

THE 43RD

NICOL ❖ BROWN

AMATEUR INVITATIONAL
PIPING COMPETITION



OCTOBER 10, 2026

SAINT MARK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ❖ ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

WWW.NICOL-BROWN.ORG

THE 2026 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 9

7:30 pm | The Judges' Concert
Craig Sutherland & Skip Cleavinger

Saturday, October 10

(Tentative start times)

9:30 am 6/8 Marches
11:20 am Group Photo Session & Lunch Break
12:30 pm Piobaireachd
4:30 pm March, Strathspey, and Reel
6:30 pm Awards Ceremony
8:00 pm Dinner by Reservation

BECOME A PATRON OF THE ARTS!

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 PayPal or 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:

Thompson McConnell
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Photo: Jim Dillahey

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Memorial 6/8 Marches



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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 **Craig Sutherland** and **Skip Cleavinger** and best wishes to all of the competitors, volunteers, organizers, and spectators at the **43rd 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*

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Jim Engle, *Executive Secretary*

Stephanie Valley, *Recording Secretary*

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Scott Fletcher, *Officer-at-Large*

Jim Wilson, *Ombudsman*

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

The AGM will be held over Zoom on
Saturday, December 5, 2026.

The Judges' Seminar will follow on
Sunday, December 6, 2026.

Proposals from EUSPBA Branches will be due to the Executive Secretary by November 20.
Further information can be found in the Friday News Update emails and on the EUSPBA Web site.

Saturday: Officers' Reports / Branch Proposals / New Business

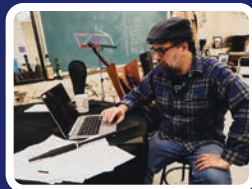
Sunday: Judges' Seminar

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	2005	Donald MacPhee
1983	James McGillivray	2006	John Wilson and Alasdair Gillies
1984	Murray Henderson	2007	John Wilson and Nancy Tunnicliffe
1985	Donald F. Lindsay	2008	Nancy Tunnicliffe, Bobby Minnear, R. Iain MacDonald
1986	William Livingstone	2009	Murray Henderson, Amy Garson, and Andrew Douglas
1987	Amy Garson, Ed Krintz, and Chip Reardon	2010	Angus MacColl
1988	Donald F. Lindsay	2011	Jack Taylor and Bruce Gandy
1989	Seumas MacNeill	2012	Willie McCallum, Nancy Tunnicliffe, Paula Glendinning
1990	James McGillivray	2013	Patrick Molard, Andrew Hayes, and June Hanley
1991	Colin MacLellan	2014	Andrew Hayes and Michael Rogers
1992	The contest was not held.	2015	Callum Beaumont
1993	George Bell and Donald F. Lindsay	2016	Willie McCallum and Nick Hudson
1994	Colin MacLellan and Donald F. Lindsay	2017	Ian K. MacDonald, Andrew Lee, and Ben McClamrock
1995	Bob Worrall	2018	Nancy Tunnicliffe and Eric Ouellette
1996	Scott MacAulay and Donald F. Lindsay	2019	Callum Beaumont, Faye Henderson, and Matt MacIsaac
1997	Donald F. Lindsay	2020	Matt MacIsaac, Patrick Molard, Sarah Muir, Jack Taylor
1998	Jack Lee	2021	Jenny Hazzard, Nick Hudson, Roddy MacLeod, Bob Worrall
1999	Michael Cusack	2022	The contest was not held.
2000	Alasdair Gillies	2023	Jack Taylor and Nick Hudson
2001	Michael Rogers	2024	Roddy MacLeod and Ben McClamrock
2002	Jack Taylor	2025	Willie McCallum and Alastair Lee
2003	Bruce Gandy and Michael Rogers		
2004	Stuart Liddell and Donald F. Lindsay		



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THE NICOL-BROWN COMMITTEE WELCOMES THE JUDGES FOR 2026:

CRAIG SUTHERLAND & SKIP CLEAVINGER



Originally from Crieff, Scotland, **CRAIG SUTHERLAND** began learning with the Comrie and District Pipe Band and in 2004 he joined the Vale of Atholl Pipe Band, progressing to the Grade 1 band in 2008. During his time with the band, he contributed to musical arrangements and harmonies and was appointed Pipe Sergeant in 2012. Craig was a member of the National Youth Pipe Band of Scotland and a former Pipe Major with the Glasgow and Strathclyde Officer Training Corps. He was a resident instructor at the Army School of Bagpipe Music and taught the Pipe Major's Course. Craig joined the Simon Fraser University Pipe Band in 2015 and in October 2025, he was appointed Pipe Sergeant, working alongside Pipe Major Alan Bevan. In August 2026, the band won the World Pipe Band Championships.

