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Grace Notes

Jane Moulder

Just a few brief notes to kick off this Spring 2020 edition – there’s no room for any more from me as it’s another packed, eclectic edition of articles and features. I never cease to be amazed at how wide a diversity of material is included in Chanter and this, I suppose, simply reflects the wide diversity of pipes, players, cultures, histories and music that this single (!) instrument shares. However, all bagpipes and bagpipers should come together to celebrate the instrument this coming 10th March as it is, of course, International Bagpipe Day! Go out, play your pipes loud and proud and make some noise! And if you can record your efforts, then please share via social media, post on the Bagpipe Society Facebook page and tag #bagpipes, #internationalbagpipeday, #makesomenoise, or whatever will help promote the day and the instrument.



Finally, the word is spreading! I am really pleased that the Society has hit its 300th membership mark. Each year we gain some new members and we lose a few members, that's the way of societies in general – but over the last few years there has been a gradual year on year increase in membership. It was about 170 when I took over the editorship in 2014 and the landmark 300 is a great one to achieve. The Facebook page stands at over 2,130 likes, so it means that we still have a few more fans to convert!

Dear Jane

The “Cat playing the bagpipes” is taken from a book given to me as a present, called “Medieval Cats”. (BL Harley 6564, FF 40R). I hope you can print it in the magazine.

Kind regards, Roger Fleming

Editor's note: I am very familiar with the image of the fiddle playing cat which is from the same manuscript, in fact on the next folio, but the bagpiping cat is not as well known.



Hi Jane,

In "The Every Day Book" by William Hone (1780-1842), London: William Tegg, (1825, 1827), in a section on waits I found the attached engraving after Bloemart and the following poem. The painting by Bloemart is well known, the engraving less so.

Regards and a piping new year Alan Radford



*He blows his bagpipe soft or strong,
Or high or low, to hymn or song,
Or shrill lament, or solemn groan,
Or dance, or reel, or sad o-hone!
Or ballad gay, or well-a-day —
To all he gives due melody.*

<https://www.hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com/Text/Hone/Waits1.htm>

Hello Jane,

I warmly remember your encouragements when I attended the PIVA course at Halsway with my pipes and melodica. We (Dromadaire Pipes trio) would be delighted to have our arrangement(s) included in Chanter, whether by including the printed score, or including links to the Noteflight scores, which play audio.

The printed scores can be downloaded as a pdf (without audio) by choosing: Menu, Score, Export. ("Menu" is indicated by the three short horizontal lines, top left of the page).

As well as the two new ones recently posted on Facebook, there are a couple of older tunes which we have played a lot and are a bit more dramatic. We like playing Prospect Place, especially as it's a co-operative effort by Steve (tune) and me (arrgt).

Burette (Mazurka) <http://bit.ly/Chanter79>

(The walk from) Prospect Place (Mazurka) <http://bit.ly/Chanter80>

Horsley Mill Mazurka <http://bit.ly/Chanter81>

Moulins (Waltz) <http://bit.ly/Chanter82>

Editor's Note: Sadly there isn't space to include the full scores in Chanter but please do visit the above links to download and play the music.

Pipenbock!

Kirsten Barron

Spielkurs Pipenbock is an annual event in Northern Germany which features workshops on traditional instruments, music and dance - including two bagpipe courses: half-closed pipes and Swedish bagpipes aka säckpipa. The main attraction for me was the chance of being taught by Swedish riksspelman Olle Gällmo, so I made the trip in 2018. And went back again last year, and will be going again in November 2020!

The Pipenbock weekend is a full-on experience, packed with tuition, concerts and dancing. You definitely get your money's worth! Workshops start on Friday morning, so it's best to arrive Thursday night. The course takes place at Schloss Dreilützow, 80km east of Hamburg (the nearest airport), in pleasant green countryside. There is also a resident ghost, of course, who goes by the name of Dieter, although I did not have the pleasure of encountering him. All accommodation is in shared rooms as the imposing 18th century manor house



largely caters for school trips and similar low-budget travel groups.

The säckpipa course benefits from having two tutors as Olle has been teaching in conjunction with German pipemaker Matthias Branschke since 2011. •Usually participants are split into two groups with alternating tutors, but when only four of us signed up in 2018, we got double the attention, and spent extra time developing harmony lines. Sheet music is provided in advance, although tunes are taught by ear. With Swedish dance this is particularly appropriate as the notation cannot

adequately describe the lilting rhythms of a polska.

Matthias teaches German dance tunes culled from a series of handy little booklets - *Neues aus alten Büchern* - compiled by a group of German musicians who regularly trawl through old manuscripts and save many beautiful tunes from oblivion. •Matthias is excellent at breathing life and wit into these tunes. He is also very helpful with any technical and practical challenges of the instrument.

Olle shares his ever-growing collection of traditional Swedish dances with the participants, additionally providing sheet music - helpfully annotated with tuning & playing instructions - to all after the event (currently well over 60 tunes taught in the previous 9 years of Pipenbock). •He has a profound knowledge and understanding of Swedish folk music which he communicates well in word and on pipes.

Both are excellent workshop leaders who adjust their teaching to the needs and abilities of the group rather than adhering to a strict schedule - this includes linguistic flexibility: •to accommodate a single English-speaking participant in 2019, one group was taught in English only, with the less anglophone members in the other group.

As the säckpipa is still very much a minority sport, this weekend provides a fantastic opportunity to learn from two of the finest, and to play for hours with a room full of fellow enthusiasts, most of whom come back year after year.

Booking via the website <http://www.spielkurs-pipenbock.de/> •which is mostly in German - or you can direct enquiries to the organiser, Merit Zloch, via 2020@spielkurs-pipenbock.de

Blowout 2020 - 5th to 7th June

**Olle Geris & Toon van Mierlo, Olle Gällmo
Porembela, Quentin Budworth, Dave Rowlands
John Tose, Terry Mann**
plus ... The Friday Tune competition!!

Full details of the Blowout 2020 can be found on The Bagpipe Society website. Here you will find biographies of the performers and workshop leaders together with details of the workshops and any sheet music that is going to be used. You can also find arrangements for camping and cuisine – including a full menu by our new caterer! Most importantly, there is also a link to enable you to book your ticket! <http://www.bagpipesociety.org.uk/blowout/2020/>

Olle Gällmo (concerts & workshops) is a Swedish musician and riksspelman, known for his work in playing and promoting the traditional Swedish bagpipe.



Olle Geris (concerts, bal and workshops) is a bagpipe maker and musician from Belgium. She studied piping with Jean-Pierre van Hees and instrument making with Remy Dubois. A winner As well as making and playing Olle numerous bagpiping and reed-making courses.



Toon van Mierlo (concerts, bal and workshops) Having studied oboe, Toon fell head over heels for the uilleann pipes and French pipes, clarinet, soprano sax, and button accordion soon followed. Today he plays with Naragonia amongst other bands and in duo with Olle Geris.



Porembela (concerts & workshops) Hailing, respectively, from Poland and Galicia, Michał Poreba and Gerardo Albela have different cultures and languages and different musical backgrounds but they mix all the differences together exploring their different folklores through to their own compositions.



Quentin Budworth (Saturday workshops) is a hurdy-gurdy player and composer on a quest. He has travelled extensively to learn from master gurdy players from different traditions. He plays as a soloist and with world music band Celtarabia, the Hesse Ceilidh band and The Grinnigogs.



Dave Rowlands (Sat, Sun workshops) will be well known to Blowout attendees. Playing pipes since the late 70s, he has combined his knowledge of dance with his love of drone music in writing, arranging and printing many tunes.

Workshops:

Olle Gällmo:•Swedish tunes by ear - for G pipes (Sat), Swedish tunes for Säckpipa in E/A (Sun)

Olle Geris: Piping techniques & ornamenting (Sat), Playing rounds on bagpipes (Sun)

Toon van Mierlo, Tone making on the bagpipe (Sat). and playing Variations (Sun).

Quentin Budworth - Hurdy Gurdy (Session 1) – different trompette techniques (Session 2) – developing and composing tunes.

Porembela Gaita: the Galician bagpipes (Sat): history, types, repertoire, fingerings, tunings. (Sun). A blending of Poland, Galicia and Wales – combining three cultures in music – for instruments in G.

Dave Rowlands: ADVANCED for D pipes only. Collecting from other traditions, with a focus on the French harpsichord tradition at the court of Louis XIV.

John Tose - Ensemble playing:•Pachelbel's Canon in D. ADVANCED for G & D pipes - must read music and be confident playing in ensemble. •To be performed at the Sat concert.

Terry Mann - Pipers' Surgery (Sat) Now a regular feature of the festival, come with questions about technique, posture, repertoire, or practice and he will do his best to help!

Ian Claburn - Absolute Beginners (Sat) For anyone who has just started out and would like a bit of help in establishing good practice from the outset. Loan pipes are available.

FRIDAY NIGHT COMPETITION! This year's theme is "Bagpipe Charades" with classes for soloists, duets or ensembles and to simplify the judging process, each entrant must define their own individual judging rules.

Makers' stalls:

The following pipe makers will be exhibiting their wares and will be glad to help you draw up your wish list: Jon Swayne, Julian Goodacre, Sean Jones, Jim Parr, Terry Mann. Whistle maker Phil Bleazey will also be in attendance. Don't forget The Bagpipe Society's second-hand pipes, books & CD Stall. Buy, sell, swap, donate - it's up to you!

