest Rules from the AGM (see page 2)

past 20 years. That is a testament to the commitment of the past/current players and band management of the L.A. Scots. It's pretty safe to say that I have "seen it all" when it comes to taking a band to Scotland.

#### Is this a Competition or "Fun" Trip?

What is the first decision you will need to make? Will this trip be for a fun travel experience or will the primary reason for going be for competition? There's a big difference! The entire preparation is very different, and this decision will affect your band in ways you would never expect.

#### If it is a "Fun" Trip

Let's start with preparing for this to be a fun or vacation trip to Scotland. If this is the band's direction, then many things will not matter as far as preparation. Be prepared to spend about \$2,500 per player for a 10-day trip that includes three competitions. This is about the minimum cost.

Size of your band will not matter as long as you have the minimum numbers. I would

*(Continued on page 12)*

# New Bylaws and Contest Rules from the AGM

Erin Gunn, Executive Secretary  
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Thank you to everyone who attended the Annual General Meeting in Salt Lake City. It was great to see so many familiar faces, and to meet some new people as well!

During the meeting, held on November 22, 2014, the following Bylaws and Contest Rule proposals were approved by the membership:

- Re-formatted Bylaws - There were no substantive changes made. Thanks to Andy Trimble, who put these together for us.
- Bass drumming, three grades - The Intermediate class will compete with an MSR. Bass players, please submit a re-grade application if you wish to be re-graded. (The application can be found at [www.WUSPBA.org](http://www.WUSPBA.org). Click on "Competition" and then "Solo and Band Grading Application.")
- Clarify - One person, one band
- Clarify – Transfers
- Dress requirements
- Eliminating the five minute grace period for band contests - The Executive Committee is strongly

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### Annual General Meeting

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recommending that all contest organizers provide a final tuning area at least 50 yards from the competition area to help facilitate this contest rule.

- Grade 2 instructors - Such instructors may not make up the minimum number of competitors, nor act as the pipe major or lead drummer.
- “Open” players instead of “Professional”
- Separating piobaireachd and light music - Solo pipers may register in one grade for piobaireachd and another for light music. Solo pipers wish to be re-graded in either piobaireachd or light music, please submit a re-grade application (see above).
- Grade 4 Mini-MSR - Beginning in 2016, bands will play four parts of march, two parts of strathspey, and two parts of reel. The current MSR will be eliminated.

Please see the WUSPBA website for full 2014 AGM meeting minutes and the updated Bylaws, and Contest Rules.

## Thanks for a Great Year

Jeffrey Mann, President, WUSPBA,  
[Jeffrey.mann@hsc.utah.edu](mailto:Jeffrey.mann@hsc.utah.edu)



Most of us, having survived the holidays, are now gearing up for the 2015 competition season. I'm happy to report that we had a very

productive Annual General Meeting in November, and I believe a great time was had by all, as you can see from pictures posted on pages 19-20.

## Thanks to Those Who Have Made a Difference

I want to thank some individuals who made a difference during 2014 for an incredible amount of hard work and effort .

First, a thank-you to WUSPBA Vice President Stu Baker. This man was a constant source of encouragement and stability who kept me on an even keel when tough issues came up. He is a man who is eloquent in speech and can run an incredibly professional meeting. He was my *Roberts Rules* guru and I appreciated his help. I am grateful for our association and truly proud to call him a friend.

Andy Trimble, past chair of the Music Board, has certainly left his mark on the WUSPBA, editing and reformatting the Contest Rules and Bylaws, making them more user-friendly. Andy helped in the creation of three committees within the Music Board in 2014: the Education Committee, chaired by Kevin McIntyre; the Adjudication Committee, chaired by Lorne Cousin; and the Grading Committee, chaired by B.J. Gunn.

Under Andy's direction, Lorne was asked to chair a committee along with Kevin McIntyre to create a *WUSPBA 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Tune Collection*. Lorne, Andy and Kevin worked long and hard on this collection and were able to produce a beautiful musical work that includes many of your contributions. This collection can be

purchased on the WUSPBA website. Thanks to Lorne Cousin, Kevin McIntyre and Andy Trimble for establishing this legacy for us.

On December 27<sup>th</sup> the WUSPBA rolled out our new membership tracking system. This will not only help with solo and band membership, it will be a great aid to contest organizers.

