

Sandy, I told you about this article I got from the National Newspaper Archives in London - some of it **The MacDougalls.** is very interesting! JD

Article taken from the Peoples Journal Saturday November 4th 1893.

An interview with the Queen's bagpipe maker.

[By our own Lady correspondent]

*Then Khan took the pipes, and all was still
As silently he the bag did fill
With flaming ? and round bright eye
Till the first faint music began to rise,*

*Like a thousand laverocks all getting in tune
Like countless ? under the night
Like the smack of kisses, like ? bells ringing
Like a mermaid, a harp or a kelpie singing
Blow the pipes of Shon.*

"The wedding of Shon Morton - Robert Buchanan"

I don't know how it is, but the fact remains that it gives a decided shock to the national feelings to learn that the bagpipes are not our national instrument, that they are only Scottish by adoption. They seem so interwoven with the national sentiment - like whisky and peat reek - from the days of Ossian to McCranky that it is somewhat of a deprivation to have to give them up! The first time I see a Sassenach screwing up his face over a pibroch I will cast it in his teeth that it is an English instrument he is listening to, and that it behoves him to grin and bear it decently. Ten to one he won't believe me!

The bagpipes indeed were classic long before they penetrated into Britain at all. The Greeks knew them, and a friend to whom the dead tongues of the past are as an open book tells me that the instrument is shown in some of the wall paintings discovered at Pompeii. The pefferars (sic) of the Calabrian peasant is doubtless the linear descendant of the classic model. But in the fifteenth century the bagpipe was common among the country people of Poland, Italy, the South of France, Scotland and Ireland. It is a primitive instrument, consisting of the bag which receives the air and the pipes which give it out, and its success entirely depends on the art by which it is modulated by the player.

But it was the Queen's bagpipe maker I started to tell you about, not the national history of the bagpipe. It was in Aberfeldy I heard that such a distinguished professor of the art resided, and I was not long in finding a mutual friend who promptly undertook to make us known to each other. It was in his workshop that I came upon Pipe Major Macdougall, (sic) surrounded by the trappings of his trade, and assisted by his youngest son Gavin, who promises one of those days to "rive his father's bonnet". Mr Macdougall comes of a line of pipers, his forefathers having migrated from the Lorn district of Argyllshire with the Campbell's of Breadalbane. Piping is generally a hereditary occupation. As Buchanan puts it in his inimitable paean of the bagpipe which heads this article, speaking of the famous Shon:-

*Father and son since the world's creation,
The Macleans have followed this occupation,
And played the pibroch to fire the clan,
Since the first Duke came and the earth began.*

Mr Macdougall is of the same calibre, if not of the same clan. In fact, I have my private belief that he must be descended from another hero mentioned in the same immortal ballad, "Dougall Dhu of Kilflannan shore", who took part in the unique piping competition, for which vide the poem referred to.

It was pretty difficult to read so had to retype it out & some words I can't make out!

Well, in the midst of his work I found Mr Mcdougall, and met a hearty welcome, and it was seated in his workshop that I had a chat with the veteran about his art. For Mr Macdougall is not only a notable maker of pipes, he is a champion piper, and on high days and holidays wears an array of medals won in open competition which makes a glittering breastplate above the tartan. His first was won at Montrose when he was quite a young lad. He lovingly remembers the occasion. And throughout the prime of his playing life he has taken an honourable in most of the great piping jousts going. He has carried off year after year all the Pipe music honours at the Northern meetings, has won the Gold Medal of the Highland Society of London, and the seven years champion medal, and altogether lays claim to some six gold and thirty silver medals. For 14 years Mr Mcdougall was chief piper to the Marquis of Breadalbane at Taymouth Castle, until he relinquished the position for another branch of his art. It is interesting to notice that he represents the third generation pipe makers, -- his grandfather Allan Macdougall, having carried on that occupation in Perth from 1792 to 1834, and his father, John Macdougall, handing on the business to the year 1857. Mr Macdougall was for eight years Pipe-Major to the Queen's Edinburgh Volunteers, and for 19 years held the same post in the 5th V.B.R.H. At the Birnam camp of the corps the Pipe-Major will have as many as 40 pipers under his baton.

Mr Macdougall was inconsolable that he did not happen to be making pipes the day I was there. He had just finished repairing a set of bagpipes belonging to the Duke of Richmond and Gordon, which lay on a box on the table. They were "upholstered" so to speak, in Gordon tartan, the old set, and sported a cataract of ribbons, no less than five yards of which is necessary to dress the drones and chanter properly. He was preparing the reeds, an unseen but most important part of the mechanism, as by their means the air is undulated. These are made of the best Spanish cane, bundles of which stood about in the corners. The reed is quite a small affair, about the size of your finger, one end flattened until the edges almost meet, and kept in position by a stout ligature, very neatly attached. These reeds have to be renewed yearly or oftener. It depends on the player and climate.

I asked how long the sheepskin bag of a set of pipes would last.