Blowout menu: This year we are very pleased to welcome Mo, of Simply Paella (simply-paella.com), who will be providing all the catering for the weekend. All meals **MUST** be booked and paid for in advance and the cut off for meal bookings is Saturday 30th May.

Details about camping, directions and payment for the Blowout are all on the website.

Coming soon: The Voice of the Wind

Michael Vereno



Five years ago, my dissertation “Die Stimme des Windes” was published as a book by a German publishing company focusing on Linguistics. As my academic field is that of languages and my private interest that for bagpipes, I was lucky to be able to combine those two and thereby create a thorough study of the history of bagpipes from the perspective of language.

My thinking was: If no early specimens of bagpipes survive and iconography fails us, language is the only thing we can turn to on our quest for answers.

More than with most instruments, the history of bagpipes is one of legends, myths and sometimes conjecture. The long-lasting negligence of the instrument by academics lead to a number of popular researchers pursuing their quest for answers; though many have accomplished an admirable task, the lack of academic background in the last group and the lack of hands-on knowledge in the former has impeded the development of a good academic tradition of bagpipe research. I did not write “Die Stimme des Windes” as a geeky remedy to all that, but as a humble proposal of how things could be addressed academically without getting detached from the audience. For if no one reads the book, what good is it to waste the paper?

As German is my mother tongue, I chose to write it in that language, with some nebulous hopes of translating it someday. As my son was born that very same year, I soon had other things in mind. Then, in the fall of 2017, I was made aware of a rather favourable review of my book by Arle Lommel, an American linguist. In his review, Mr Lommel said, “If and when it appears in English, it is a book that will deserve a wider audience among English-speaking folklorists than its subject matter might suggest.” Another 18 months later, my ensemble “Unisonus” was invited to come to Polesworth and play at the Blowout; at the end of this festival, after I had given a talk on the subject of my book, I had got acquainted with a lovely band of people who all agreed to help me with getting the English version on the way. The Bagpipe Society has proven most generous and kind in this matter ever since, and indeed I would not have been able to come this far without their help. As translation is getting finished soon, I am now able to announce that the English version is finally on the way: By the beginning of summer, “The Voice of the Wind – A Linguistic History of Bagpipes” will be available on online sale platforms, as print-on-demand, as a tablet version, or directly through me.

The content of the book basically is a journey through all those myths, legends, and assumptions I mentioned above. However, it is a journey not only from a musicological perspective, but – as the title reveals – from the perspective of language and etymology. Was it really the Romans who spread bagpipes all over Europe with their armies? Did they call it ‘tibia utricularis’? Did the Greek playwright Aristophanes really mention a bagpipe made from a dog’s behind? Are bagpipes really mentioned in the Bible? Were the terms ‘gaita’ and ‘gaida’ really crafted by bagpiping Goths?

Language is the key to answering those questions and to countering the myths, replacing them with facts or – at least – well-crafted theories and substantial proposals. It shows us the reality that speaks from the dim and scarce sources of old, and in some instances reveals a far more intriguing picture than that of a Roman-based monogenesis of piping. What if bagpipes had indeed been around for quite a long time, but existed in a different paradigm of instrument classification? One that simply did not view them as more than a pipe played with a bag instead of the player’s mouth? What if the concept of a drone pipe, which surely is one of the most recognizable features of the bagpipe today (at least in Europe) actually originated from Moorish influence?

“The Voice of the Wind” does not aim to correct every sentence that has hitherto been written about bagpipes. Far from it, in fact. Rather, I chose to carefully examine some of the things that many of us pipers, including myself, believe to know or to have known about this instrument. With this, I hope to shed some new light on old questions, and maybe answer a few.

Editor’s Note: An update on the publication and how to purchase a copy will be notified via the Bagpipe Society Facebook page and in Chanter

Making reeds for a Boha in G

Robert Matta

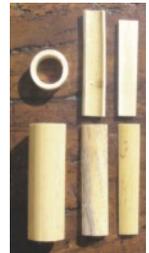
During a conference in Barbaste in 2012, Robert Matta gave a detailed demonstration of his manufacturing technique for his boha reeds. After numerous experiments, he determined the dimensions and measurements that best suited his bagpipes. Only a few materials are required, just a Plexiglass body and a strip of carbon fibre or cane. Then, having assembled the reed, all that is required is to vary the thickness of the carbon fibre or cane strip to refine the setting.

In the following instructions, manual alternatives have been added for those that do not have the necessary tools.

Materials required

- Plexiglass tube: 7mm external and 5mm internal diameter
- Cylindrical stem • 5mm aluminum
- Carbon fibre strip of longitudinal fibers* (cut from the tube of a kite or a tent pole) or cane (*Canne de Provence - arundo donax*)
- Polyester thread: 0.5 mm approximative diameter

** carbon fibre comes in a wide variety of forms and binder. Blades or tubes consisting of longitudinal fibres are fine.*



Tools

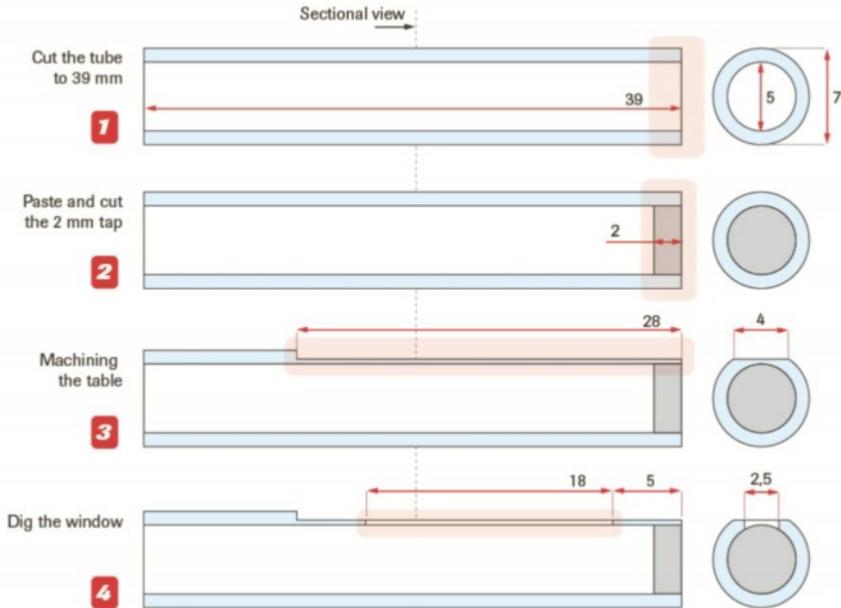
Small dimensions require precise tools such as those designed for model makers:

- Workbench mill • Cross feed table vice • Calibrated vice • Belt sander
- Metal saw • Flat file • Scalpel • Garden secateurs/pruning shears (anvil cutter with a flat bed) to cut carbon fibre without making shards or splitting cane.
- Super glue • Precise measurement tools such as verniers or calipers



Making the body of the Reed

The reed bodies, regardless of whether they are for the chanter or the drone, have the same dimensions. Therefore it's good to make them all together as this will save you a lot of time.



1. Grip the plexiglass tube lightly in a vice in order to turn it and cut with a metal saw at 39 mm (leave 1 mm extra greater than the final dimension). Clean the cut with a scalpel.
2. Put a drop of Superglue right on the end of the tube and quickly, without turning, put the aluminium stem two millimeters inside.
Cut the aluminium stem once the glue has set and the plug must be 2 mm wide. Check that the reed body is air tight and add more glue if necessary.

Making the flat reed bed.

3. The tube is fixed on the precision vice, which is itself fixed on the cross feed table vice. Everything needs to be precisely adjusted so that the reed is parallel to the course of the mill. With a 6mm diameter drill mounted on the workbench mill, make the flat of the reed. Always mill in the same direction by successive passes. Be aware that the fibreglass burns or melts easily, so use



very sharp tools and a slow cutting speed. The width of the flat (4 mm) determines the depth of the cut.

Keep a margin to realize the angle of the following step. The width of the flat is 4mm (+/- 0.2mm) and 28mm long. Note that plexiglass tubes do not necessarily have a regular inside diameter. The flat should be on the thickest side.

A possible manual method • Paste some sand paper (180 -150 grade) on a hard and flat surface. Sand with careful and regular gestures. Your objective is a flat and rectangular surface with a smooth aspect.



The Window/Opening



4. The window is dug out in the centre of the flat using a centering drill bit. It must measure between 2.0 -2.5mm wide and 18mm long, at a distance of 5 mm from the end of the reed plug.

Manual method • Take a scalpel and insert and cut into the thinnest part in the center. Then, cut very thin slices towards the sides. If you have a Dremel and are skilled in using

it, you could use a circular saw attachment. The ends of the finished aperture can be round or angular but the dimensions have to be precise.



The reed tongue: cane or carbon?

The choice depends on the available materials, the ease of use, the search for specific tones but both materials give similar results. Carbon is more stable to humidity, more solid but more difficult to work. The fibre can cause irritation, even eye injuries. Cane is simpler to work, neutral to the touch but needs to 'rest' between the each stage of making. The adjustments are more time consuming.

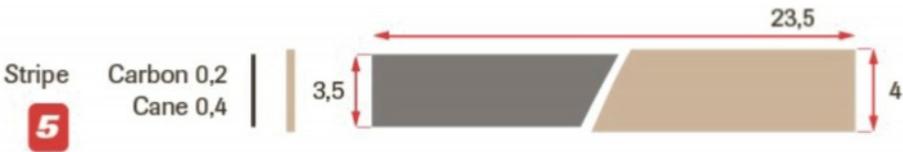
Making a cane reed tongue.