### **New Officers Elected**

At the AGM, the membership elected the following people to administer the WUSPBA in 2015. Congratulations and thanks for being willing to serve to:

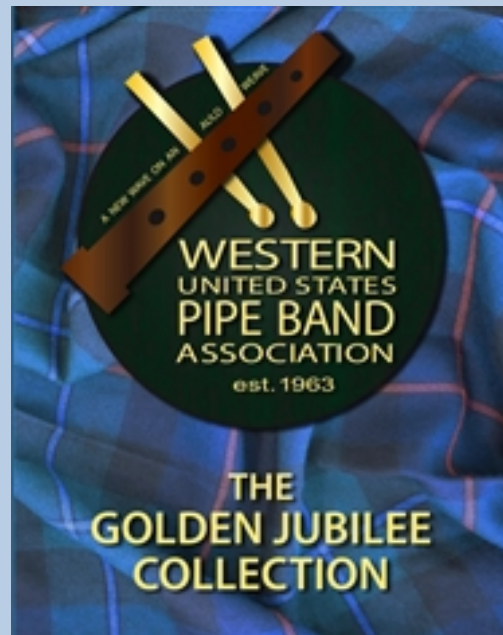
- Vice President - Drew McPheeters
- Sanctioning Secretary - Todd Brown
- Solo Registrar - Lezlie Mann

### **Alliance Meeting in Kansas City**

On January 9-11, as this issue of *Words & Music* is being put to bed, WUSPBA administration will be meeting in Kansas City, Missouri, with the presidents of the other associations in the Alliance of North American Pipe Band Association.

In addition, those in attendance will be the presidents and chairs of the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association, the Pipe Bands Australia, and the Scottish Pipe Band Association of South America. The Brigadier from the Edinburgh Tattoo will also be attending to make a presentation.

We will be discussing issues of commonality and those areas that are of current concern in the pipe band world.



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[www.thebookpatch.com](http://www.thebookpatch.com).**

## Amazing Growth

I continue to be impressed with the hard work of all of our bands and soloists. I am amazed at the improved level of playing since I first became involved with the WUSPBA back in 1997. The young individuals competing solo at that time are now some of the individuals who are leading our Music Board and other committees in the WUSPBA.

Finally, I want to thank all of the Executive Committee and the Music Board under the direction of newly appointed chair Andrew Morrill; Lise Nelson, new chair of the Adjudication Committee; B.J. Gunn, chair of the Grading Committee; and Ross Morrill, chair of the Education Committee. I am looking forward to a new year filled with synergy and innovation.

I wish everyone the very best for the year ahead, and am looking forward to meeting each of you in the New Year.

## Additional Highlights from the AGM

*Susan Thornton, Assistant Editor, Words & Music, [susthorn@aol.com](mailto:susthorn@aol.com)*



The 2014 Annual General Meeting of the Western U.S. Pipe Band Association was held at the beautiful Little America hotel in Salt Lake City. Approximately 40 members attended to

greet old friends, make new friends and attend to the future of the WUSPBA.

While officers and members of the Music Board met on Thursday and Friday, with a special meeting for games organizers on Friday evening, the AGM itself kicked off Saturday morning and went into the late afternoon.

## Officers' Reports

First on the agenda were officers' reports. President Jeff Mann reported on a successful year and promised increased efforts to communicate with the membership in 2015. Executive Secretary Erin Gunn reported that any action requiring Executive Committee approval should be sent to her.

Among highlights were a report from Treasurer Holley Morrill, who took office mid-year. Holly reported on revenues and expenditures for 2014 and laid out the budget for 2015, which totals \$31,650.

Band Registrar Nancy Theriault pointed out that in 2014, the WUSPBA had one band in Grade II, 10 bands in Grade III, 23 bands in Grade IV and 22 bands in Grade V. In 2015, three Grade III bands have been moved to Grade II, one Grade IV band has been moved to Grade III, and three Grade V bands have been moved to Grade IV.

Solo Registrar Lezlie Mann reported that there were 513 soloists registered in 2014. A total of 225 soloists were from the Northern Branch, 190 from the Southern Branch, 193 from the Intermountain Branch, and 75 from the Great Basin Branch.

Sanctioning Secretary Todd Brown reported that 26 games registered with the WUSPBA in 2014.



Branch presidents reported on activities in their branches and thanked the WUSPBA for financial support of a new competition, *Scots on the Rocks*, in Moab, Utah, and for assistance with a workshop in the Intermountain Branch.

### **Music Board**

Andrew Morrill, chair of the Music Board, reported on the Competitor's Performance Level (CPL), which asks judges to rate bands and soloists as to whether they are playing above, below or in the middle of other competitors in their grade. These ratings are separate from winnings, and are aggregated so that the Music Board has a picture of whether bands and soloists are in their correct grades. Bands playing above or below grade level in 2015 will be warned and may be moved up or down in 2016. The Music Board plans more education of the membership about the CPL approach.