"It depends entirely on the player" was the reply "Some will make them go two years, others six months. it depends on the man's breath. A player with an acid stomach will wear out his bag twice as quickly as will a healthy man. I noticed this very much when I was in the army."

Perhaps you have never been in the near neighbourhood of a set of pipes - near enough that is, to note their formation closely. I know I never was before. Well, they are composed of the bag, which is generally of sheepskin, covered either with green baize or tartan. Then there is starting from this, the cluster of pipes which looks so confusing, viz, the chanter which produces the melody, which is pierced with eight holes, and has an imperfect scale. Of the three others called drones, two are in unison with the lowest A of the chanter, and the third and longest an octave deeper. It is the drones of course which are responsible for the droning or humming noise which are such a characteristic of the instrument.

It is on the chanter and the drones that the decorative art of the maker is most expended. Mr Macdougall made a beautiful set for use in Her Majesty's household, which were exhibited at the Edinburgh exhibition in 1883. These were entirely silver mounted, and artificially chased with a design of Scotch thistles. He has also made pipes for use in the households of T.R.H. the Prince of Wales and Alfred, Duke of Coburg; the Duke of Fife, Lord's Huntly and Breadalbane, Earl of Dunmore and many others. One of the most beautiful sets of pipes Mr Macdougall ever turned out was that presented to the Caledonian Company of the Natal Royal Rifles by Sir Donald M.P. Ebony, I was told, is the wood most commonly employed, as it takes a fine polish, and is very hard. For use in foreign countries, however, a brown wood called cocoa is best, as there is a native oil in the wood which prevents its cracking with the heat. For the mouthpiece ivory is used, and I asked Mr Macdougall where he got it.

"In Dundee" he said, "I come down when the whalers come in. It's sea ivory I use; the horns of the walrus, the husks of the sealion, and the blade of the sword-fish. Here is a whole set of

drones and chanters cut out of a huge narwhal horn; but it is not a success, he added, pointing to the streaks and chips which disfigured it.

"Would vegetable ivory not do?" I enquired but was told it was too brittle.

Bone is occasionally used for the cheaper classes of pipes, but it quickly turns yellow. Peat reek too, soon spoils the colour of ivory exposed to its influence. You can imagine how tenderly the Highland shepherd or ghillie will wrap up his cherished pipes in his best plaid and commit them to the keeping of the big kist to preserve them from the pungent and penetrating reek.

Mr Macdougall turns the wood and ivory he needs at a bench fitted with lathes of different sizes, and furnished with a bewildering variety of tools, gauges, planes and drills.

"What do bagpipes cost?" I bethought me to enquire, after I had heard all about their components.

"Sets can be got from 50s up to £50--according to the value of the mounting" was the reply.

"The Queen's set cost £60, but then there was a lot of silver on them. Practice chanters can be got from 5s6d upwards."

The beginner anxious to learn the pipes does not start off at once on the full set. To do so would be quite hopeless. He gets a practice chanter and learns the fingering, and that once mastered, he is entrusted with the real instrument- at a safe distance, let us hope, from human habitation. For if the practising piano be irritating and the amateur violin be maddening, what shall be the effect of the bagpipes in unskilful hands? The imagination refuses to picture it!

This brought me to ask if the pipes were difficult to learn, and how long it would take the beginner to acquire the art of playing.

Mr Macdougall looked at me with a peculiar twinkle in his eye which expressed at once amusement and scepticism.

"Some people never learn," he said, with meaning emphasis "After two years you might play a little, but ----"

There was much unexpressed. On the whole the expression remained that piping is one of the arts which should be acquired young.

Leaving these commercial details, I found Mr Macdougall eloquent on the poetical aspect of his art. He knows all about the genesis and development of the pipes, and brought out for my inspection a set of beautiful old English bagpipes, very slender and pretty, a chamber instrument with thin but pleasing tone. On this he played a pibroch, explaining as he did so the character of the music and the development of the air. Next he produced a dainty little set of Irish pipes, which are not inflated in the ordinary way by the mouth, but blown by the means of a tiny pair of bellows, which the player straps to his right arm and works as he plays. I can't say the effect was graceful. It suggested the hurdy-gurdy too much, but the tone was mellow and pleasing. The Irish and English pipes are elegant little instruments, but mere toys beside the great Highland or military bagpipes, whose wild scream has so often led an army into battle, rallied breaking ranks, brought cheer to fainting hearts, and sung above the victorious warrior in *Pibroch* or in *Coronach*. Rudyard Kipling has written the paeon of the drum in his "Drummer of the Fore and Aft" 'who will do as much for the piper, the hero of a hundred fights'.

I don't know anything sweeter than on a summer gloaming to listen to the plaintive music of the pipes, as it steals down the glen. I don't know a more moving sight in the world to a Scottish eye than a Highland regiment with "bonnet an' feather an' a'" marching to the martial music of the Gael, the pipers in front, "pride in their port, defiance in their eye," and every heart tingling to the pibroch. The pipes, indeed, in skilful hands can be made to answer every gradation of feeling, as the subscription to an old German print has it;-

"He blows his bagpipe soft or strong,

Or high or low, to hymn or song,

Or shrill lament, or ??????????

