

THE 42ND

NICOL ♦ BROWN

AMATEUR INVITATIONAL
PIPING COMPETITION



OCTOBER 11, 2025

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THE 2025 NICOL-BROWN WEEKEND

The Nicol-Brown committee is proud to co-sponsor the concert and competition again this year with the Institute of Musical Traditions. Thanks to our generous, brilliant donors, including the Eastern United States Pipe Band Association and the Piobaireachd Society, admission is free at all events, with donations accepted at the door or online.

Saint Mark Presbyterian Church
10701 Old Georgetown Road
Rockville, Maryland 20852

Friday, October 10

7:30 pm | The Judges' Concert
Alastair Lee & Willie McCallum

Saturday, October 11

(Tentative start times)

9:30 am 6/8 Marches
11:30 am Group Photo Session & Lunch Break
12:45 pm Piobaireachd
4:30 pm March, Strathspey, and Reel
6:30 pm Awards Ceremony
8:00 pm Dinner by Reservation

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The Nicol-Brown committee has hosted an elite event for amateur pipers since 1982, thanks to the generous donors and volunteers who have given their time and financial support year after year. Nicol-Brown Chalice, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Your donations are welcome via our PayPal button at:

nicol-brown.org/donations.html

or you may send a Zelle donation to:

nicolbrownchalice@gmail.com

Checks in US dollars are always welcome. Make payable to **Nicol-Brown Chalice, Inc.** and mail to our treasurer:

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Photo: Jim Dillahey

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The members of the Executive Committee of the Eastern United States Pipe Band Association offer their welcome and sincere appreciation to **Willie McCallum** and **Alastair Lee** and best wishes to all of the competitors, volunteers, organizers, and spectators at the **42nd Nicol-Brown Amateur Invitational Piping Competition**. This is truly one of the premier amateur piping events in the world and it is an honor to be a sponsor.

EUSPBA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Bill Caudill, *President*

Joe McGonigal, *Vice President*

Jim Engle, *Executive Secretary*

Stephanie Valley, *Recording Secretary*

Matt Wood, *Treasurer*

Andrew Douglas, *Officer-at-Large*

Scott Fletcher, *Officer-at-Large*

David Hall, *Ombudsman*

Please join us for the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

The AGM will be held over Zoom on
Saturday, December 6, 2025.

The Judges' Seminar will follow on
Sunday, December 7, 2025.

Proposals from EUSPBA Branches will be due to the Executive Secretary by November 21.
Further information can be found in the Friday News Update emails and on the EUSPBA Web site.

Saturday: Officers' Reports / Branch Proposals / New Business

Sunday: Judges' Seminar

www.euspba.org

For more information, please contact:
Executive Secretary Jim Engle at zecsec@euspba.org

PAST JUDGES FOR THE NICOL-BROWN AMATEUR INVITATIONAL COMPETITION

1982	Ed Neigh	2004	Stuart Liddell and Donald F. Lindsay
1983	James McGillivray	2005	Donald MacPhee
1984	Murray Henderson	2006	John Wilson and Alasdair Gillies
1985	Donald F. Lindsay	2007	John Wilson and Nancy Tunnicliffe
1986	William Livingstone	2008	Nancy Tunnicliffe, Bobby Minnear, R. Iain MacDonald
1987	Amy Garson, Ed Krintz, and Chip Reardon	2009	Murray Henderson, Amy Garson, and Andrew Douglas
1988	Donald F. Lindsay	2010	Angus MacColl
1989	Seumas MacNeill	2011	Jack Taylor and Bruce Gandy
1990	James McGillivray	2012	Willie McCallum, Nancy Tunnicliffe, Paula Glendinning
1991	Colin MacLellan	2013	Patrick Molard, Andrew Hayes, and June Hanley
1992	The contest was not held.	2014	Andrew Hayes and Michael Rogers
1993	George Bell and Donald F. Lindsay	2015	Callum Beaumont
1994	Colin MacLellan and Donald F. Lindsay	2016	Willie McCallum and Nick Hudson
1995	Bob Worrall	2017	Ian K. MacDonald, Andrew Lee, and Ben McClamrock
1996	Scott MacAulay and Donald F. Lindsay	2018	Nancy Tunnicliffe and Eric Ouellette
1997	Donald F. Lindsay	2019	Callum Beaumont, Faye Henderson, and Matt MacIsaac
1998	Jack Lee	2020	Matt MacIsaac, Patrick Molard, Sarah Muir, Jack Taylor
1999	Michael Cusack	2021	Jenny Hazzard, Nick Hudson, Roddy MacLeod, Bob Worrall
2000	Alasdair Gillies	2022	The contest was not held.
2001	Michael Rogers	2023	Jack Taylor and Nick Hudson
2002	Jack Taylor	2024	Roddy MacLeod and Ben McClamrock
2003	Bruce Gandy and Michael Rogers		



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THE NICOL-BROWN COMMITTEE WELCOMES THE JUDGES FOR 2025:

ALASTAIR LEE & WILLIE MCCALLUM



ALASTAIR LEE is a top solo competitor in Canada, the U.S.A., and Scotland. In January of 2025, he won the Gold Medal Ceol Beag Championship and the Overall Aggregate at Winter Storm in Kansas City, Missouri. In 2024, he took home the top prizes in Open Piping at the BC Pipers' Annual Gathering and was the BCPA overall Grand Aggregate winner. His dad, Terry Lee, is his tutor. In Scotland, Alastair plays in the Former Winners' MSR at Oban as well as the Gold Medal for Piobaireachd at Oban and Inverness. Alastair also pipes for Highland Dancing on a regular basis and is sought after in Canada and the U.S.A. Not only is he a well established piper on the competitive circuit, Alastair is also a multi talented musician. He plays the piano, guitar, and accordion, and enjoys composing and creating musical arrangements.