Alongside his pipe band career, Craig has established himself as one of the World's leading solo pipers. He was successful at winning the MacGregor Memorial

Piobaireachd at the Argyllshire Gathering in 2009 and both A Grade light music events at Oban in 2014. In 2017, he won the Highland Society of London Gold Medal at the Argyllshire Gathering. In 2023, he won the A Grade MSR at the Northern Meeting and was named Overall Champion at the Uist and Barra Invitational Solo Piping Competition. In 2024, he won the Highland Society of London Gold Medal at the Northern Meeting in Inverness and completed the rare achievement of winning both Highland Society of London Gold Medals.

Craig has built a successful career as an Electrical Engineer in the energy sector and currently lives in Vancouver, British Columbia.



SKIP CLEAVINGER began piping 50 years ago with lessons in Louisville, Kentucky, and then lessons with Mike Cusack while Mike attended Vanderbilt University. Skip studied with Mike in those formative years, and continues to draw on Mike's knowledge today. Through Mike, Skip met Jimmy McIntosh, who became his principal piobaireachd teacher from 1984 until Jimmy's passing in 2021.

In 1991, Skip won the Nicol-Brown Chalice for Piobaireachd, so he is especially honored to be invited to judge the Nicol-Brown this year. In the 1990s, Skip became a successful professional solo competitor, while enjoying an active pipe band career. He played with the Grade 1 Dunvegan Pipe Band in Ontario under the leadership of Scott MacAulay and Colin MacLellan. He later joined the City of Washington Pipe Band, with which he won the Grade 2 North American Pipe

Band Championship at Maxville. Skip was also a co-founder and playing instructor for the Louisville Pipe Band, and has recently served as a teacher and member of the Nashville Pipe Band.

In 2000, Skip began an intensive study of the Irish uilleann pipes. Living just north of Nashville, Skip has had wonderful opportunities to perform with some outstanding artists in recordings, film scores, and live orchestral concerts. Now retired from public education, he continues to teach and perform on highland pipes, uilleann pipes, tin whistle, and Scottish smallpipes.

Skip and his wife Rebecca, an accomplished fiddler, along with multi-instrumentalist John Mock, formed the trio "North Channel," whose repertoire draws from the shared musical heritage of Scotland and Ireland. Skip and Rebecca founded Southcentral Kentucky (SKy) Celtic Arts, a community initiative offering instruction in highland pipes, uilleann pipes, tin whistle, and fiddle. Skip is also honored to serve on the Jimmy McIntosh Scholarship Committee, which oversees a program providing young pipers with nearly seven months of intensive piobaireachd instruction from some of Jimmy's most accomplished students. Skip and Rebecca live in Bowling Green, Kentucky with their daughter, Ruby.

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THE 2026 COMPETITORS

LUKE BALTRUSAITIS

Waterloo, Ontario

Luke is 17 years old, and has been piping since 2019. He is currently playing with the Grade 2 Guelph Pipe Band. Luke's piping career was inspired by the 1970 film 'Waterloo' and his fascination with bagpipes led his family to seek out lessons with Dylan Whitemore. This season, his first in Grade 1, he was the top contender in Senior Amateur Piobaireachd, winning Champion Supreme in Ontario, and he placed second overall in Grade 1 Light Music. His season highlights included Amateur Piper of the Day at the Fergus Highland Games and an invitation to compete in the prestigious Pipe Idol contest for pipers under age 21, a fixture of the Piping Live! festival in Glasgow. Outside of piping, Luke enjoys time outdoors and traveling with his family and is grateful for all of their support (including his cat Foxy who doesn't love the piping). Luke is never happier than when playing a tune on his pipes. He is taking a gap year before beginning an honours bachelor's degree in physics at the University of Guelph in fall of 2027, and works as an instructor for the Guelph Pipe Band teaching program.