### **Important Database System**

Ryan Rodgers, from R2 Sports, introduced a new database system that is being used by major sports events across the U.S. and is being developed for use in the WUSPBA.

Bands and soloists will register for events on the WUSPBA website and must have dues current before registrations will go through. Funds will be collected by the company, which has been in business for 13 years, and remitted to games organizers along with names of registered bands and competitors. There will be a \$1 fee for each soloist or band registering for a contest, no matter how many events are entered.

### **2014 Circle of Honor**

A Circle of Honor ceremony was held following the business of the AGM. In a moving ceremony, members of the Presidents' Council honored seven individuals for their long-term contributions to the WUSPBA: Jim Harrington, Elaine Hoffman, Drew McPheeters, Lise Nelson, Jan Richey, John Thornton and Liz Tubbs (see photos on pages 19-20).

### **Possible Realignment of WUSPBA Boundaries**

President Jeff Mann explained that due to increased security at the Canadian/U.S. border, Washington, Oregon and Northern Idaho may soon form their own pipe band association, or may join the WUSPBA.

Jeff reported on meetings in British Columbia with the BC Pipers Association, the Eastern U.S. Pipe Band Association, the Midwest Pipers Association and the Pipers and Pipe Band Association of Ontario.

## **Treasurer's Report**

*Holley Morrill, Treasurer*  
[hrmorrill@live.com](mailto:hrmorrill@live.com)



I enjoyed and learned a lot at my first AGM in November. It was nice to meet a lot of neat people who are keeping the great Scottish culture alive!

It was also good that we made it through

the audit, with some good suggestions on things we can do better for this new year.

With a new computer program to register bands and solo competitors, this will be an interesting year, but I do think it will be better, and I hope everyone is patient as this new program gets up and running. We will no longer be going through Pay Pal, which should make the registration process go more quickly.

## Solo Registrar Report

*By Lezlie Mann, Solo Registrar  
mannlezlie@gmail.com*



My first experience with the WUSPBA's AGM was very insightful. I learned a lot and enjoyed mingling with those of you who were able to attend.

The thing that I came away with that I am most excited about is the new computerized membership tracking management system. I think that once everyone familiarizes themselves and feel comfortable with it, this program will be a great improvement and benefit to us all.

### **Solo Competitors -- Register Yourself**

Starting December 27, 2014, soloists were able to register or renew your online membership yourself. You will no longer have to wait for me to send out your information, because the system will

automatically send your information in real time. You will always be able to edit your profile if there are any changes. This system gives individuals more control over their own profile and membership.

### **How to Renew Your Membership -- Important!**

If you are a renewing member, go to [www.WUSPBA.org](http://www.WUSPBA.org), and under the membership tab click "How to Join." This will direct you to the membership page. Click on the solo membership link and choose your membership type. Follow the instructions and log in to view your profile. *If you are a renewing member and already in the system, it is very important that you **do not** create a new profile.* Instead, click on "Returning users login below."

If you don't know your login information, click on "Forgot or do not know your login info? Click here." Follow the instructions to search for your name. The system will then send you an email where you will be able to create your new username and password. If there is any missing information in your profile, the automated system will prompt you to fill that out before you can go onto payment. Click "OK" at the bottom of profile once you have updated your information. Then follow the payment instructions.

You should receive an email with a receipt of payment, membership card, kilt number and instructions.

### **New Members -- How to Register**

If you are a new member registering for the first time go to [www.WUSPBA.org](http://www.WUSPBA.org) and under the membership tab, click "How to

join.” This will direct you to the membership page.

Click on the solo membership link and choose your membership type. Go to “Create New Profile Here” and follow the instructions. If there is any missing information, the system will prompt you to fill that out before you can go onto payment. Click “OK” at the bottom of the profile once you have entered all the required information. Then follow the payment instructions.

You should receive an email with a receipt of payment, membership card, kilt number and instructions.

### **Let Me Know of Any Problems**

We realize that with this new system there may be things that will need to be changed and/or corrected, so please be patient with all of this. If you do have any problems, please contact me.

I am very excited for this coming year and once the new system is all up and going and everything worked out, we should be able to see definite improvements. Good luck to all for the coming season!