5: Use a solid piece of cane, 7.00mm or 8.00mm diameter, (it should withstand crushing between the thumb and index finger) which has a good polished outer surface. From the tube, cut a section which is a third of the total diameter, then sand the inside until you get a flat and perfect surface.

Sand the exterior more delicately (180 grade sandpaper) until you get into the region of 4.00mm thick.

Then, sand the interior side to get a 0.4mm thickness. Control the evenness of the thickness by regularly holding it up against a light. Cut the vibrating part so it goes beyond the window by 0.5 mm. The anvil garden cutters limits the risks of splitting the fibres when cutting to length. Cut the sides to obtain a 4.0mm wide vibrating part.

The polished side of the cane goes normally on the flat of the tube but choose the side that naturally bends upwards. On a piece of boxwood, smooth this side of the reed tongue. It's best to prepare several reed tongues together and then the cane must rest for at least 24 hours between two making stages.



Producing the carbonfibre reed tongue

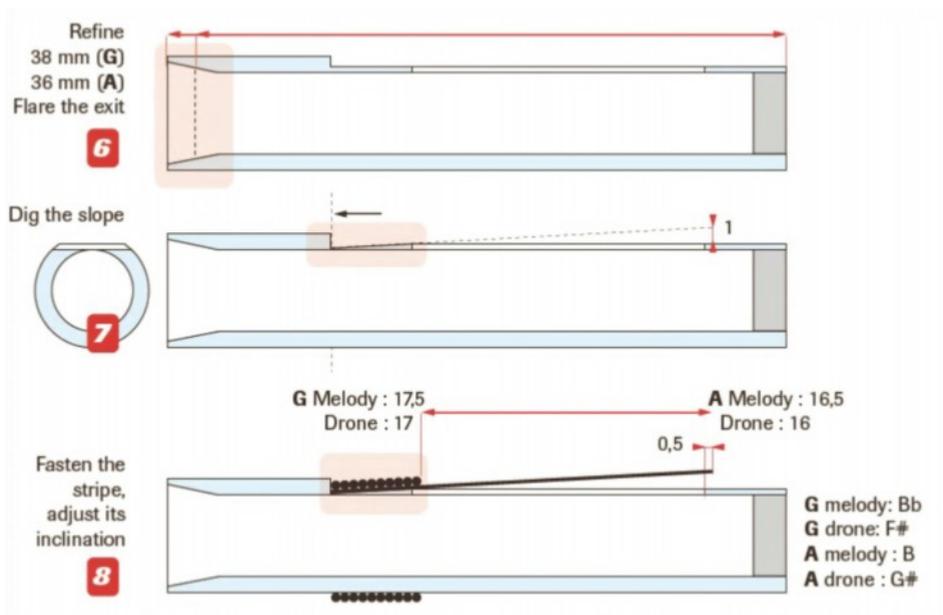
6. Carbonfibre is harder but it's worked in a similar fashion to cane. One must take precautions to avoid being wounded by any of the fibres and its recommended that you should wear a mask when sanding. Also wash your hands often to get rid of any fine particles. Robert uses flat carbonfibre strips which are 5.00mm wide and 0.5mm thick. Cut the strips to 24-25mm, leaving a little margin. To adjust the width, use sandpaper rubbed in the same direction as the fibres. The strips are usable immediatly.

To manually cut carbonfibre to the specific thickness, place the strip on the edge of a hard surface and press firmly with a sharp blade. Strips of various dimensions can be obtained from model maker shops.

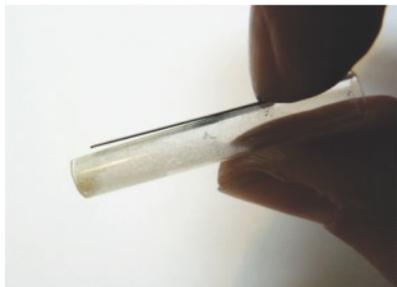
Adjusting the reed body and assembling

Make sure that the reed body is 38mm long with a 2 mm plug. Slightly widen the end of the body, to create a flare, by using a scalpel (see Stage 6 on the diagram) and then sand off.

Place the reed tongue on the flat surface of the tube, paying attention to any natural up-turning curvature in the strip. The following steps are key in making a successful reed.



7• Taking into account any natural curvature, make a slope at the end of the reed tongue so that when held in place, the tongue rises about the flat surface by about 1.00mm. This can involve making several attempts to get it right, so take your time and make a number of them.



These dimensions are very fine as the depth will be determined by the thickness of the tube. However, the angle must be sufficiently pronounced and the surface big enough to allow a fine adjustment of the slope. Consequently, it must be as deep as possible and long enough for the total length of the tongue.

Firmly hold the strip on the slope with the finger. This next bit needs some dexterity as you need to be able to hold the tongue and wrap the thread tightly. With the narrow tube it can be difficult to hold the tongue precisely in place.

When in place you can test the reed by placing it in your mouth and blowing. The resulting sound must be easy and clear, using a reasonable pressure without any odd sound or blockage. The reed must always sound when blown through. From now on, one can get the sense of the potential of the reed.

First Adjustment

8. Once you can be sure that the first set up allows the reed to vibrate, secure the thread and wind the thread very tightly from the end of the reed tongue and wrap progressively to the edge of the window.

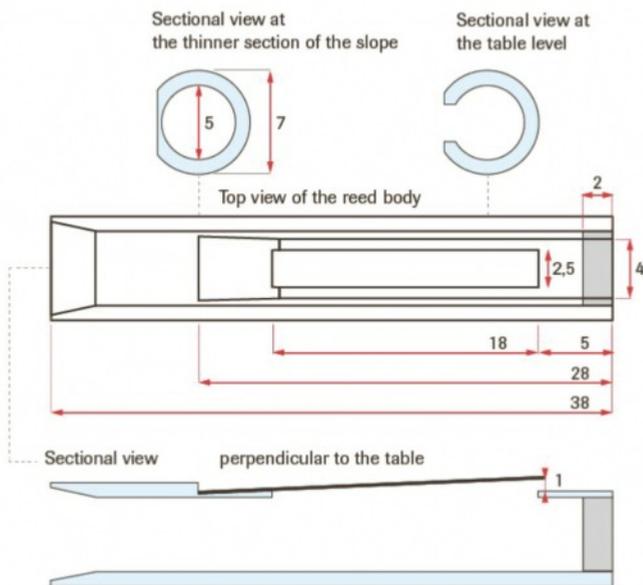


The ligature will control the opening of the reed and you will need to tighten it until you reach the desired sound. If the sound is weak or if the reed stops sounding, raise the strip by increasing the slope/angle. If the sound is too loud, or irregular/screeching when blowing, then lower the strip by tightening the ligature. If the slope cannot be increased and/or the sound stays hard, then you will need to thin the strip.

Robert Matta has set tongue dimensions which will allow the reeds to work by

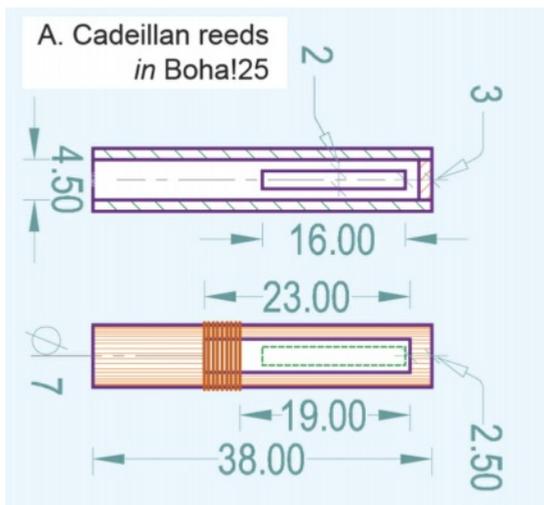
setting the angle.

This streamlines the making of them. If a tongue proves difficult to settle, it is easy to adjust it. With practice you will be able to anticipate the state of the reed at this stage; for the melody reed you will have to achieve a Bb which is clear, stable, sonorous with good harmonics. If you can't get a good Bb at



this stage then there is no point putting the reed in the chanter. If the reed is too hard, then scrape the entire length of the tongue which will soften it. The length of the tongue, as well as its angle, can impact greatly on performance and range of notes which can be obtained. The ligature will determine both of these factors. A length of 17.5mm for the vibrating part of the tongue is desirable.

These dimensions correspond to Robert's current chanters. With different drills it could be necessary to slightly modify them. This is confirmed by the measurements of the G-reeds made by Alain Cadeilhan (Kachtoun).



Adjust the reed to the chanter

Wind the thread around the base of the reed so that it fits tightly into the bore of the chanter. Glue the thread with a touch of Superglue, wrap two times around the thread with teflon (carefully flat). The reed must slide easily without being forced whilst also staying firmly in the chanter. Blow with the mouth and adjust the fundamental note by moving the reed in or out. Work on the inclination/angle and the tension of the ligature to approximate the scale, to ensure power, clarity, roundness and stability of sound. It's possible to do several different things to improve the sound; each of them will have a greater or lesser impact on sound, stability, tone etc... think well before acting.