GREG BOWEN

Waterloo, Ontario

Greg began piping in the early 2000s under the instruction of Bruce and Adam Annandale, and currently studies with Michael Grey. Piping has long been a family tradition, which sparked his early interest and continues to inspire his playing today. Greg recently completed his fourth year competing with the 78th Fraser Highlanders Pipe Band, and this is his second season competing in Grade 1 solos. It's been a strong season on the solo circuit — he was named Amateur Piper of the Day at the Hamilton, Northumberland, and Kincardine Highland Games, as well as at the North American Championships in Maxville. Away from the games, Greg works as an IT Engineer specializing in identity and security. He enjoys fishing, tinkering with smart home automation, and spending time with his partner, Taylor—a tenor drummer—and their two cats, Charlie and Tula, at their home in Waterloo, Ontario.

OLIVIA CORCORAN

Gaithersburg, Maryland

Olivia began her piping journey at age 10 in the Rockville High School Pipe Band (now the Maryland Youth Pipe Band) under the tutelage of Paula Glendinning. Paula remains one of Olivia's most influential mentors, providing exceptional musical instruction, steadfast guidance, and an inspiring example of excellence as a respected woman in piping. Her mentorship has played a defining role in shaping Olivia's growth as both a musician and educator.

Outside of her career as a civil engineer, Olivia directs the University of Mary Washington Eagle Pipe Band in Fredericksburg, Virginia, plays in the MacMillan Pipe Band, and enjoys performing with The Washington Tattoo. Her recent prizes include the 2026 US Piping Foundation overall amateur championship, and overall winner of the CLASP Grade 1 Piping Live! in Glasgow, Scotland.

LOGAN GORSUCH

Auburn, California

Logan is 19 years old and began piping at the age of 10 with his instructor, Ian Whitelaw. Logan joined City of Angels Pipe Band in Los Angeles, California when he was 14 and competed with the band two years later in Grade 3B at the 2024 World Pipe Band Championships. He began solo competing four years ago, and was the Grade 4 and 3 Western US grand aggregate winner in his first two competition seasons. Logan received a mid-season upgrade from Grade 2 to 1 in 2025 and earned 4th overall at the Balmoral Classic Invitational that same year. In 2026, Logan has won the piobaireachd and aggregate for the BC Pipers' Annual Gathering, the piobaireachd at the US Piping Foundation and the CLASP Live Online competitions, received second in the MSR and piobaireachd at the World Amateur Solo Piping Competition for Piping Live!, and is the current Grade 1 aggregate winner of the Western United States Pipe Band Association. Outside of piping, Logan studies History, and before moving to Auburn he worked at his local library archives. He loves to travel and spend time with his family.

**Best wishes to all
2026 Nicol-Brown
competitors!**

**We'll be following
you today, and
wherever your piping
takes you next.**

Stay tuned.

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Congratulations to the
2026 Nicol-Brown invitees!

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dedicated volunteers!



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**THE NICOL-BROWN AMATEUR INVITATIONAL
PIPING COMPETITION**



Founded 1987

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.

www.uspipingfoundation.org

LIAM HORNEWise, Virginia

Liam began piping at the age of 12. He won Piper of the Day at the 2026 Grandfather Mountain Highland Games and has previously competed at the Nicol-Brown Invitational. Liam is currently under the tutelage of Nick Hudson. Outside of piping, Liam is in his senior year of college completing his bachelor's degree in mathematics. He hopes to continue his education in math to a doctorate level and teach college.

ABBY LONGHouston, Texas

Abby has been playing the bagpipes for eight years. She started with the St. Thomas Episcopal School band before continuing with private lessons from Nick Hudson and Mike Cusack. In 2025, she took the overall prize in Grade 1 at Winter Storm, the USPF, and the George Sherriff Competition. This year, she joined the St. Thomas Alumni Band and played with them at the Chicago Highland Games, Perth and the World Pipe Band Championships. In her 2026 solo competitions, she placed second in the Grade 1 MSR at Winter Storm, won the overall at the Chicago Highland Games, and made it through to the final of the MacGregor Memorial Piobaireachd Competition in Scotland. In her free time, she is busy studying kinesiology at Texas A&M University. She also enjoys working out and spending time with her family and two terriers in Houston.

