

The Desert Branch of WUSPBA covering Clark County Nevada and the State of Arizona is home to 11 member bands plus nearly 200 individual members. We've had an eventful 2023 with exciting changes and growth. We held at least one event each quarter held in historic or scenic venues.

Our year started in March with a successful Scottish Games hosted at Gilbert Regional Park.

The games kicked off on Friday night with the Phoenix International Twilight Tattoo! In its second year, 3000 people were entertained by the Isle of Skye Pipe Band from Scotland, Mesa Caledonian Pipe Band, The Alma College Kiltie Dancers, a German brass quintet Die Leidermause, the Jason Cartmell Band, Craic in the Stone, and more. We look forward to the 2024 games in March which will include another tattoo with the Ingersoll Pipe Band from Canada, military bands, and a concert by the Wicked Tinkers.

Saturday and Sunday of Phoenix once again featured a full range of solo contests and pipe band competition. We saw participation from all our Arizona bands, Billings Caledonian from Montana, and Isle of Skye. Congrats to all for a successful start to the season.

April held the Las Vegas Celtic Festival at a new location. It was better than ever! Their contest attracted bands & soloists from Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah. Las Vegas also features the only Professional/Open Piping contest in our branch.

Our next big event came in July with the Arizona Highland Celtic Festival in Flagstaff. This contest venue is tied in with the Jim Thomson School of Piping – a weeklong instruction course held at Northern Arizona University. Competitors came from all over our region including New Mexico. The cooler mountain temperatures and a bit of rain made it all feel a bit like the old country. Competing bands included Phoenix Pipe Band and Glendale Pipes & Drums.

A special mention is also deserved for the Hugh O'Connor Memorial Pipe Band formed by Len Wood, a stalwart of piping in our branch. Hugh O'Connor was an early settler of Arizona and considered a founder of Tucson. His namesake was used for a band in Tucson for several years so the band was revived for a special project. Formed mostly from Desert Branch members to compete at the All-Ireland Pipe Band Championships, this band did extremely well and took the best bass section prize in Grade 4B!

Our last branch contest was just held in late September at Prescott on the shoreline of Watson Lake. Congratulations to Mesa Caledonian's Grade 5 band for their victories in both sets that day.

In November, we held a solo competition at the Tucson Celtic Festival for the first time in over a decade. We are excited and hopeful to bring a full range of competition back to this venue.

In 2024, we will be gearing up for our workshop in January of 2025. Please keep an eye out for updates and instructor information. Everyone is invited!

The Desert Branch welcomes members from the other branches of WUSPBA to consider our events for 2024. We'd love to have you here!

Sincerely,  
Teresa Black