Or dance or reel, or ??????????

Of ballad gay, or well a lay,

To all he gives due melody."

I am afraid that the bagpipes have all through this article rather run off with the bagpipe maker, but I know no-one will pardon this more readily than the genial Royal bagpipe maker himself, whose portrait appears at the head of the columns.

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"The Queen's set cost £60, but then there was a lot of silver on them. Practice chanter can be got from 10s upwards."

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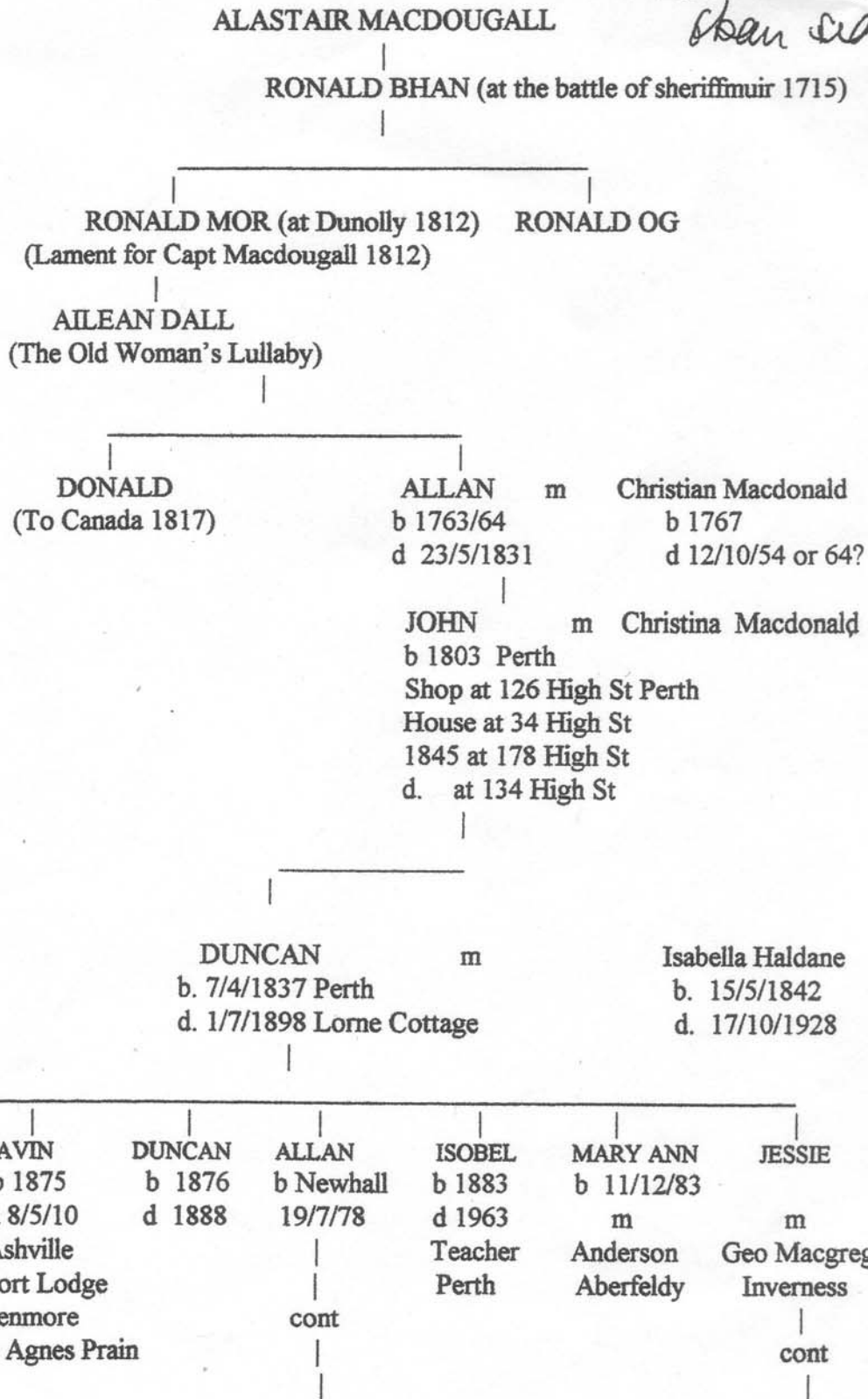
"He blows his bagpipe soft or strong,
Or high or low, to hymn or song,
Or still lament, or rattle rattle,
Or dance or reel, or rattle rattle,
Or ballad gay, or well a joy."

I think this is pretty accurate - & interesting. Duncan 183 to 189.

- This ties up with the article - &

THE MACDOUGALLS FAMILY TREE

also have a lady
Glean who has all the
Glean side & ties
with this
[Signature]



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