Alastair started his pipe band career with the Robert Malcolm Memorial Pipe Band, and has been a member of the world-renowned Simon Fraser University Pipe Band since 2008. In concerts with the band, Alastair can be seen playing both pipes and keyboards, including last year in August at the largest Pre-Worlds concert at the SEC Armadillo, in Glasgow Scotland. Alastair continues to give back to the Robert Malcolm Memorial Organization as the instructor for the grade 4 band. He also enjoys being a solo piping instructor, workshop instructor, and judge. Alastair graduated with honours in 2013 from the Art Institute of Vancouver in professional sound engineering. He is a new resident of Port Coquitlam, British Columbia, and currently works full-time at the well-known Scottish importing firm, Tartantown Ltd., as a bagpipe technician, shipper and sales associate.

Alastair competed in the 2007 Nicol-Brown Invitational, winning the Piobaireachd, the MSR, and the Overall Championship. This is his first time back at the Nicol-Brown as a member of the judging panel.



WILLIE McCALLUM is legendary in the piping world, with a remarkable career in solo piping, pipe bands, and teaching. Willie's solo piping results are astounding, including a breathtaking nine Glenfiddich Championships between 1990 and 2022. He has been a member of four Grade One pipe bands—Babcock Renfrew, British Caledonian Airways, Scottish Power, and Spirit of Scotland. In December of 2023, Willie was inducted into the Scots Traditional Music Hall of Fame in recognition of his years of excellence as a musical performer.

Originally from Campbeltown, Kintyre, Willie was taught piping by his father, Willie Sr., his uncles Ronald and Hugh, and another relative, his 2nd cousin P/M Ronald McCallum, MBE. After an early career as an accountant at the

University of Strathclyde, Willie now lends his expertise in many ways to the global piping community. He is well-known for his generosity and brilliance as a teacher—in private lessons, at piping schools around the world, and as the Piping Degree Tutor at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. For over 20 years, Willie has organized an elite event, now called the Alasdair Gillies Memorial Recital Challenge, a part of the Piping Live! festival in Glasgow. Willie sells his own McCallum (McC²) solo pipe chanter and his new McCallum Kintyre practice chanter, and is an agent and product consultant for McCallum Bagpipes Ltd. He is also a consultant to Bannatyne Ltd, adding his experience to pipe bag design. Willie and his wife, Christine, live in Bearsden, Scotland.

Willie previously judged the Nicol-Brown in 2012 and 2016, and it's an honor to have him back on the panel for the third time.

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THE 2025 COMPETITORS

AIDEN FOWLER

Langley, British Columbia

Aiden began bagpiping at age 9 with the White Spot Pipe Band under the instruction of Hal Senyk. He is now an instructor with the White Spot Pipe Band and has several individual students. Aiden currently plays with the Grade 2 Cascadia Pipe Band, who recently tied for 6th place at the 2025 World Pipe Band Championships. Aiden is happy to have been awarded the British Columbia Pipers' Association (BCPA) Grade 1 solo piping Grand Aggregate for the 2025 season, including aggregate wins at the Bellingham Scottish Gathering, Scotfest B.C. (the British Columbia Highland Games), and the Skagit Valley Highland Games. Outside of bagpiping, Aiden is a student at Simon Fraser University studying for a degree in criminology. He also serves as a director on the BCPA board and as chair of the BCPA Youth Committee.

JEAN-SÉBASTIEN GAMACHE

Ottawa, Ontario

Jean-Sébastien began playing the pipes at the age of 12 in his hometown of Ottawa. In the 2025 season, he was named Amateur Piper of the Day at the Georgetown, Northumberland, and Fergus Highland Games, and won the Senior Piobaireachd (Group B) at the Glengarry Highland Games. He is a piper with the Ottawa Highlanders Grade 2 Pipe Band and the Royal Canadian Air Force Pipes and Drums. Jean-Sébastien studies under Brian Williamson and has recently begun lessons with Bruce Gandy. Outside of piping, he is pursuing a degree in aerospace engineering with a specialization in space systems design at Carleton University and is set to become an aerospace engineer with the Royal Canadian Air Force upon graduation.

LIAM HORNE

Wise, Virginia

Liam is 20 years old and began piping at the age of 12. In 2025, Liam has won Piper of the Day at the Ohio Indoor, Ohio Outdoor, and Virginia Games. His past accomplishments include 2nd in the

MSR at the Sun Belt Invitational in 2023, as well as winning the United States Junior Solo Competition at the Balmoral Classic in 2023. When Liam is not competing, he is a Junior at the University of Virginia at Wise majoring in mathematics.

ABBY LONG

Houston, Texas

Abby started playing the bagpipes in the fourth grade with the St. Thomas Episcopal School band. After transitioning to focus on solo competitions, she continued taking lessons from Nick Hudson and later Mike Cusack through the Jimmy McIntosh Piobaireachd Scholarship. This year, she is focusing on competing at top tier Grade One competitions. At Winter Storm, she placed first in the MSR and second in the piobaireachd. She also placed first in the piobaireachd, second in the MSR, and won the overall in the amateur category at the United States Piping Foundation. In August, she traveled to Scotland to compete at the MacGregor Memorial Piobaireachd Competition, and in November she will compete at the Sun Belt Invitational in Florida. In her spare time, Abby enjoys working out and learning jiu-jitsu at her local gym, as well as spending time with her family and two dogs, Jack and Wolf.