## **New Computer System for Bands, Soloists**

*Nancy Theriault, Band Registrar  
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As we head into the 2015 competition season, the WUSPBA will be transitioning to a new online registration system. We are very fortunate to be using tried-and-tested software that was designed for sporting



tournaments and has been in use at large events for many years.

Because it was designed for sports, the system has required modifications to fit the piping and

drumming community’s needs. Several of us have been working with the programmer to put in requests for these alterations, and most of our modifications should be completed by the time you read this. We’ve been pushing to get this system up and running quickly, so I’m sure there will still be a glitch or two in the form of verbiage that doesn’t quite seem right. Please let me know if you notice anything that sounds odd or confusing, and we’ll have it corrected.

The beauty of this program is that band managers will have control over inputting their initial rosters (up until the cut-off date) and will be able to not only register and pay for WUSPBA memberships, but will also be able to complete contest registrations. This will greatly impact the efficiency of the process and, I believe, make things easier for all of us at every step of the way.

### **Instructions to be Sent Soon**

I’ll be sending out instructions to band managers and pipe majors as soon as we’re ready to have you start using the new system, so please make sure that we have proper email contact information for your band.



I want to thank all the band representatives who attended the AGM in November. We had a good turnout and were able to take care of a lot of business items -- and it was nice to see old friends and make new ones.

## Music Board

*Andrew Morrill, Music Board Chair*  
[amorrill@dmail.net](mailto:amorrill@dmail.net)



Let me introduce myself. I am Andrew Morrill, chair of the Music Board. Many of you know me from when I served as the president of WUSPBA for four years. I have

had the opportunity to serve in most positions in this association for the last 40 years. I feel that a great Music Board has been put together with a lot of experience and practical knowledge.

### Three Committees

For 2015, the Music Board has been divided into three committees: Adjudication, chaired by Lise Nelson; Grading, chaired by B.J. Gunn; and Education, chaired by Ross Morrill. You will be seeing articles from each of these committees as they try to educate and explain many of the changes happening in our association. We hope throughout this year to help explain changes regarding bands and individual competitors, as well as many judging issues. We also hope to provide educational ideas to help members compete better.

I hope all your preparation for the coming season is going well!

## Busy Year Ahead for the Education Committee

*Ross Morrill, Education Committee Chair*  
[isrossam@gmail.com](mailto:isrossam@gmail.com)



The Education Committee of the Music Board is excited to promote the development of the art of Scottish piping and drumming.

### New Band and Solo Grading System

Our tasks this year include work with the other Music Board committees. We will be working with the Grading Committee to help educate the general membership about the new Competitor's Performance Level (CPL) system of grading. This system will help ensure that bands and soloists are competing in a grade appropriate for their skill level and that will best help them develop musically.

We will also be working with the Adjudicator Committee to ensure that judges are educated about the importance of and proper way to use the CPL numbers.

Watch *Words & Music* for a future article with more information about the grading process.

### Promoting Branch Recitals-Performances

In addition, we will be working with the MDAP Committee to generally promote the Scottish arts. Specifically, we hope to promote branch recitals that are intended

to showcase the talents of the players within the various branches. These recitals are also intended to shift the focus off of competition and on to performance, hopefully helping to highlight the art itself.

We will also be continuing work on developing ways to promote Scottish piping and drumming in K-12 schools across the WUSPBA.

## Competitor Performance Level Drives Regrading

*By B.J. Gunn, Grading Committee Chair  
drumminggunn@msn.com*



During the 2014 competition season, the Music Board's Grading Committee collected Competitor Performance Level (CPL) data for hundreds of competitors from thousands of

judging forms. Solo CPLs are recorded on the bottom of each judging form, and band CPLs are recorded on the "blue sheet" summary form.

Adjudicators are asked to rank bands and solo competitors into one of the following categories:

- 5: Above the generally recognized level for this grade
- 4: In the upper quartile of this grade level
- 3: Performing at the generally accepted level for this grade

- 2: In the lower quartile of this grade level
- 1: Performing below the generally recognized level for this grade

From the data collected, the Grading Committee created band and solo data spreadsheets. This information aided the committee when making band and solo re-grade recommendations.

### New Re-Grading Application/Appeals Forms

Another major accomplishment for the committee in 2014 was the creation of the band and solo re-grade applications and appeal forms. The information requested on these forms gives the Grading Committee a more complete picture of the soloist or band. Bands and soloists wishing to be re-graded for 2016 should submit their application no less than 45 days before the 2015 AGM.

The application form is available at [www.WUSPBA.org](http://www.WUSPBA.org) under "Competition."