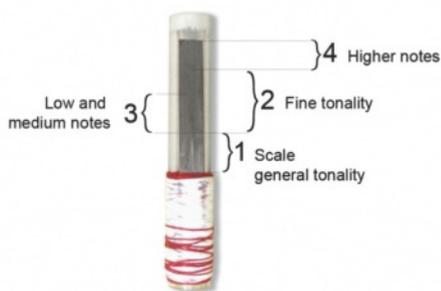
For example, if the scale is too extended (the highs are too high) then the strip is too stiff, so you can reduce the thickness (which will be irreversible) or tighten the ligature towards the heel to lengthen the vibrating length (which is reversible). Reducing the thickness of the strip is also necessary if one wants a 'round' sound or to make it easier to sound. On the contrary, lengthening the

vibrating strip can make notes unstable or screechy. Proceed with light touches, cut with sufficiently long rests in between to allow the reed to stabilize.

These steps are a guideline and you will need to make both subtle and personal adjustments to suit. Different pressures on the bag will also have an impact. So you will have to make many reeds which, by default, will present slight differences and only you can decide which is the best approach. Sharing your experiments with other manufacturers could help a lot.

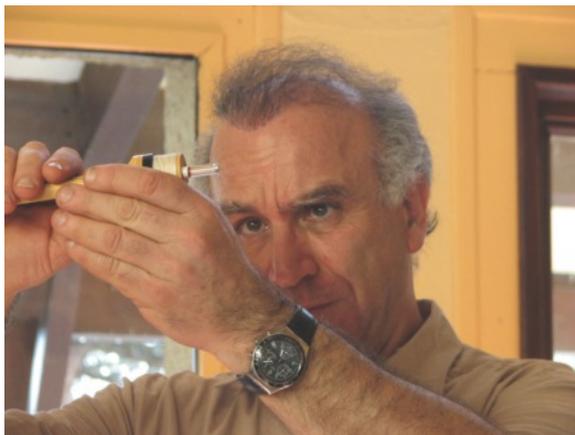
Regulating the scale

Robert Matta's method consists of removing the material off the strip to adjust the notes. For each note there is a corresponding zone on the strip; The bass notes towards the thread, the high notes towards the plug. The thickness of the strip by the thread has the most influence on the general equilibrium of the reed, so one should adjust the low G first.



Use a scalpel for the scraping with a gentle, little, successive touch. Cane reacts more quickly than carbon by doing that. If the range becomes too high and short, one may have to change the strip. As soon as the range gets close to the right sound, put the chanter into the bag to continue the adjustment. Close off the hole of the drone with an 8mm wooden plug and take your time in between two adjustments.

Continual adjustments can 'tire out' the reed so it is best to leave a gap of 24 hours between stages when working with natural cane. When you think you have almost set the reed as well as you can, do the same to the drone reed in the same way so that it reacts to the same pressure as the chanter reed. Put the reed into the drone and adjust that two reeds (chanter



and drone) so that they sound G together. Then fine tune each of the chanter notes against the drone G.

Reed's memory

During a playing session, the reeds can go out of tune but then will stabilize in the long term. This is particularly true for cane reeds which are very sensitive to humidity. Overtime the fibres will become used to this process and will stabilise and so, for this reason, you must look for reasonable results which correspond to the age of reed. In time, the reed will become more and more reliable and there will be less movement. If the reeds have been correctly made, they will tend to be balanced throughout the playing session. A regular and precise pressure will be enough to make the sound round and balance out the tuning.

Whilst the plexiglass body of the reed is not sensitive to humidity, it does react to condensation. Adjusting the set up with the mouth, or when it is cold, droplets of water can form inside the tube that can affect the tuning and range. Moreover, impurities can accumulate in the body of the reed especially under the strip. To resolve this, clean the inside body of the reed with a cotton wool bud. Clean the underneath of the tongue by sliding a piece of fine paper along the length of the tongue. Do this gently in order to not damage the fibres of the tongue.

And now.... To your scalpels!

Observations from Fred Vigouroux:



So proud! I made them!

I have experimented with making idioglotte reeds (from the same piece of cane) and those with tongues since 1993; Cane, elder, plastic, carbon, aluminium and plexiglass. I have achieved mixed success with the idioglotte cane. Robert's demonstration allowed me to make a G chanter play with a comfortable pressure after a dozen attempts.

Plexiglass is easily glued with superglue but this glue is aggressive. One should use a very minimal amount. Plexiglass is very sensitive to abrasion, is easily polished (fine sand paper). Both plexiglass and carbon fibre strips can be found on eBay.

The incline of the strip and the equilibrium of both reeds, seem to me, the

most subtle to master. The search for the the right cane is a challenge: Humming, warm, supple, biting ,nasal, powerful...

My attempts have produced very different results. Experience has shown that one has to search from the very first stage of making, a certain freedom in the vibration of the strip while varying the opening(inclination, stiffness etc.).

*This article was first published in Boha! 30-Bohaires de Gasconha 2012
English translation: Robert Matta, Frédéric Vigouroux & Jane Moulder
Photos from Yves Pouysegur and F. Vigouroux, drawings F.V.*

The Müsa: Original Instruments and a Hypothesis on Scales and Tunings.

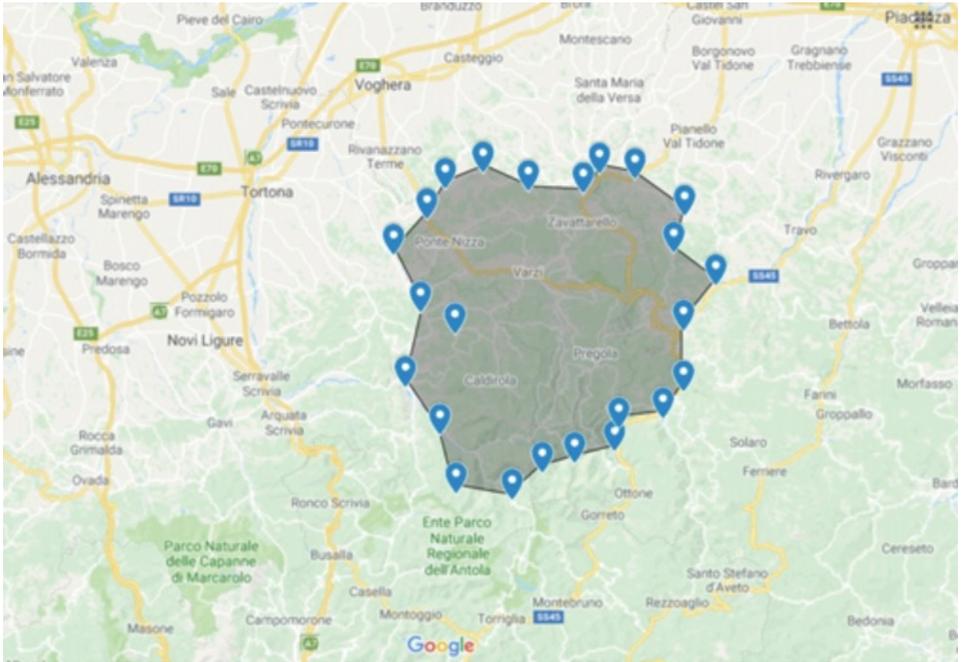
Daniele Bicego

In Chanter n. 30, vols. 3 and 4 (2016) I talked of the müsa in the Edinburgh museum, concentrating on that specific instrument with technical drawings, but many pages were dedicated to a general description and background of the müsa, no need to repeat it here. I will just give a short note about it as the aim of this article is to enlist all the surviving instruments and to propose an hypothesis on its tuning as since the '70s, when musicological research started, one of the most debated topics was the scale of the chanter and which note the drone played, a question still debated today.

The müsa is a bagpipe with a conical chanter and one drone, typical of a small mountain area divided between the provinces of Pavia, Genoa, Alessandria and Piacenza and known locally as the "region of the Four Provinces" where you can listen to a huge repertoire of traditional music, dances and songs, played on the region iconic instrument, the piffero, a loud shawn about 40cm long and pitched in G. The piffero is accompanied by the accordion today but it was with the müsa that formed an unbreakable bond until a hundred years ago.

The map, overleaf, shows a line connecting all the towns where traditional music is still played on a regular basis; of course it is also played on many occasions outside of this area but I considered only the places that offer music all the time.

The peculiarity of this pairing is that the two instruments aren't in the same key: the piffero is in G while the müsa uses a higher scale. This means that they



The area called “Quattro Province”

can't just play the same melody like other shawm/bagpipe couples (e.g. in Brittany), but a kind of polyphony. Unfortunately, we don't have any recording of the old players, and that's why we are still questioning which way the *müsa* played in the past. The most logical choice seems to be using parallel thirds on a G drone but this method doesn't always work, first of all because the traditional tunes aren't always in G: many are in D, C, and A minor.

Moreover the structure of traditional dances (Alessandrina, Monferrina, Piana, Giga...) is usually in two or four parts, with second and fourth part repeated: A-BB or A-BB-C-DD, and lots of tunes change key between parts. A very short prelude is played before any tune, to let the dancers know that the dance is starting, and in the same way a “cadenza” is played at the end. Both prelude and postlude are always in G, no matter which key is the rest of the tune. Also there is a short break between each part, where the *müsa* plays a few measures to let the *piffero* player breath and the dancers prepare to the next figure; this part is today leaved to the accordion and by evidence the role of the *müsa* in accompaniment was equivalent.