JIM MALCOLM

River John, Nova Scotia

Jim was born in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, and has been a dedicated piper for 37 years, having begun his musical journey at the age of 12 through Army Cadets. After a brief hiatus in his early 30s to fulfill military obligations, he returned to piping with renewed focus and enjoyed playing with the 78th Highlanders Halifax Citadel Pipe Band. He is currently a member of the Dartmouth & District Pipe Band (Grade 2) and remains active as a solo competitor. His commitment to excellence was recognized with the Grade 1 Champion Supreme award in Atlantic Canada, following a successful competitive season. Jim continues to refine his talent under the teaching of Bruce Gandy. Now retired from a successful career in the Canadian Infantry, Jim resides in River John, Nova Scotia, where he enjoys spending time with his wife and sons while remaining actively engaged in the piping community.



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<https://imtfolk.org/about-imt>



The MacMillan United Pipe Bands are proud to support the Nicol-Brown Amateur Invitational Piping Competition.

Thank you to the judges and best of luck to all the competitors.

ALEX PAVLOVIC

Houston, Texas

Alex is 15 years old, and has been taught piping by Nick Hudson at St. Thomas Episcopal School since the fourth grade. He plays with the school's juvenile pipe band as well as the Grade 1 St. Thomas Alumni Pipe Band. In 2024, Alex was first overall in the EUSPBA's 18-and-under events, and in November he won the Balmoral Classic for pipers aged 21 and under, with 1st in the Piobaireachd and 2nd in the MSR. In 2025, Alex placed 3rd in the Grade 1 Piobaireachd at Winter Storm in January, was Grade 1 Piper of the Day at the MWPBA's Chicago Games in June, and won the BC Pipers' Grade 1 Games Aggregate at the Pacific Northwest Games in Washington state in July. Traveling to Scotland in August, Alex won the Pipe Idol contest at the Piping Centre in Glasgow, was Junior Champion Piper at the Lonach Gathering, and competed in the MacGregor Memorial Piobaireachd Competition in Oban.

COLIN RICHDAL

Coquitlam, British Columbia

Colin is 18 years old and began piping at the age of seven. He played with the White Spot Pipe Band throughout his youth, being taught by Hal Senyk since he was nine. He was the band's pipe major for his final three seasons and is now an instructor. Most recently, Colin joined the Cascadia Pipe Band in Seattle, Washington, and competed with the band at the 2025 World Pipe Band Championships in Grade 2. In solos, Colin came in 2nd place for the 2025 BC Pipers' Grade 1 Grand Aggregate.

ALEX ROCHELEAU

Windsor, Ontario

Alex was born and raised in Windsor, Ontario and began learning the practice chanter at the age of 6 from his late grandad. Alex took lessons from Bob Irvin, who was the ex-pipe major of the local regiment, the Essex and Kent Scottish. He has played in the Scottish Society of Windsor Pipe Band, the Border Cities Pipe Band, the Windsor Police Pipe Band, and most recently, the 78th Fraser Highlanders Pipe Band since 2023. He is currently the pipe major of the Essex and Kent Scottish Pipes and Drums, based out of Windsor. Alex is an engineer at General Motors and was once the 9th fastest runner in Canada in the 1500 metres.

FLORA STONE

Natick, Massachusetts

Flora is 18 years old and has been playing pipes for 6 years. She has learned from Callum Beaumont, Glenn Brown, and Margaret Dunn. She has had a successful season, taking multiple amateur awards this year, including Piper of the Day at the Glengarry Highland Games in Ontario and the Loon Mountain Highland Games in New Hampshire. Flora has competed in many North American amateur invitationals and special events during her time in Grade 1, including the Metro Cup, the US Piping Foundation, the Balmoral Classic, the Sun Belt, and the Nicol-Brown, in which she placed last year. She is excited to be part of the Nicol-Brown again this year and is looking forward to a new season of piping.

ALEXANDER WALKER

Pacific Palisades, California

Alexander took his first bagpipe lesson in 2006 when he was eight years old, and shortly after began weekly lessons with Ian Whitelaw. In 2016, he began his studies at UC Berkeley, where he majored in economics and created a student-run piping class, introducing dozens of his peers to the bagpipes. He has worked for a Canadian medical device startup since graduating, where he manages all quality and regulatory affairs. In late 2019, Alex joined the Kevin R. Blandford Memorial Pipe Band in Southern California, and was elected pipe major in November 2022. Alex has competed with the LA Scots at the World Pipe Band Championships in Grade 2 in 2022, 2023, and 2025, and he led Blandford to the Worlds in Grade 3B in 2024. This year, he is thrilled to participate in the Nicol-Brown, the WUSPBA Invitational, and the George Sherriff Invitational. Alex would like to offer special thanks to Glen Thompson, who opened up his home and has generously given Alex his time and expertise in the wake of the devastating Palisades Fire earlier this year.



6/8 MARCHES

(The competitors have each chosen two tunes to play in this order.)