### A Focus on Education

The Grading Committee will be working with the Education Committee to produce educational materials to help bands and soloists understand how to move up and progress. In coming issues of *Words & Music*, you will also see articles about the process and criteria the Grading Committee uses when recommending upgrades and downgrades.

Stay tuned!

# Adjudication Committee

*Lise Nelson, Chair*

[joyfulnoises33@gmail.com](mailto:joyfulnoises33@gmail.com)



The meetings at the AGM kept the entire Music Board busy, so there wasn't much time for the Adjudication Committee to have a separate meeting, but we did meet for a short time.

The members of the committee are Ryan Balchuck, Janice Richey, Michael LeBoeuf, Kevin McIntyre, and Bob Mason. Ryan will be overseeing the Shadow Program, and Janice Richey will be making sure that applications are dealt with in a timely manner. Other members of the committee will take on duties as needed.

We have several items on our agenda for this year, starting with rewriting and posting to the website the process of becoming an adjudicator, and making sure that each candidate going through the Shadow Program has a mentor and a clear path to follow.

## Branches

### Great Basin Branch

*Michael D. Gibbs, President*

[pipermdg@msn.com](mailto:pipermdg@msn.com)

The Great Basin Branch had a great year. Going forward, we are pleased to welcome



Ros Hadden as our new secretary, and D. Bruce Baxter as our new vice president.

We are very excited about the growth we have seen in the branch this year, and look forward to the 2015 competition season, which will now include Grade II band competitions, with the move up of our own Wasatch & District to that new grade! With a host of new pipe majors and the grade change for Wasatch, this coming year will be one to watch.

### New Competition: Scots on the Rocks

We were very pleased with the newest addition to our area, the Scots on the Rocks competition in Moab, held in November. We had great participation from several local and out-of-state bands, as well as soloists from six western states.

We are excited to welcome back the three outstanding judges we had this year -- Jack Lee, Chris Apps and John Fisher -- and we are adding Terry Lee to our lineup for 2015.

### Hope to See You in Utah!

We would like to thank all who came out to all our area festivals and competitions this year, and we hope to see you all again at the Utah Scottish Festival at Thanksgiving Point in June, Payson Scottish Festival in July, and the Scots on the Rocks Moab Celtic Festival in Moab on November 6-8th 2015.



Finally, the branch sponsored a clinic featuring Jack Lee, Glenn Kvidahl and Andrew Elliott that was attended by more than 60 pipers and drummers. This clinic could not have been possible without the support of education funds provided by the WUSPBA as a whole, and we wish to express our appreciation to the association for its help in sponsoring this clinic.

## Intermountain Branch

*Drew McPheeters, President*  
[dbmcpheeters@gmail.com](mailto:dbmcpheeters@gmail.com)



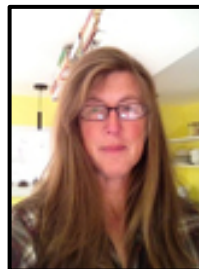
The Intermountain Branch has been pretty quiet since the last report. The season is very short in the branch because weather is not very predictable before May and after

September. We were fortunate this year to have excellent weather at the Longs Peak Scottish Irish Festival in Estes Park; it has been known to snow several inches at this festival on Saturday and have sun and be in the 60s on Sunday.

A number of Colorado bands participated in the Colorado International Tattoo in 2014 at the World Arena in Colorado Springs. The Tattoo featured bands from the U.S. Air Force Academy and the U.S. Army Band of the 4th Infantry Division based at Fort Carson, Colorado. Chorale groups, military drill teams and Celtic dance groups were also part of this show. This was the first time an event of this type has been staged, but it is hoped that it will be a regular show.

## Northern Branch

*Lisa Graves, Outgoing President,*  
[lisaigraves@earthlink.net](mailto:lisaigraves@earthlink.net)



I recently returned from the WUSPB AGM in Salt Lake City, and boy, was it a well-run affair! Erin Gunn did an excellent job of organizing the event. The Executive Board and Music

Board put a lot of time and energy into discussing proposed bylaws, and comments from the attendees before votes were cast were well-reasoned. Next year, the AGM will be held again in Salt Lake. I encourage you to attend.

As the year comes to a close, the Northern Branch will have elected a new President and Vice President. I did not run again as branch President although I really enjoyed my two years on the Northern Branch board. I especially enjoyed working on our smaller solo piping events and getting to know the wonderful community of solo pipers and drummers. Take care, and I wish you all a wonderful New Year.