Surviving Original Instruments

Over the last 15 years I have measured many old instruments in both museums and private collections, but it is the Museo Guatelli in Ozzano Tarò that

has the most remarkable collection. All the original müseⁱ are in Italy except the one in Edinburgh. Below is a list of all the instruments I know of, 21 in total. Most are just fragments and we have only two complete ones preserving all the parts: chanter, drone, bag, stocks, reeds.



A rare complete müsa from Nicolò Bacigalupo “u Grixiu” (=the grey) from Cicagna, an important maker in the beginning of the 20th century.

1. Complete müsa in a private collection near Torino
2. Complete müsa in the National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, catalogue number 1947-117ⁱⁱ

We have only three more which preserve at least chanter and drone:

3. Chanter, drone and blowpipe of the “Pragaja-Creidöra” müsa, private collection, Milano
4. Chanter and drone from “Langin”, private collection, Montoggio
5. Chanter, drone, blowpipe in the Museo Guatelli, Ozzano Taro, cat. number A13 (100-103)

The same museum holds many other instrument parts:

- 6-8. three chanters – catalogued A80, A81, A82

9-10. two complete drones – A83, A84

11. and a drone end section – A85

Except from the Guatelli A13 *müsa* that shows signs of use, the other instruments in this museum were stored in the maker's workshop and it seems they were never played. Another important collection, the Lascito Cuneo in Calvari, has:

12-13. Two chanters

14-16. Three drones

17. The first section of another drone

all with no catalogue number.ⁱⁱⁱ

Finally we have four more pieces in private collections:

18. The ebony chanter played by Carlo Buscaglia "*Pillo*", in Negruzzo (PV)

19. Another chanter from an unknown maker, in Bobbio (PC)

20-21. Two drone end sections, in Cegni (PV)

The older instruments in the list (number 2, 4, 5 in particular) are pitched lower than the 20th century ones by almost a semitone; at the turn of the century the *piffero* started to play with the accordion, encouraged by famous players like *Piansereju*, *Brigiottu* and *Jacmòn*.^{iv} Thanks to this major change they were able to introduce to the repertoire modern couple dances like polca, valzer, mazurca; but new instruments tuned at A=440 were required and they were made by Nicolò Bacigalupo *U Grixiu* in his workshop in Cicagna near Genova. This maker, active between 1900 and 1930 made also several *müse*, even if the instrument was falling out of use, so we have many by him and they are shorter in length: under 300mm while the older ones are between 315 and 318mm. Number 1, 3, 6-8, 18 in the list are surely made by *u Grixiu*. The drones 9, 10, 11 were found in his workshop but we cannot say for sure he made them.

The maker of instruments number 2, 4, 5, 12-17 and 19-21 is still anonymous.

A hypothesis on the scale and tuning

The first references of the *müsa* are in documents of the 16th century but we don't know if it had been a solo instrument, in the first moment of its long history, or was created on purpose to join the *piffero*. However, to play solo melodies it should have a drone that matches the chanter scale. Today the drone plays G but has holes in the bottom part, normally open when played; if we close

all the holes we do not reach a note much lower than G. We can obtain a F sharp - completely useless - or maximum a F natural.

Let's suppose that the drone originally had no holes and played F. Then it would be possible to play tunes in F, having the tonic in the middle of the chanter, and going up and down a fifth in range (up to C6 and down to B4). The drone holes could be a later addition, made on purpose to raise the note from F to G when playing with the piffero.

But to play in F major it would be better to have a B flat as chanter lower note, and in some early exemplars (like Guatelli A13 and Edinburgh) we see an extra hole drilled just under the bottom note, in attempt to raise its pitch.

Using the same argument of the holes on the drone, I suppose that the chanter's bottom note (in parenthesis in the diagrams) was originally a B flat instead of B natural; B natural being another adaptation to match the piffero.



The range written above could have been the original one. Did the müsa sound like that in the past? Maybe we'll never know...but the extra holes on chanter and drone are a clue to support this theory. Note that the pitch of the older instruments was much lower, more or less one semitone, around A=415 instead of A=440.

The next step was the instrument in its classic form, suitable to play with the piffero: the drone plays G and the chanter a C major scale, with bottom note B natural. The pitch is still around A=415.



It now comes to the time when the accordion takes a central role in the music of the Quattro Province, and suddenly a new generation of pifferi starts to be made in modern pitch at A=440. The müsa had to follow this step, raising up by almost half a tone; this is the müsa that is currently used today since its revival in the 80's, that can even play in a trio setting, with piffero and accordion.



But, if we give a closer look to the *müsa* made by Nicolò Bacigalupo in the first years of the 20th century, there is another mystery to solve: these instruments have an extremely large low C hole (the chanter fundamental note, closed with RH little finger). In fact, it is not possible to play C natural opening this hole: it will be too sharp. The first one who faced the problem was musicologist Vittorio Messori in his 2012 book “*piffero e musa*”.^v

Messori has a new approach to the problem of the drone holes; his speculation is that they were not just a vestige inherited from older instruments, but were in use. When playing dance repertoire, the drone played G, but opening the holes it was possible to raise the note up to A. Thanks to the C# in the chanter scale, an A major harmony was obtained: not very useful for the dance tunes, but suitable to vocal music, a rich repertoire of ritual or narrative songs called “*stranot*”. These tunes were not played in the same setting of dance nights but on different occasions, then the *müsa* player had time enough to change the drone tuning up to A by opening all the holes (the holes were normally closed with beeswax plugs, that are still to be found on many historical instruments). When they went back to play for the dancers, the drone was set in G again, and the C natural on the chanter could be played by half covering of the little finger hole: an uncomfortable technique for sure but possible with some practice. The consumption in some chanters, precisely around this hole, may suggest that this skill was used.



The latest type is the most represented among original instruments, including one complete *müsa* (n. 1) and at least six more chanters. But with the passing of the last players this tradition ended, losing a musical heritage that lasted for centuries. Although this layout, with the chanter keynote raised up a semitone, seems quite weird, it is possible to achieve interesting musical results. I think a revival of the *müsa* in all his historical variants would be really intriguing.

Of course, the ideas exposed in this chapter are just hypotheses, they are supported by some elements but still don't allow any confirm. It is however curious to note, if we look at the four diagrams with the instrument's range, a constant raise in the pitch through time, both in the drone and in the chanter.

ⁱ müse = plural of müsa

ⁱⁱ see Daniele Bicego “The Edinburgh Müsa” in **Chanter** – Journal of the Bagpipe Society, vol. 30 no. 3 & 4, Autumn-Winter 2016

ⁱⁱⁱ Photos and diagrams of the instruments in Guatelli and Cuneo collections can be found at <http://www.baghet.it/musa4province.html>

^{iv} Lorenzo Bava *Piansereju* (1826-1894), Paolo Pelle *Brigiottu* (1861-1903), Giacomo Sala *Jacmòn* (1873-1962)

^v Vittorio Messori, **Piffero e Musa**, cd booklet, Associazione Musa, Cosola

Iberian and Balaeric Bagpipes

An exhibition by Rosa Sánchez and Pablo Carpintero



Rosa Sánchez and Pablo Carpintero are musicians and musical instrument makers and over the last thirty years they have visited all the locations in the Iberian península where the bagpipe is present, including Balearic Islands, with the aim of interviewing and recording female singers and bagpipers. They have now collected more than 700 hours of field recordings that form the main source of bagpiper’s repertoires from the peninsula: 165 bagpipers recorded. Also, they have registered more than 300 historical bagpipes and they have built accurate reproductions of many of them, gathering together a collection of

originals and their reproductions. Additionally, they have studied and reproduced many of the musical instruments used by women to accompany their songs.

They have now created an exhibition where they present a journey through bagpipe history as well as an explanation of differences among the cultures that currently use it in the Iberian Peninsula and Balearic Islands.

This exhibition contains replicas and historical originals of more than 40 different bagpipes, as well as numerous percussion instruments which accompanied them, with a special feature on those used by women. It contains a series of 30 explanatory posters, where bagpipe history and the specific characteristics of the different Iberian bagpipes and cultures are explained.

A bit of history

Bagpipes were born, probably around two thousand years ago, when a bag was added to directly blown instruments that were employed across Eurasia such as the Greek aulòs or the Ur pipes, both of which have been reproduced by authors for this exhibition. In this primitive stage, the bagpipe remained hidden within the Eurasian and North African shepherd cultures. However, as iconography shows, the bagpipe underwent significant development in the medieval Iberian peninsula with the appearance of a large number of different varieties, some of which have stayed with us.





What we show

This exhibition is divided in five parts: the first explains the bagpipe origins from the ancient direct blown instruments, which is shown using a number of different primitive pipes and bagpipes from Galicia and North Africa, as well as some types of medieval Iberian bagpipes.

In the second part, we show how the Galician boys repeated the bagpipe history in the sequence of musical instruments that they used to arrive to adult bagpipe: from single straw pipes, through the instruments blown directly with the mouth, as elder or reedpipes, and finally adding a bag to it, building a kind of



primitive bagpipe. (see Pablo's articles in Chanter Spring & Summer 2018)



The third part explains bagpipe making, showing a process that has not varied substantially changed from the Middle Ages until the 20th. We show the ancient tools that old craftsmen employed, explaining the process in detail.