1. FLORA STONE

Bengullion
Meg MacRae

2. LIAM HORNE

Pipe Major Donald MacLean of Lewis
Mrs. Lily Christie

3. ALEX PAVLOVIC

Miss Ishabel T. MacDonald
Cameron MacFadyen

4. JIM MALCOLM

Donald Maclean of Lewis
Jimmy Anderson's Welcome to Arran

5. ALEX ROCHELEAU

Miss Ishabel T. MacDonald
Mrs. MacDonald of Uig

6. COLIN RICHDALÉ

Mrs. Lily Christie
The MacNeils of Ugadale

7. ALEXANDER WALKER

Dovecote Park
Caverhill

8. JEAN-SÉBASTIEN GAMACHE

Cameron McFadyen
Pipe Major Sam Scott

9. ABBY LONG

Dornoch Highland Gathering
Slainte (C. Glendinning)

10. AIDEN FOWLER

Dovecote Park
Redford Cottage

IMPORTANT PHOTO OP

Please meet next to the stage immediately following the final 6/8 March performance for the official 2025 group photo of the competitors and judges. Weather permitting, outdoor photos will also be taken at this time.

PLEASE WEAR YOUR NICOL-BROWN LAPEL PIN!

PIOBAIREACHD

(The judges have selected one tune for each competitor.)

1. ALEX ROCHELEAU

Lament for Donald of Laggan
Lament for Mary MacLeod
The MacFarlanes' Gathering

2. COLIN RICHDALÉ

In Praise of Morag
The King's Taxes
Corrienessan's Salute

3. ALEXANDER WALKER

Lament for the Children
Lament for Patrick Og MacCrimmon
The Big Spree

4. JEAN-SÉBASTIEN GAMACHE

Corrienessan's Salute
The Prince's Salute
Lament for the Earl of Antrim

5. ABBY LONG

Lord Lovat's Lament (Angus MacKay's setting)
Lament for the Viscount of Dundee
The Park Piobaireachd No. 2

6. AIDEN FOWLER

I'm Proud to Play a Pipe
Lament for Mary MacLeod
The Finger Lock

7. FLORA STONE

The Massacre of Glencoe
Lament for Donald of Laggan
MacLeod's Controversy

8. LIAM HORNE

The Unjust Incarceration
Roderick MacDonald's Salute
Lament for the Iolaire

9. ALEX PAVLOVIC

Rory MacLeod's Lament
Lament for Patrick Og MacCrimmon
Lament for Ronald MacDonald of Morar

10. JIM MALCOLM

The Piper's Warning to His Master
A Son's Salute to His Parents
Lament for the Departure of King James

MARCH, STRATHSPEY, AND REEL

(The judges have selected one set of tunes for each competitor.)

1. JEAN-SÉBASTIEN GAMACHE

2/4 Marches:

Inveran / Captain Carswell

Strathspeys:

The Shepherd's Crook / Maggie Cameron

Reels:

Lt. Col. D.J.S. Murray / Sandy Cameron

2. ABBY LONG

2/4 Marches:

The Braes of Brecklet / Doctor Allan MacDonald

Strathspeys:

The Shepherd's Crook / Catlodge

Reels:

Fiona MacLeod / Jacky Latin

3. AIDEN FOWLER

2/4 Marches:

Morag Ramsay / The Clan MacColl

Strathspeys:

Cabar Feidh / The Caledonian Society of London

Reels:

Broadford Bay / Gena MacLeod

4. FLORA STONE

2/4 Marches:

Donald MacLellan of Rothesay /
The Edinburgh City Police Pipe Band

Strathspeys:

The Bob of Fettercairn / John Roy Stewart

Reels:

Willie Cumming's Rant / Peter MacKinnon of Skeabost

5. LIAM HORNE

2/4 Marches:

Dugald MacColl's Farewell to France /
Invergordon's Welcome to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

Strathspeys:

Catlodge / Cabar Feidh

Reels:

Broadford Bay / Major Manson

6. ALEX PAVLOVIC

2/4 Marches:

Johnny MacKinnon, Arisaig (Allan MacDonald) /
Brigadier General Ronald Cheape of Tiroran

Strathspeys:

Cabar Feidh / The Shepherd's Crook

Reels:

Fiona MacLeod / Donald MacLean, R.M.S. Athenia

7. JIM MALCOLM

2/4 Marches:

Hugh Kennedy / The Conundrum

Strathspeys:

Doune of Invernocht / Lady MacKenzie of Gairloch

Reels:

Lt. Col. D.J.S. Murray / The Rejected Suitor

8. ALEX ROCHELEAU

2/4 Marches:

The Knightswood Ceilidh / Leaving Glenurquhart

Strathspeys:

Lady MacKenzie of Gairloch / Inveraray Castle

Reels:

Drumlithie / Cecily Ross

9. COLIN RICHDALE

2/4 Marches:

John MacDonald of Glencoe / The Clan MacColl

Strathspeys:

Maggie Cameron / The Shepherd's Crook

Reels:

Thompson's Dirk / Dolina MacKay

10. ALEXANDER WALKER

2/4 Marches:

The Pap of Glencoe / The Lochaber Gathering

Strathspeys:

Susan MacLeod / MacBeth's Strathspey

Reels:

Mrs. MacPherson of Inveran / Alick C. MacGregor

HISTORY

In recognition of the continuing development of piping standards in North America, Donald F. Lindsay and students from Williams College in Massachusetts established the First Annual Williams College Amateur Invitational Piobaireachd, where the Nicol-Brown Chalice was first presented on April 2, 1982. This special event was dedicated to Robert Brown and Robert Nicol (“The Bobs of Balmoral”) who shared a deep and abiding enthusiasm for Piobaireachd. It was out of their affiliation with John MacDonald of Inverness that their life-long commitment to the teaching and perpetuation of Ceol Mor grew. As musicians and as world citizens, their lives remain an inspiration to pipers everywhere. It is upon the shoulders of these great teachers and Piobaireachd authorities that today’s pipers and instructors stand.