## Southern Branch

Scott Larson, President  
[larsonsr@gmail.com](mailto:larsonsr@gmail.com)



Hello Southern Branch!

AS I write, we are in the "off season," but there is a lot to do to get ready for next year.

This year at the branch AGM at Queen Mary, we will need to vote in new officers. I will not be running for president again, as I have a lot of stuff going on right now in my personal life. Therefore, anyone who is interested in the position and who would like to know more about what is involved, please reach out to me.

All four officer positions need to be voted on, however our bylaws say that we are supposed to have two positions up on alternating years, so we will need to either vote two of the positions for one-year terms or extend some of our current board members' terms. I am open to suggestions on how best to do this.

Thank you for staying involved!

## So You Want to Take Your Band to Scotland

*(Continued from page 1)*

caution you to make sure that everyone in the band is very clear that this is a fun trip and not to get overly worried about results. When a band is split in philosophy about the trip and things don't go well in

competition, then you are in jeopardy of losing membership.

Have practice early in the mornings and then let everyone go off and sightsee. Again, just be clear on expectations. Have fun and enjoy Glasgow and Princess Street, and visit a few castles!

### If it is a "Competition" Trip

Now if you want to be serious and see where your band fits into the World standards, it will look a bit different. Here is the process we have used in our Grade I and II bands. It took serious planning, recruitment of talent and setting attainable goals and expectations.

When I took over the L.A. Scots back in the early 'nineties, it was clear we needed to set some goals. We had talent, as many bands do, but bands from our area never seemed to progress to a higher level. So we made a decision that we were going to travel and compete.

We needed to determine if we could play in the upper half of Grade II in North America before we made the big trip to Scotland. We had made up our minds that we were going to be competitive, and I had the commitment from the players for the kind of work this step would take. This was Year One of our five-year plan.

So we traveled to Maxville to compete in the North American Championships. We were up against the very best in Grade II that year, and I think there were 16 bands in the competition. We went with a fairly good-sized band but were not really sure what was about to happen.



We played extremely well that year and were thrilled with taking fourth place our first time traveling. We were exposed to great playing, found out that we were in the competitive mix, and that was all it took! As a band, we knew at that moment that we were ready for Scotland and motivated to put in the hard work ahead of us.

### **Set Goals and Expectations**

After the successful trip to Canada, we finalized our five-year plan to travel to Scotland with the hope of competing for a World Championship in Grade II. My experience is that you have to put in the time and years competing in Scotland to get good results. If you and your band expect to place high the first few years, you will be setting yourself up for disappointment. The L.A. Scots have been there.

Very few -- if any -- traveling bands outside of Scotland can go over and expect a high placing if the judges have never heard the band. There always has been a bit of "paying your dues" surrounding the Worlds. That is why we decided to make a five-year commitment and take a legitimate shot at the championship. We definitely paid our dues over the years.

### **Seek Advice and Musical Support**

Many bands make the mistake of not reaching out to get help. But stop and think about that. You figure you will be spending up to \$80,000 total for the band to compete in Scotland. Spend the few extra dollars and get support from a player or players that have gone through this process. It takes a team effort to make the trip successful.

We were no different. We had help from Richard Parkes, John Elliott and others over the years. They helped out with music and preparing the band for competition at this level. The years of working with these guys also made me a successful pipe major, which in turn benefitted the band overall.

### **Determine the Size of your Competition Band**

Let's talk about the size of band needed to compete. If you have the minimum numbers, then I recommend you wait until you are at least a band of 18 players to get the most out of your trip. The size of your band is important and projects a serious band ready to compete. I am treading here a bit, as many bands fluctuate in size and their results have not been affected.

But if you're an overseas band and traveling over for the first time, then first impressions are important. The numbers below are a good balance for a competitive band in each of the grades.

This would be a minimum requirement:

- Grade IV - 18 Players is a good balance (10 Pipers, 4 Snares, 3 Tenors and Bass)
- Grade III - 25 Players is a good balance (12-14 Pipers, 6 Snares, 4 Tenors and Bass)
- Grade II - 30 Players is a good balance (14-18 Pipers, 6-8 Snares, 4 Tenors and Bass)
- Grade I - 34 Players is a good balance (18-21 Pipers, 8 Snares, 4 Tenors and Bass)

Now that I have helped you determine what it will take to set up your trip for success,

let's set up how to make the time spent in Scotland productive.

### **Establish a Schedule of Events for Your Time in Scotland**

The L.A. Scots plan out the entire trip from the time we arrive to when we leave. We always want to keep a balance of practice time and fun time, but we all know that we have committed a ton of time, money and vacation days from school and work. Balance is the key word.