The fourth part shows how the instruments that accompanied bagpipes have varied through the time. In the Middle Ages and Renaissance the Iberian bagpipe played alone, with oboes or accompanied by female percussion instruments; we show more than thirty different types of instruments played by women. During the baroque centuries the Iberian bagpipe was



associated with the tabor-pipe, the XVIII century led to the bagpipe being accompanied with the drum but no flute/pipe. Finally, in the XIX century some popular band instruments, like side drums, bass drums,



clarinets, etc., begin to play along bagpipes. All these accompaniment forms are kept alive in the Iberian bagpipe cultures.

The last part of the exhibition shows the diverse Iberian bagpipes cultures that, in these one thousand years, have developed definite characteristics:

- The Cántabra and Asturiana bagpipes.
- The bagpipes from Eo-Navia, a culture between Asturias and Galicia.



-The great diversity of different cultures and models associated with them that can be found in Galicia: the *gaitas* of Terra Cha and the *gaita de ronquillo* Chairega, the central Galicia bagpipes, the *gaita of ronquillo* of the occidental zone, the *gaita de catro voces* of Arzúa and Terra of Melide and, finally, the *gaita of barquín* (bellow bagpipe) and the primitive *rosca*, both from the Baixo Miño.

-We also explore what we know about the Bierzo and the Maragatería bagpipes (León province) and, further to the east, the *gaitas de boto* from Aragón, the catalonian *sac de gemecs* and his sister, the *xeremies* from Mallorca.

-To the south, we found three very interesting and distinct bagpipe cultures: the Sanabresa, the Alistana and the Trasmontana, already in Portugal.



-Finally, we explore the three main portuguese coast zones that use the bagpipe: Entre-Minho-e-Douro, the Coimbra bagpipes and the bagpipes from Estremadura, that reflect the big cultural exchange among Lisbon and Galicia in the XVIII and XIX century.

Each different type is explained through a poster where we describe the main characteristics regarding turning and chanter morphology, fingering, ornamentation, musical scale, reed morphology, repertoire and accompaniment. There are also more than 70 historical photographs from all the Iberian and insular cultures.

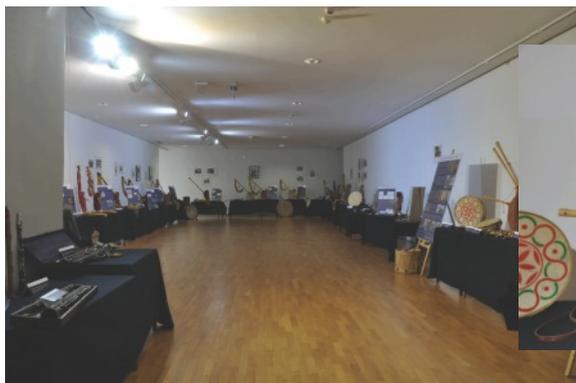


You can see the exhibition pictures at this link : <http://bit.ly/Chanter83>

Finally, there are two videos, one explaining the early origins of the bagpipes and their evolution. <http://bit.ly/Chanter84> The second shows us playing all the different Iberian bagpipes and drums and explain their differences. <http://bit.ly/Chanter85>

Finally!

We would love to take our exhibition and music to other locations. If you know of a venue that you think would be suitable and interested, please contact me. We need an area of approx. 250-300 m², some cases or protected tables for the instruments, a total surface of approx. 50 m², somewhere for fixing photographs and, of course, good security! pablo.carpin@gmail.com



Spotlight on.....



Gesine Bänfer / Ian Harrison

The duo of Gesine Bänfer and Ian Harrison goes back a long way and it has been a winding road full of highs and lows, or as the medieval French would have said, 'Les haulz et les bas'. Here they talk about their music and their experiences.

Though our musical biographies are very different, both of us became fascinated by 'early' and 'traditional' music in our teens. Gesine learnt music by doing it. She formed her first group at the age of 14, singing and playing drums, guitar and recorders in the girl folk band **Jawbone**. Within a year it had morphed into a folk punk band with gigs all around her area and even a television feature about the group. The belief in group dynamic and initiating one's own musical projects has stayed with her all her life, and she has been the driving force behind countless programmes since. Ian came from the other side - he was sent kicking and screaming to piano lessons from the age of four and forced by a series of tough teachers to practice arpeggios and Beethoven. He will remain eternally grateful to all of them as they gave him a grounding in music theory and an idea of the meaning of music which has stayed with him all his life.

One boring Sunday morning, Gesine, aged 12, experienced the Great Highland Pipe, suddenly, live, in her small home town of Hofgeismar, near Kassel, Germany when a parade of British soldiers unexpectedly marched down her street. She was bitten. Meanwhile, growing up in Newcastle, Ian was regularly exposed to the bagpipe - meaning the GHP - and on rare occasions even to the Northumbrian Smallpipes - but like many teenagers found them uncool and irrelevant. Both of them came to playing the instrument via early music. Ian started, while living in London, on a 'medieval English' pipe in G by Alan Ginsberg. In Freiburg, Gesine made herself an EMS pipe in F from a kit and thus was put off for a long time. When we got together in 1991 it was clear we needed to synchronise our pipes.

Of all the instruments available at the time we decided that the best for medieval and renaissance music was the Galician Gaita, and so we ordered sets from the late Anton Varela. In boxwood with horn mounts and an unadorned

leather cover both the optical and tonal aesthetics were just right for our needs. Medieval pictures show a bewildering array of different sizes and shapes of pipes but the form with one long drone over the shoulder, one chanter and a sewn swan-neck bag is common in Western European depictions over a wide geographical area and a long period. Also, the bright, loud sound of the Gaita is effective both indoors and outdoors and the wide chromatic range makes it adaptable to many musical genres. We also got Anton to make us two chanters with a low Bb (as opposed to the usual B natural). Ian combines this chanter with the bag and drones from Gesine's EMS pipe which makes a wonderful 'Flemish' pipe.

It was with our medieval/renaissance wind band **Les haulz et les bas** that our bagpipe duo reached its first audiences in the early 90's. Gesine and Ian play shawms and bagpipes, and our colleagues play slide trumpets, sackbuts, buisines, percussion etc. Les haulz et les bas was born and has grown up in the context of the 'Early Music' movement whose audiences, critics and concert promoters appreciate not only the virtuosity and the moving power of the music but also its 'authenticity'. This is a vague term and means different things to different people - another buzz phrase is 'historically informed performance practice'. It means that part of the inspiration for playing the music comes from studying sources - contemporary accounts, pictures, manuscripts and early printed editions of the music etc. The sources of the music we play with Les haulz et les bas date from the 13th to the 16th century.

But what about the sources of 'traditional' or 'folk' music? It was not until the 2000's when our interest in this woke up. It combined our fascination with research into historical sources with our love of folk music and our ability on one of the most important instruments of 'early folk' music - the bagpipes. Britain and Ireland in the 17th and 18th centuries produced a vast and rich corpus of manuscripts and prints of 'traditional' music. This wonderful, magnificent music from the baroque and classical eras was just waiting to be explored. The whole thing took off at the Bagpipe Blowout in 2010 when we heard and saw Mike York playing his 'Border smallpipes'. We ordered two sets that very day. We formed the **Early Folk Band** in 2011 with Gesine on said smallpipes, flageolets (by Jonathan Swayne), cittern, dulcimer and voice and Ian on smallpipes, flageolets, cornett, harp and voice. Gesine commissioned a wonderful copy by Paul Doyle of a cittern made by W. Gibson (both of Dublin) in 1722. The sound and dynamics of this instrument blend perfectly with the smallpipes. We were immediately offered a co-operation with the biggest German radio station Deutschlandradio Kultur, with whom we have produced two CDs. Our latest CD is a coproduction with the South German radio station SWR.

Mike York's smallpipes are cylindrically-bored and open-ended. They are pitched in 6-finger D at A=440, with a C for the 7th finger and a range up to high D - no keys! The fingering is basically half-closed as in Central French and Border pipes. Two tuning rings enable the player to set high C or C# and B or Bb. Three drones are tuned in D, A and octave D. Gesine plays them mouth-blown and Ian with bellows. The sound is mellow and beautiful, and blends with 'baroque' string instruments such as cittern,



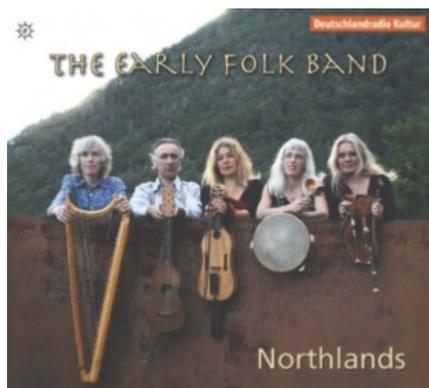
harp, dulcimer, baroque guitar and fiddle - loud enough to be present but not to dominate the sound. The famous picture of 'Northumberland' piper James Allen (1734-1810) in the frontispiece to his biography by James Thompson (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1826) shows him playing exactly this instrument, and there are many other illustrations of similar instruments from that time and earlier. We had found 'our' instruments for 17th- and 18th-century music from the British isles. For Ian, who grew up in Newcastle, it was like coming home, bagpipe-way. Here was a Northumbrian smallpipe which a punch. And it was the ideal instrument for the music from the book which more than any started this whole thing off: William Dixon's manuscript of 1733, in the edition by Matt Seattle.