Modeled after Scotland’s Oban and Inverness competitions, the “Olympics of Piping,” the Nicol-Brown Invitational Contest provides enthusiastic top amateur pipers with a prestigious competition which sets a standard by which to judge their piping, and a goal to direct their hours of practice. Piobaireachd, or classical pipe music, does not always get a fair hearing due to the length, difficulty and intricacy of the tunes, but this invitational contest has become a respected place to play and listen to Piobaireachd in the United States. In order to encourage Piobaireachd of the highest standards, the top amateur Piobaireachd players from across the North American continent have been invited to compete. All competitors selected for the Nicol-Brown must be ranked at the top amateur level for both Piobaireachd and Light Music.

The Nicol-Brown has pioneered the way for elite invitational events for amateur pipers. Many former competitors and their family members return each year to volunteer their time — a testimony to the influence that the contest has had on the lives of so many pipers.

ROBERT URQUHART BROWN

Bob Brown was born in 1906 in Banchory, Scotland, of a family which had long shown a keen interest in all the music of Scotland. He received his first instruction on the bagpipes from William Fraser, a pupil of G.S. McLennan, who although suffering from a physical handicap acquired during the First World War, was still considered a fine player. Next, the young Brown went to Jonathan Ewen, an Inverness Medalist, who began for him his life-long study of Ceol Mor. Ewen was a pupil of Sandy Cameron, so it was not surprising that his young pupil began to win a number of competitions in his local area. This brought him to the attention of G.S. Allan, who took him under his wing and accompanied him to the Argyllshire Gathering in 1925, where Brown won the junior piobaireachd. The following year he was unplaced but highly commended in the Gold Medal event.



Although he was a keen competitor and loved the excitement of the boards, Bob Brown did not always find it easy to get time off from work. This is surprising in view of the fact that his employers have always been enthusiasts for piping. It was, in fact, 1931 before he was able to return to Oban, and this time he won the Gold Medal. By then, however, he was the holder of the Inverness Medal, which he won in 1928. This was also the year when, according to Bob, there occurred the most important event in his piping life—he began to take lessons from John MacDonald. “I owe my knowledge,” said Bob Brown, “to John MacDonald who made me the piobaireachd enthusiast that I am.”



Certainly, it is partly through his long and close association with John MacDonald that he came to be looked on as a great authority, but this was also due to his own clear and reasoned expositions on this subject, and his unfailing ability to produce great music whenever he played.

His fame and standing increased as time went on. In the last decade of his life, pipers began beating a path to the door of his cottage at Balmoral and he began taking his knowledge to different parts of the world. For several years he was the instructor at the Invermark summer schools in New York state; he visited South Africa and New Zealand; and it was while he was in Australia in 1972 that the first signs came of the ailment which was to prove so quickly fatal. He was barely able to get home to his beloved Scotland before he passed away.

ROBERT BELL NICOL

Bob Nicol was born in 1905 in Durriss, Aberdeenshire, and was first taught by a piper MacKellar, a pupil of MacDougall Gillies, who was later killed in the 1914-18 war. Nicol was then taught by one of the Ewen brothers. Another of the brothers, Jonathan Ewen, at that time was teaching the young Bob Brown who was later to become Bob Nicol's life-long friend. Bob Nicol had a successful junior career and his first piping appointment was as piper to Lord Cowdray at Dunecht. It was from here that he moved to Balmoral as King George V's piper in 1924. In 1926, when only 20 years old he had a shooting accident that resulted in the loss of his right eye. A shot from a fellow gamekeeper ricocheted off a frozen tree and hit him in the eye.



Later in 1926, King George V was anxious to have Bob given the best tuition and he consulted the factor at Balmoral, Sir Douglas Ramsay, and Sheriff Grant, Rothiemurchus, who were both pupils of John MacDonald. As a result, Bob Nicol was sent to Inverness to study with John MacDonald for a month that same year. It was a nerve-wracking time, as Bob related, "When John MacDonald came into the room he gave me a good dressing-down for a start. He said, 'You're no use to me.' In fact he was quite nasty to me for the whole month." But on the completion of his course a very good report was sent to Balmoral. The following year he was accompanied by Bob Brown, and the visits continued every year until 1939.

During this period, Bob Nicol became one of the world's outstanding

pipers, winning all the top honours including the Gold Medal at Inverness and Oban in 1930 and the Clasp in 1932. His medal tune at Inverness was "Lament for Donald Ban MacCrimmon," a tune he was later to play at the graveside of both John MacDonald and Bob Brown. Throughout the 1939-45 war, he served as pipe major in the 2nd Gordons and ran a piobaireachd class for the 15th Scottish Division. He also taught at schools in America and Brittany. He was a very good and firm teacher, a likeable man with a sharp wit and sense of humour. Dedicated to keeping the traditional piobaireachd alive, he was undoubtedly one of the greats and one of the most knowledgeable men of our time. Bob Nicol died in 1978.

(These bios include excerpts from Vol. 24, #10 and Vol. 30, #9 of the Piping Times.)



United
States
Piping
Foundation

The USPF extends sincere congratulations to all the invited competitors at this year's Nicol-Brown Amateur Invitational! Enjoy the experience!

The USPF hosts the Maclean Macleod Memorial Piping Competition each year, offering Piobaireachd and March, Strathspey, & Reel events for Professional and Amateur competitors.