Before we leave, we even talk about who will be sharing flats while we stay in Scotland. That might sound like a small thing, but it is important to have harmony in those flats, as you are spending at least 10 days in close quarters.

Practicing is always a very fine line. The worst thing you can do is cause fatigue in the band before you actually compete. Unless you practice heavily throughout the year, it does not make sense to over-practice once you get to Scotland, because your mind and stamina will not make it through 10 days. So be careful!

It is always good to start the day on chanter and pads just to get the fingers and hands warmed up. Go through the sets and set expectations on tempos and breaks. By this time, if you are correcting notes and bad playing, expect issues on competition day.

Then take a break and get out the pipes and drums for a few runs through your competition sets. We try to work on breaks and areas that need a bit of extra work. We typically don't run through the whole sets until the end of practice. This session is

usually 60 to 90 minutes. After an hour on the pipes, players start to get tired and mistakes begin to take over.

The L.A. Scots schedule full-day practices (based on need, preparation and weather) at the start of the trip leading up to the Championships. We don't practice the entire day, but stay close "just in case" we have a last-minute session.

The last few days before we compete, we have just one practice to run through the sets a few times and make sure there are no issues with sound. We use these sessions to actually simulate preparing for the contest. We start about 90 minutes before we "compete." It is important to keep your players fresh and ready for the big day at this point.

Pipes are sensitive to the weather conditions in Scotland for bands that play in warmer weather, and will change dramatically once you arrive. Don't panic. Just let your pipes settle in a few days before major tuning.

A wet bagpipe is an issue and will not perform to your expectations. In fact, if it is raining throughout the week, don't play your pipes that much. If it is raining on the day of competition, we might start warming up just 45-60 minutes before the contest. Drums have similar issues as well, and need to be kept dry.

### **Dealing with Players Who Are Not Performing to Expectations**

This next part is the most difficult part for the leadership of the band. When do you cut a player?

In my mind there are three ways a player is cut from the circle: not prepared with the music and making too many mistakes; instrument is not set up well enough and having issues with tuning; and finally competitive nerves. All are justifiable reasons to cut a person on the day of competition.

The bottom line is that each player has the responsibility on his or her own to be prepared musically, to have his/her instrument set up perfectly, and finally to be able to perform in a high-stress environment.

If players can't, then they have little to complain about, regardless if they took time off of work, paid their share of expenses, and participated in practices and performances throughout the year. These are the World Championships, and only those who are prepared and ready should expect to be in the circle. Decisions are based on the best musical interest of the band.

I think it is very important to communicate the expectations about readiness clearly throughout the year. Let players know of weaknesses that might cause them to not be on the field when you get to Scotland. For the L.A. Scots, you need to be able to play and perform at a Grade 1 level. It is not the band's responsibility to guarantee a player that he or she will compete. Typically, a player will think he or she is at the required competitive level in Scotland, and if not, that is when issues happen.

It takes strong leadership when converting to a truly competitive band. The stakes become higher as well as the expectations of each individual player. I will say that even

as much as you help prepare your band members, emotions can run high when the leadership has to make the tough decisions to cut players.

I have found over the years that continued high-level communication with individuals throughout the year and establishing a structured and professional culture within the organization can help alleviate (although not eliminate) hurt feelings. The greater outcome can be that your band can attain some great moments like we have over the years.

So there you have it! You spend up to as much as \$80,000. You get to practice all week like you have never practiced before. You don't get to really see the beauty of Scotland with the exception of Buchanan Street, The Piping Live Festivities, the Piping Center and competitive bands practicing all over Glasgow.

Sounds fun doesn't it? It is, if you are serious and your band is committed.

The Los Angeles Scots Pipe Band has competed in Grade II and Grade I over the years with success; we have won a World Championship in Grade II and placed as high as 11<sup>th</sup> three separate times in Grade I. We have had more than 150 pipers and drummers as part of the band over the years, and we have spent well over \$1 million traveling to Scotland! There have been many high and low points during the past 20-plus years, but everyone who has played in our band has great memories that will last them forever.

## To Summarize

- Determine whether you are going to Scotland on a competitive or fun trip
- Set goals and expectations
- Seek advice and musical support
- Determine the size of your competition band
- Establish a schedule of events once you arrive in Scotland
- Prepare to deal with players who are not performing up to band expectations
- Communicate, communicate, communicate!