As an antidote to authenticity, and living in the Black Forest, far away from any bagpipe tradition, we formed **Contraband** with German guitarist Thomas Bergmann and Swedish tuba player Jörgen Welander. With this group we experiment with bagpipes and bagpipe tunes from all over Europe with groovy bass lines and jazzy chords. One of our most memorable performances was at the Blowout in 2009. We are flattered that a picture of that concert is still being used on the Society's web site to publicise future Blowouts. And the following year we experienced another highlight with a duo concert in Polesworth Priory - we still remember the warm and welcoming audience.

Our piping style is of no one school. Like many readers of this journal we were self-taught and have learnt various bagpipes separated by space and time from the cultures which gave rise to them. We were freestylers, free thinkers, unfettered by any traditions, piping *cartes blanches*, a reboot. We got most of our early education one weekend a year at the University of St. Chartier, sitting at the feet of Macedonian, Galician, Breton, Scottish, French, Irish, English and

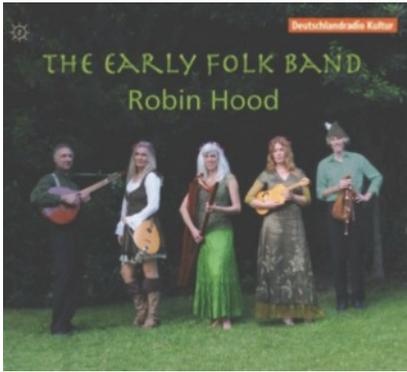
Italian players, watching and hearing what they did, picking out this ornament, that timing, the other freedom of melody, and hearing in their playing echoes of their medieval forerunners whose performances are captured in countless pictures. Later, books helped. After many decades of trying to ignore the deafening instrument of his northern neighbours Ian finally succumbed and borrowed Gesine's copy of the School of Piping's Tutor for the Great Highland Pipe volume one. There was no turning back. Here at last was a method, a school, a plan - and more colours for the palette. The baroque ornamentation and division playing that Ian learnt studying cornett at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis in Basel, Switzerland has also enriched his playing. He now combines all these things as teacher of shawm and early bagpipes at that institution. The long and winding road continues. For a long time we have been searching, copying styles, interpreting sources, arranging early pieces and gradually we have found our own style - Ian as a soloist accompanied by Gesine on cittern, or as a bagpipe duo.

Ian's own compositions have enriched our repertoire. Watching late-night Brexit parleys on Parliament Live inspired him to this Brexit Rant: we play it on our website www.early-folk-duo.com. Gesine and Ian's bagpipe playing can be heard on CD with their ensembles **Les haulz et les bas** and the **Early Folk Band**. In 2008 they founded their own independent CD label, **Ahalani Records**, which shares its profits fairly with its musicians.



Northlands (2012) is a collection of ballads, songs and dance tunes from Britain and Sweden. Gesine and Ian are joined by the Swedish singer and harp player Miriam Andersén; the German fiddle player Susanne Ansorg, and the English baroque guitar player, dancer, actor and comedian Steven Player.

Robin Hood (2014) tells of the famous outlaw in ballads and songs. This CD owes much to the ballad collector Joseph Ritson who, in 1779, walked from his home near Durham to Oxford to “explore the literary treasures of the Bodleian [Library]”, and a few years later walked to Cambridge. He saw “a great many curious books and made a great many important discoveries”. He published his collection of Robin Hood ballads in two volumes in 1795, adorned with engravings by Thomas Bewick. Bewick wrote in his Memoir: “I used to engage John Peacock, our inimitable performer,



to play on the Northumberland or Small-pipes; and with his old tunes, his lilt, his pauses, and his variations, I was always excessively pleased." His son Robert was a pupil of Peacock and himself left a wonderful collection of smallpipe tunes. Both Bewicks lived and worked in Newcastle, Ian's home town. There are a wealth of pipe tunes on this CD including our version of William Dixon's *Dorrington*.

Lumps of Pudding is our latest recording - a live Winter CD of a performance in December 2018 in Freiburg, Germany, with all the associated energy and spontaneity: mumming, carols, winter ballads, a stick dance and instrumental music ranging from Vivaldi to Pepusch to the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book to the Hannay-McAuslan ms. of c.1815. It is available now but will be reviewed in a future edition of *Chanter*.

In its 25th anniversary year the ensemble **Les haulz et les bas** marked the 600th anniversary of the Council of Constance with a programme of music for the *alta capella* ensembles. The Council, (1414-1418) gathered together Europe's political and religious elite, together with singers and musicians playing trumpets, bagpipes and shawms. This recording marks this event. Finally, in our recording, **ars supernova**, *Les haulz et les bas* celebrates seven centuries of wind bands and the exchange of material between early music and jazz. (A review of this CD was printed in *Chanter*, Autumn 2018) We prove that the saxophone is the ideal instrument for the 14th-century *ars nova* and that the medieval shawms and bagpipes have just the sound that jazz has been waiting for! The greatest hit on this CD is Ian's composition "*Aires de Bollschweil*" for two *gaitas*, trombone, tuba, soprano saxophone, guitar and percussion - you can see a live version of this on our website ars-supernova.com. This is our four daughters' favourite track!



Depiction of a bagpiper at the Council of Constance, Richental Chronicle, fol 76l, second half of the 15th century

If you would like to find out more about our groups, concert diaries and programmes then please visit www.office-of-musicians-affairs.com. We also have a new Facebook page www.facebook.com/gesinebanfer.ianharrison.

The Brexit Rant

G drone 

Ian Harrison



6 **G₅** **F**

10 **F** **G₅**

14 **F** **G₅**

18 **F** **F** **G₅**

21 **G₅** **G₇** **C** **G₅** **G₇** **C** **G₅** **F**

1. 2.

D.S. al Fine

The Brexit Rant - Ian Harrison

The repeated low C strikes as in bar 2 are intended to be done with the little finger of the left hand going from first right to left then from left to right and stroking the hole on the way past - similar to the Highland birl (assuming the left hand at the bottom - if your right hand is at the bottom then vice versa). •This movement reappears faster in bar 20 - if this slows you down too much then just play bars 20 and 21 as 12 and 13 but with the high C#. ♣if you haven't got a C#

play the A in stead (but try various fingerings and bag pressures before you give up!) The grace note cluster in bars 18 & 19 is a version of the Highland bubble note. ♣Try it, but again if it slows you down too much then play a simpler version. ♣The repeated F# strikes as in bar 11 are intended to be done with the index finger of the bottom hand as with the little finger in bar 2. ♣The different directions of the finger movements really do affect the sound. ♣These notes are not sacred. ♣Feel free to make your own version, play and share - I would be interested in hearing it. ♣Enjoy - and if you don't then play something else (but do play!). For a video of us playing it, visit ♣http: <http://bit.ly/Chanter86>

Reviews

Quest for the Maltese Żaqq – a lost piping tradition by Karl Partridge

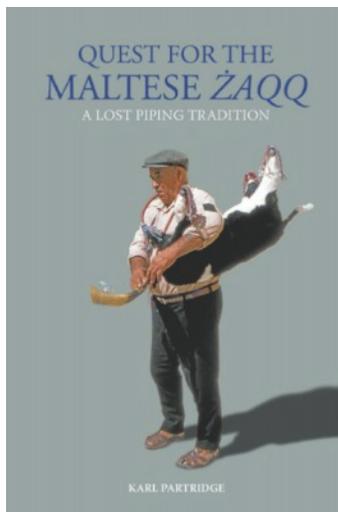
Ian Clabburn

Before I attended the International Bagpipe Conference in 2016, I was vaguely aware of the existence of the Maltese żaqq, but nothing quite prepares you for the physical reality. The first thing Karl Partridge did at the start of his presentation was to play one of the most extraordinary and dramatic bagpipes I

have seen; the bag was an entire animal skin, complete with legs and tail, with only the head being replaced by the chanter. Furthermore, the hide is “fur side out” and when it is inflated, you are in no doubt about its origin and even the first owner's gender!

Karl went on to talk about his chance discovery of this almost extinct instrument and his subsequent travels around Malta in the 1970s tracking down the last of the players. The timing of Karl's research was fortuitous. At that time, the character and culture of Malta was changing rapidly from rural to urban and the tradition was clearly in terminal decline. The żaqq no longer had a role in village life, most of the small group of men who once played were elderly, few possessed a

working bagpipe and there was only one man – relatively young at 55 – still playing regularly and also had the skills to make and maintain żaqqqs. Another decade and the tradition would have probably disappeared completely. It was only through a combination of circumstances that Karl came across the żaqq; he



mentioned to a fellow folk music enthusiast, Frank Jeal, that his father was being posted to Malta to take up the position at the British Services Children's School and Frank then suggested that, since so little was known about the instrument, Karl should make some enquiries during his upcoming Christmas visit. The fruits of Karl's investigations undoubtedly played a vital part in recording, preserving and championing the revival of an important facet of Maltese cultural history which would otherwise have faded away completely, with the instruments becoming mere curios. There is an article about the *żaqq* and a short account of Karl's researches in Chanter 30 vol. 4.

This book brings together the whole story and is divided into 4 parts:

Part 1 covers the story of Karl's research and how it started, followed by descriptions of his encounters with pipers, both past and current (1970s). This is a particularly readable section, peppered with colourful descriptions of people, places and shows Karl's talent for narrative and the memorable anecdote. For example, his less conventional researches, which sometimes led nowhere, such as making a journey to and from a remote village to interview a reported *żaqq* player only to find that he was a highland piper, having learnt in New York. "We then gave him a lift to Victoria while he explained in great detail how to make a non-return valve for the blowpipe!" (I think we have all met someone like this!). I particularly liked his idea of playing the *żaqq* to elderly patients in the geriatric ward of a hospital to see if it jogged old memories (it didn't).