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The MacRae Pipe Chanter is now ready for sale and will be provided with all MacRae Bagpipes from mid-August 2025.

I have been playing the chanter for some time now and it just needed a few tweaks to get it exactly how I wanted it.

I'm delighted how it's turned out, with a stable piobaireachd high G and solid F, and vitally, it suits a wide range of reeds. I was determined to make it a comfortable chanter to play with a relaxed hand position and spacing, vital for all pipers.

The pitch is bright and suitable for today's solo and pipe band world. I really hope you enjoy playing it.

Pipe Major
Stuart Liddell
MBE



C14 Blackwood
MacRae Pipe
Chanter

C15 Plastic
MacRae Pipe
Chanter

www.macraebagpipes.com



HISTORY (cont.)

PIPE MAJOR WILLIAM ROSS



Pipe Major William Ross (1879-1965) learned his early piping from his father, mother, and his uncle, Aeneas Ross, who guided his early steps in piobaireachd. By his own great musical ability, Pipe Major Ross rose to the top of his profession. Music flowed from William Ross's pipe and fingers with no apparent effort: "the mighty frame seemed hardly to need to blow". It was the simplicity of the true expert—like the golf swing of a master—making it look easy until we try to do it ourselves. Unlike so many pipers, success never spoiled him, and if ever one needed a tonic, an hour in the company of the illustrious pipe major would assure a cure for the ailment. He was peerless in conversation, a Prince of Storytellers. He loved human beings and was loved by them in return. In his life and work, Willie Ross was a delightful example of the perfect gentleman. By his courtesy, his modesty, and his professional ability, he left an indelible, honoured name that will live down through the ages and cheer the hearts of those who listen to the recordings of his lovely music.

He joined the Scots Guards in 1896 and from that date until his retirement in 1957 he served piping and pipers. In 1920 he was appointed Principal of the new Army School of Piping at Edinburgh Castle. After his retirement from the Army, it was in 1921 that he became the Piobaireachd Society's tutor, and through his appointment, pipers both military and civilian were able to benefit from his tuition. His pupils are scattered throughout the world and always provided the cream of the piping world with many champions amongst them. The world of pipers has not only been made up of players, teachers, and composers; there have been those who worked to make the music of the pipe available to the piper, and those who worked to ensure that the great heritage was passed on. William Ross's collection of pipe music remains the mainstay and guide of many pipers.

(Excerpted from Piping Times, June 1966; A Highlander Looks Back by Angus MacPherson; Scots Guards Book 1; and The Piper's Handbook by P/M John MacLellan.)

DONALD MACLEOD



Donald MacLeod was born in Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis on August 14, 1916. His first piping lessons were from his father, and at the age of six he came into contact with Pipe Major Willie Ross, who travelled to the Hebrides on behalf of the Piobaireachd Society. At age 11, Donald had his first lessons with John MacDonald of Inverness, and that relationship lasted for 25 years.

MacLeod joined the Seaforth Highlanders in 1937, and in 1939 went to France with the 2nd Battalion. He was taken prisoner at St. Valery, but escaped, and made his way back across Europe to re-join his regiment. MacLeod was made pipe major in 1941, and in 1944 returned to the front, where he piped his regiment across the Rhine during the last campaign of the war. Following the war, MacLeod spent a number of years at Fort George, where he tutored young pipers in the British Army.

Few competitors have won as many prizes as Donald MacLeod. He won the Gold Medal at Inverness in 1947, and added eight Clasps between 1948 and 64. He won the Open Piobaireachd at Oban three times, and six Silver Stars for the Former Winners' MSR at Inverness. In 1959, Donald MacLeod competed only at Oban and Inverness. Of the seven events he entered, MacLeod won six first prizes, and was unplaced in the 7th event!

Donald MacLeod owned the bagpipe firm of Grainger & Campbell after leaving the army, and during those years he travelled around the world to teach and perform. He also was among the first to use recorded lessons for teaching piobaireachd, and he sent tapes to pipers around the world. Those original tapes are now available to all pipers in a comprehensive CD series.

MacLeod was a prolific composer with six books of light music, plus a collection of piobaireachd. Many of the tunes collected, composed and arranged for his 7th and 8th books of light music were published by the Gordon Highlanders after his death in 1982. His tunes are standard fare of both bands and soloists, and they are heard wherever the Highland bagpipe is played.

Donald MacLeod left many recordings of himself through years of BBC radio programs and solo records. After he had retired from competition he was heard on two excellent recordings, "The Piper in the Nave" and "The Piper's Ceilidh." Donald MacLeod was awarded the M.B.E. for his services to piping.

—by Iain MacDonald (Regina, Saskatchewan)

PAST WINNERS

William Ross Challenge Targe for MSR

1987	Alasdair Wright	2006	Micah Babinski
1988	Daniel Whatley	2007	Alastair Lee
1989	Ken McKeveny	2008	John Lee
1990	Robert Boyd	2009	Anthony Masterson
1991	Alan Bevan	2010	Glenn Walpole
1993	Paula Glendinning	2011	Ursa Beckford
1994	Jason Briscoe	2012	Alexander Schiele
1995	Michael Rogers	2013	Liam Hilder
1996	Michael Rogers	2014	Liam Hilder
1997	Steven Tripp	2015	James Dyson
1998	Andrew Douglas	2016	Austin Diepenhorst
1999	Glenn Brown	2017	Alistair Bevan
2000	Glenn Brown	2018	Filemon Tan
2001	Lionel Tupman	2019	Joseph Horwath
2002	Lionel Tupman	2020	Henry Michael Paluch
2003	Lyric Todkill	2021	Henry Michael Paluch
2004	Andrew Lewis	2023	Cameron Bonar
2005	Alex Gandy	2024	Gillian Blaney