## History of the L.A. Scots

<http://www.lascots.org/>

The Los Angeles Scottish Pipe Band was originally started in 1961 by founding members P/M Jimmy Thompson, P/S Ian MacDonald and D/S Charlie Capperault. This group was very successful throughout the 1960s and the early 1970s. During the peak period when they reached Grade A Status (now referred to Grade I), the band had some of the best talent in the area, including Jimmy McCall, former Gold Medal Winner in Scotland. This group competed through 1974.

In the early 1990s, sons of founding members revived the “LA Scots” name by combining players from two existing bands in the area – Beach Cities Pipe Band and Scottish Heritage Pipe Band under P/M Scott Ruscoe and D/S Tom Foley.

Scott MacDonald became Pipe Major in 1992. Scott is the son of former founding member P/M Ian MacDonald. Under

Scott’s leadership, the band established itself as the premier pipe band in the United States. The LA Scots started off in Grade II and competed successfully in Canada and Scotland. The band’s crown prize was winning the 1997 World Championship in Grade II in Scotland – marking the first time an American band had won this honor. Later that summer the band was upgraded into Grade I by both the Western United States Pipe Band Association and the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association. This is the highest grade a band can reach and is an elite level of international accomplishment as evidenced by there being only 3 bands in Grade I in the United States.

In Grade I, the Los Angeles Scots have placed as high as 11th in the World Championships on three occasions at the annual competition held in Glasgow, Scotland. The band has placed in the top 15 bands in Grade I over the past few years, including just missing the finals this past year. Only the top 12 Bands in Grade I from the qualifying heats play in the finals. The band is now under the leadership of P/M Colin Armstrong and D/S Bryce Parker. Colin has been leading the band since P/M Scott MacDonald stepped down in 2005. Colin is Scott’s nephew, making him a third-generation pipe major from the MacDonald Family.

The Los Angeles Scots are considered the premier pipe band in the United States – evidenced by the number of players who travel thousands of miles to be a member of this successful organization. Since the 1990 relaunch of the LA Scots, the band has been home to over 150 band members! The current Grade I group is made up of 24 Pipers, 15 Snare Drummers, 7 in the Bass & Tenor Section, and a Drum Major. Many of

our players are active instructors, judges, and respected leaders within the international pipe band community. In addition, the band is home to a Grade IV band, and to a new Grade III competition band since merger of the Nicholson Pipe Band from Westminster, California, in October. This has been a very long-time, successful organization and we look forward to them being part of the L.A. Scots organization for many years to come.

## **2014 Circle of Honor Awards**

In a moving, sometimes emotional, often humorous ceremony on Nov. 22, seven people who have contributed many years of support to the Western U.S. Pipe Band Association were inducted into the WUSPBA's Circle of Honor in Salt Lake City. The ceremony was held in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Association.

Honorees were introduced by Presidents' Council members who were present: John Biggar, Chris Hossack, Susan Thornton, and WUSPBA President Jeff Mann.

Those honored were:

- Jim Harrington
- Elaine Hoffman
- Drew McPheeters,
- Lise Nelson
- Janice Richey
- John Thornton
- Elizabeth Tubbs

Photos of five the honorees are shown in the AGM Picture Gallery on the following page. Their photos and descriptions of why they were nominated for the WUSPBA's signature honor will soon be available on the WUSPBA website.

Congratulations to each of the new Circle members!

### **Upcoming Newsletter Deadlines**

**Spring 2015 Issue: March 10**  
**Summer 2015 issue: June 10**

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## 2015 Circle of Honor Photo Gallery

*(Not shown: Jim Harrington and Elaine Hoffman)*



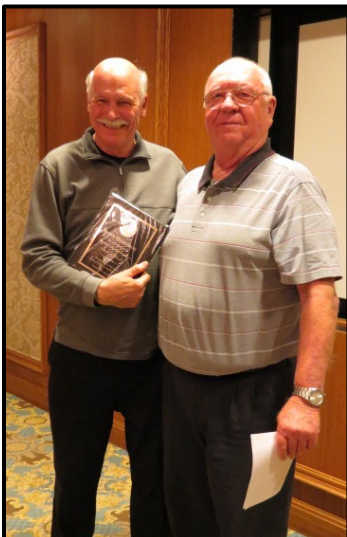
**Jan Richey's Circle of Honor presentation by Jeff Mann**



**Lise Nelson's Circle of Honor presentation by Jeff Mann**



**Drew McPheeters with his Circle of Honor award**



**John Thornton's Circle of Honor presentation by Chris Hossack**



**Liz Tubb's Circle of Honor presentation by John Biggar**