Part 2 is a detailed description of the *żaqq*, it's component parts and their sources (which seems to be anything from native cane, cats, dogs, brass tubing from a shot down WW2 aeroplane or lead piping – you name it), historical accounts, recordings, published illustrations, fingering methods and a description of the music played. There is enough information here to at least construct a *żaqq*, but no guarantee that it would work. Included is the little-known fact that you cannot make a *żaqq* using a female cat skin, because too much air leaks from the nipples!



Part 3 consists of well observed and sensitive pen portraits of the last generation of street players and their families.

Part 4 describes life in the British Services community in Malta, as a background to Karl's lifelong association with Malta.

In conclusion: This book cannot be easily categorised: it is not an academic publication in the strictest sense, but a rich blend of academic research, personal memoir, photographs, stories of the musicians, social history, anecdotes and much more, together making a well-rounded, engaging and very readable book, which will have an appeal beyond the piping community. Recommended!

Finally! By it's very appearance, the zaqq attracts comments. Here are a few that caught my eye:

"... basically a dog with the original yapping mechanism replaced." (From a friend of Karl's)

"... the zaqq, as it is called, cannot play tunes; it only has one loud drone, sometimes varied by warbling notes." (From a Maltese musicologist who really should know better, in my opinion)

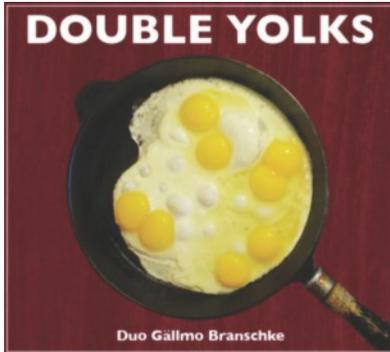
But my favourite was from a friend, to whom Karl was demonstrating his zaqq: *"But Karl.... do you not know that I am a vegetarian?"*

Quest for the Maltese Żaqq – a lost piping tradition. Midsea Books LTD.
www.midseabooks.com ISBN 978-99932-7-736-1



CD: Double Yolks - Duo Gällmo Branschke

Kirsten Barron



Since 2011, Swedish riksspelman Olle Gällmo and German bagpipe maker Matthias Branschke have jointly taught the Säckpipa course at Spielkurs Pibenbock, offering an equal mix of traditional Swedish and re-discovered German tunes. •'Double Yolks' is the first CD resulting from this collaboration and features 22 of their favourite pieces played as duets.

The two pipers have different playing styles which complement each other well - Matthias punctuates the tunes with rhythmic 'hiccuping' borrowed from Hungarian piping tradition while Olle's piping has the typically sweet Swedish lilt, with lots of subtle ornamentation. Their combined playing is expressive and precise at the same time, resulting in a bright and joyful collection of sets which transcend the limitations of the single-drone, single-octave instrument.

The combination of Swedish and German dance tunes also works well. Somewhat surprisingly, there is more similarity than difference - the country of origin is not always obvious without looking at the sleeve notes!

I would heartily recommend 'Double Yolks' for sheer listening pleasure, but also as an excellent inspiration and learning resource for the growing number of säckpipa players! •If you don't already possess a set of Swedish pipes, you may well find yourself wanting some after an hour in the company of Gällmo and Branschke.

To buy a copy, visit <http://olle.gallmo.se/cd2/>

[Note that Olle Gällmo will be teaching and performing Swedish tunes at this year's Blowout!]

In the Bag

Paul Saunders

Paul Saunders, more commonly known as wynndebagge, is a veteran of the costumed performance scene. Having first picked up pipes in the 90s, this year he's celebrating 25 years in the business. He came from a theatrical background - his Great Aunt Florence was a Shakespearian leading lady at the Old Vic who married John Laurie, (Private Frazer in Dad's Army). His maternal grandmother taught him pace-egging and mummers' songs at the kitchen sink

and made their own entertainment gathered round the piano. His mother met his father when he was performing in a Wilson, Kepple & Betty tribute act in the local village hall. Consequently, Paul sees himself more as an entertainer than simply a musician and there has always been an aspect of humour and audience participation in his shows. A multi-instrumentalist, including hurdy-gurdy, hammer dulcimer, gittern, concertina and banjo in his armoury, he programmed the Music Stage at English Heritage's Festival of History and has been the Creative Director of the Ludlow Medieval Christmas Fayre for over twenty years. He runs an independent record company, builds and collects automatons and in his free time occasionally joins his family exercising Joe the Cocker on the fells and dales on the Yorks/Cumbria border where he has a home, workshop and studio.



What bagpipes do you play?

Twenty five years ago I started with a mouth-blown set of Jon Swayne's student pipes in G. I am still playing the same set and have added an octave G drone and tenor D drone over the years. I also have a set of Julian Goodacre's Low D Durer pipes and a gaita in C. Previously I have owned a set of Bechonnet pipes. My first ever pipes was a lovely set of Dave Burleigh Northumbrians, followed by Ray Sloan's Northumbrian/Smallpipes combination. All lovely pipes and a tribute to the makers.

What led you to take up piping?

Apparently around the age of five I was on a family holiday in Bournemouth where a Highland pipe band was playing on the esplanade every day and that was it – I was hooked. That was in the Sixties. Then there was David Munrow and the folk revival in the Seventies followed by Blowzabella in the Eighties. Playing the pipes was the only way I could place the music I wanted to. As to the pipes I play now, that was the result of a chance conversation in a pub.

Which pipers do you most admire?

I don't think you can play the pipes I play without being heavily influenced by Jon Swayne, who through both his playing and making has opened

the door for so many of us. Thinking of the gentle mastery of Liam O'Flynn, the flair of Paddy Keenan, the innovation of Davey Spillane and Hamish Moore.

Name three, non-piping-related musical influences:

Bert Jansch, Nigel Eaton and JS Bach.

What three albums are top of your playlist right now?

La Guitarra del Lleons: Xavier Diaz-Latorre & Pedro Estevan – the guitar music of Albeniz Sanz, Sor, Murcia and Guerra played on historical guitar models from the Musee de la Musica de Barcelona.

Songs From The Road: Leonard Cohen. A masterful blend of Leonard's words, wit and wisdom with world-class musicians.

Dowland's Tears: Nigel North – sublime music performed by a sublime player.

If you had your life again, what instrument would you play?

Probably the cello – so I could aspire to play Elgar's Cello Concerto.

Name your favourite music festival.

The one I'm at at the time.

What three words describe your piping style?

Simple, straightforward and joyful

Bellows or mouth-blown?

Either. I try to match it to the historic period I'm working in at the time

Cats or dogs?

Dogs for companionship, cats for unnerving workmen in the house. Dog: "I don't know what you're doing but it's fantastic! Cat: "That's never going to work - your torque settings are all over the place"

Do you prefer playing, dancing or both?

I think playing for others to dance to is the best but I like to think I can turn my hands – and feet - to both.

Cane or plastic reeds?

I think it depends on the instrument and the levels of humidity. Plastic is a bit easier on the eyeballs! I think plastic reeds has made our lives a lot easier but not quite the plangent edge that a cane reed has.

What's your greatest musical achievement?

I have had many great moments over the years, including MCing and

performing at Dave Pegg's 60th Birthday Bash in my home town of Birmingham, recording with members of Fairport Convention and supporting rock guitar legend Richie Blackmore on his UK tour, as well as working alongside many other great musicians who aren't household names but overall my greatest achievement must be longevity. Twenty-five years on and I'm still out there making a living rocking and rolling.

What's your most embarrassing bagpiping moment?

Leading an impromptu 'Show and Tell' session for a large all-male group of overseas visitors, who turned out to be none other than the Ghurka Pipe Band on their UK tour. They exacted humorous revenge later by tuning up at the start of my next show.

What's the most annoying question you get asked about the bagpipes?

"So how much would something like that cost?"

What advice would you give a novice?

Immerse yourself in the music you want to play. Play everything as slow as you need to play it right. Speed will come. Playing too fast will lead to mistakes and practicing too fast will just make you very good at your mistakes. Practice the parts you can't play not the bits you can – it wastes precious practice time. It's more rewarding to play simple pieces well than struggle with tunes beyond your capability. Be serious about your music but don't take yourself too seriously. Be kind to yourself. Try not to make it look like hard work – it makes your audience nervous.

Read 'Zen and the Art of Archery'. Playing music is a journey not a destination

I love bagpipes because...

They have taken me on an unanticipated journey of experiences – musical, social and geographical. It is an instrument which has fascinating social history that is woven into ours and other countries' traditions and everyday lives. And there is that gorgeous moment when the drones slip into tune with themselves and chanter. A simple instrument with a rich variety of sounds capable of immeasurable beauty that can touch all the emotions.

As a reminder – if you wish to access the Chanter archive on The Bagpipe Society website, the password is **bourdons**.



Front cover: Ian Harrison and Gensine Bänfer . Featured in this edition's Spotlight On.....



Rear cover: Thanks to Scott Marshall, taken in the Bode Museum in Berlin. Figures 1 & 3 by Valerio di Simone Cioli (1529-1599) and Figure 2 is from Nuremberg (c1530/40)

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