Donald MacLeod Memorial 6/8 Marches

1990	P. Andrew L. Hayes
1991	Alan Bevan
1993	Jamie Troy
1994	Ryan MacDonald
1995	Paula Glendinning
1996	Ryan MacDonald
1997	Joss Fisher
1998	Andrew Douglas
1999	Glenn Brown
2000	Andrew J. Hayes
2001	Lionel Tupman
2002	Lionel Tupman
2003	Lyric Todkill
2004	Robert Beaton
2005	Colin Lee
2006	Kegan Sheehan
2007	Gordon Conn
2008	Johnny Bassett
2009	Richard Gillies
2010	Chris Lee
2011	Joseph Stewart
2012	Joseph Stewart
2013	Jack Williamson
2014	Tyler Bridge
2015	Tyler Bridge
2016	Andrew Hutton
2017	Alistair Bevan
2018	Alistair Bevan
2019	Alistair Bevan
2020	Henry Michael Paluch
2021	Stuart H. Marshall
2023	Colin Forrest
2024	Liam Forrest



The Robert Nicol-Robert Brown Chalice,
William Ross Challenge Targe and
Donald MacLeod Memorial Buckle.

Photo: Jim Dillahey

Nicol-Brown Chalice For Piobaireachd

1982	Nancy Crutcher: "Lament for Donald Duaghal MacKay"	2003	Lyric Todkill: "Lament for the Only Son"
1983	Ian Beatty: "Black Donald's March"	2004	Eric Ouellette: "Scarce of Fishing"
1984	Robert Minnear: "Lament for Donald Duaghal MacKay"	2005	Colin Lee: "The Desperate Battle"
1985	Kenneth Garson: "The Vaunting"	2006	Cameron Scott: "The Old Men of the Shells"
1986	June Potter: "The Park Piobaireachd" #2	2007	Alastair Lee: "Melbank's Salute"
1987	Joyce McIntosh: "The Old Men of the Shells"	2008	Johnny Bassett: "The MacGregors' Salute"
1988	Daniel Whatley: "The Park Piobaireachd" #2	2009	Anthony Masterson: "The Mackays' Banner"
1989	Katy Rashid: "The MacDougalls' Gathering"	2010	Robert Durning: "Lament for the Viscount of Dundee"
1990	Daniel Kenny: "The Desperate Battle"	2011	Joseph Stewart: "The Red Speckled Bull"
1991	Skip Cleavinger: "The Earl of Seaforth's Salute"	2012	Alexander Schiele: "The King's Taxes"
1992	The contest was not held.	2013	Andrew Mackay: "The Massacre of Glencoe"
1993	Paula Glendinning: "The Desperate Battle"	2014	James Dyson: "MacCrimmon's Sweetheart"
1994	Andrew Hoag: "Beloved Scotland"	2015	Kevin McLean: "The Red Speckled Bull"
1995	Paula Glendinning: "The Desperate Battle"	2016	Andrew Hutton: "MacLeod of Raasay's Salute"
1996	Ryan MacDonald: "Grain in Hides, Corn in Sacks"	2017	Laureano Thomas-Sanchez: "Lament for the Earl of Antrim"
1997	John MacPhee: "The Battle of the Pass of Crieff"	2018	Filemon Tan: "Lament for the Only Son"
1998	Brian May: "The Prince's Salute"	2019	Blaise Theriault: "The Massacre of Glencoe"
1999	Maureen Connor: "The Marquis of Argyll's Salute"	2020	Stuart H. Marshall: "The MacLeods' Salute"
2000	Erin McCarthy: "The Rout of Glenfruin"	2021	Callum Bevan: "Corrienessan's Salute"
2001	Erin McCarthy: "The Rout of Glenfruin"	2022	The contest was not held.
2002	Jeremy Freeman: "The Old Men of the Shells"	2023	Colin Forrest: "The Groat"
		2024	Gillian Blaney: "The Big Spree"

Congratulations to the
2025 Nicol-Brown invitees!

A special thanks to the
dedicated volunteers!



www.hendersongrouppltd.com

See What's New!



THE PIOBAIREACHD SOCIETY

The Nicol-Brown Invitational is grateful to have received grant funding in 2025 from The Piobaireachd Society to support our judges' recital, our competition, and our scholarships.

The aims of both of our organizations fit together perfectly:

- To encourage the study and playing of piobaireachd on the Highland bagpipe.
- To aid in the general advancement and diffusion of knowledge of piobaireachd.
- To encourage the playing of piobaireachd in recitals and competitions.
- To aid promising pupils in obtaining further piobaireachd instruction.

www.piobaireachd.co.uk

TROPHIES & PRIZES

In 1982, Brian Yates, an American piper and silversmith, was commissioned to craft the Nicol-Brown Chalice, with the winning Piobaireachd competitor's name to be inscribed on the base each year. Inspired by the Ardagh Chalice, c. 800-899 AD, the Nicol-Brown Chalice was designed as a symbol of the pursuit of excellence in Celtic art and music. Brian described the Chalice project as a "cathedral" which would take years to complete. Decades later, Stephen Walker of Walker Metalsmiths volunteered many hours of his artistic skills to bring the cathedral to completion, and it is a masterpiece.

In 1987, the Nicol-Brown committee added a March, Strathspey and Reel contest, and commissioned Mr. Fred Graham, Scottish Celtic Armourer and Silversmith of the "Royal Mile" in Edinburgh, to make a targe in honor of P/M William Ross.

In 1990, a 6/8 March contest was added in honor of Donald MacLeod, with a silver buckle designed by Brian Yates to be awarded to the winner. In 2007, Stephen Walker designed a new edition of the silver buckle, to be awarded as a gift from Stephen for the 18th time this year. He has done considerable research on a technique to create "chip-carving," which is how he believes many of the early medieval masterpieces of Celtic metalwork were fashioned. The method seems to have been lost about a thousand years ago, and Stephen is working on a revival.

The overall Nicol-Brown champion for 2025 will win \$1000.00 USD for travel expenses to compete in a major competition in 2026, to be approved by the Nicol-Brown committee. The prize is donated by the NHScot Fund. Over the years, this prize has added to the lives of amateur pipers and has helped many take the next step toward Open piping and elite international competitive careers.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Donald F. Lindsay, Founder
Judy Campbell
Jim Feeney
Paula Glendinning
June Hanley
Ben McClamrock
Thompson McConnell, Treasurer
Steve Porter
JoAnn Scott
Chris Shepherd, Chief Steward
Will Shropshire
Jane Spicer



DONORS AND VOLUNTEERS

Luke Ashton
John Bertino
Joan Bull
Michael and Mary Jane Cole
Thomas Cook
Olivia Corcoran
Betsy and Bruce Douglas
Keith Earle
Eastern United States Pipe Band Association
David Eisner
Tom Fennell
Doreen Forney
Victor Frank
Gordon and Susan Fraser
Jackson Galloway
Charlie and Paula Glendinning
June Hanley
Henderson Imports, Ltd.
Catriona Hill
Chris Imlay and Rita Kruhm
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Peter Kent
Donald F. Lindsay
MacMillan Pipe Band
McCallum Bagpipes

Barbara McCarthy
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Thompson McConnell
Charles and Christine McKee
Robert Mitchell
NHSCOT Fund
The Piobaireachd Society
The Piobaireachd Society of Central Pennsylvania
The Piper's Dojo
The Piper's Hut
pipes | drums Magazine
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Saint Columcille United Gaelic Pipe Band
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Tartantown, Ltd.
Nancy Tunnicliffe
United States Piping Foundation
Stephen Walker
Walker Metalsmiths Celtic Jewelry
Rick Woolard
Bob Worrall

SPECIAL GIFTS

Competitors and judges will receive a Nicol-Brown lapel pin to mark their participation in this important event.

DEDICATIONS

Doreen Forney's donation was given in memory of Pipe Major Angus Macdonald.
Catriona Hill's donation was given in memory of her friend, Connie Powell, who loved piping very much.
Rick Woolard's donation was given in memory of Ronald Morrison of South Uist.



RESULTS OF THE 2025 NICOL-BROWN AMATEUR INVITATIONAL COMPETITION

October 11, 2025 ♦ Rockville, Maryland

Judges: Alastair Lee & Willie McCallum

OVERALL NICOL-BROWN CHAMPIONSHIP

1. _____ The 2025 Nicol-Brown Champion's Chanter — a McCallum McC² blackwood pipe chanter with a custom-designed sole — donated by McCallum Bagpipes (Kilmarnock, Scotland); plus travel expenses up to \$1000, donated by the NHSCOT Fund (Concord, New Hampshire), to be used to compete in a major solo contest in 2026 to be approved by the Nicol-Brown committee.
2. _____ \$500 piping scholarship donated by Doreen Forney (Vermont) in memory of Pipe Major Angus Macdonald.
3. _____ \$400 piping scholarship sponsored by Henderson Imports, Ltd. (Traverse City, Michigan).
4. _____ \$300 piping scholarship sponsored by Jane and Jim Spicer (Maryland).
5. _____ \$200 piping scholarship sponsored by MacMillan Pipe Band (Washington, DC).

THE ROBERT NICOL-ROBERT BROWN CHALICE FOR PIOBAIREACHD

1. _____ (9 points) A bound copy of the Piobaireachd Society Collection, Volumes 1-16, with personalized presentation page, donated by Jon Maffett of The Piper's Hut (Pickerington, Ohio).
2. _____ (7 points)
3. _____ (6 points)
4. _____ (5 points)
5. _____ (4 points)

THE WILLIAM ROSS CHALLENGE TARGE FOR MARCH, STRATHSPEY, AND REEL

1. _____ (8 points) A McCallum Kintyre practice chanter with engraved presentation ferrule, donated by The Piper's Dojo (Troy, New York).
2. _____ (6 points)
3. _____ (5 points)
4. _____ (4 points)
5. _____ (3 points)

THE DONALD MACLEOD MEMORIAL 6/8 MARCHES

1. _____ (6 points) The Donald MacLeod Memorial Sterling Silver Buckle created and donated by Stephen Walker of Walker Metalsmiths Celtic Jewelry (Andover, New York).
2. _____ (4 points)
3. _____ (3 points)
4. _____ (2 points)
5. _____ (1 points)

DRESS AND DEPORTMENT

- _____ A \$100 gift certificate for The Piper's Hut in Pickerington, Ohio, sponsored by Charles McKee (Maryland).

SAVE THE DATE FOR NEXT YEAR!

October 10, 2026

The Nicol-Brown Invitational is held on the Saturday before Columbus Day / Canadian Thanksgiving.

nicol-brown.org