JACK MARTINPender Island, British Columbia

Jack has been playing bagpipes for the last decade, under several different bands and instructors. Most recently, he has joined the Simon Fraser University Pipe Band. Jack is also an accomplished solo competitor, winning multiple aggregates across the West Coast, and is notably a two-time BCPA Annual Gathering Aggregate winner in Grade 1. Outside of piping, Jack is a volunteer fire fighter, a certified first responder, and a certified forklift operator.

HAZEN METROWilliamstown, Vermont

Hazen began playing the bagpipes at 14, studying under Iain MacHarg. At 18, he moved to Glasgow to attend the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, where he earned a BA with Honours in Scottish Music (Piping). His piping studies there were primarily under Allan MacDonald and Gavin Stoddart. Since returning to Vermont in 2013, Hazen has taught piping, performed with a number of small folk projects and played with the Catamount Pipe Band. He currently plays flute and border pipe with the band Cantrip. He serves on the board of the Vermont Institute of Celtic Arts and is the pipe sergeant for the Catamount Pipe Band. Hazen returned to solo piping competitions in 2024 and since has won the piobaireachd at Maxville in 2024 and 2026, and the CLASP World Solo Amateur...

Piping Competition in 2025. In 2026 he was Piper of the Day at the Dunedin Games in Florida in April and the New Hampshire Highland Games in September. In his professional life, Hazen works for the online gardening company American Meadows as their Senior Manager of Data. He lives in Williamstown, Vermont, with his wife Katelyn and their menagerie of animals on their small farm.

COLIN RICHDALCoquitlam, British Columbia

Colin is 19 years old and began piping at the age of seven, starting lessons with Hal Senyk when he was nine. He played in the White Spot Pipe Band growing up, and is now an instructor with the band. He has competed with the Grade 2 Cascadia Pipe Band at the World Pipe Band Championships in 2025 and 2026. Colin won the 2026 BCPA Grade 1 Grand Aggregate and Grade 1 Piobaireachd Grand Aggregate, winning solo prizes across British Columbia, Washington, and Oregon. Additionally, he was the runner-up at the 2025 Nicol-Brown Invitational; earned 3rd place in the Grade 1 MSR at Kansas City Winter Storm 2026; competed at Pipe Idol 2026 in Glasgow, Scotland; and was the Grade 1 Aggregate champion at the Victoria, Portland, British Columbia, and Penticton Highland Games in 2026. Outside of piping, Colin studies Political Science at college and works part-time as a sales associate.

BRADY WEBBWestville, Nova Scotia

Brady began piping at a young age under the direction of Madelyn Evans-Langlois and Scott Williams. He currently receives instruction from Alex Gandy and plays with Dartmouth & District Pipe Band in Grade 2. Brady is a member of the Atlantic Canada Pipe Band Association (ACPBA), and has competed across Canada and internationally. His recent achievements include being named Overall Grade 1 Aggregate Winner at the CLASP Live Online Competition (November 2025 and May 2026); Overall Grade 1 Winner at the 2026 Halifax Citadel Mini-Gatherings; Grade 1 Winner at the 2026 Atlantic Canada Piobaireachd Challenge in both MSR and Piobaireachd; 2026 Moncton Highland Games Piper of the Day; and 2026 Antigonish Highland Games Grade 1 Piper of the Games. Outside of piping, Brady is a teacher and enjoys golfing, kayaking, and spending time with family and friends.



6/8 MARCHES

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

1. OLIVIA CORCORAN

Jean Mauchline
Bonnie McAlpine

2. JACK MARTIN

Murdo MacKenzie of Torridon
Cameron MacFadyen

3. ABBY LONG

Dornoch Highland Gathering
Miss Ishabel T. MacDonald

4. HAZEN METRO

Dr. Peter Pern (by Dr. Angus MacDonald)
Bruce Gandy's Farewell to the Iron Horse

5. COLIN RICHDALÉ

Mrs. Lily Christie
Ellenorr

6. BRADY WEBB

Cameron MacFadyen
Mrs. Lily Christie

7. GREG BOWEN

Tom Speirs's Welcome to Glenalmond
The Dundee City Police Pipe Band

8. LUKE BALTRUSAITIS

Mardick
Mrs. MacDonald of Uig

9. LIAM HORNE

Pipe Major Donald MacLean of Lewis
Mrs. Lily Christie

10. LOGAN GORSUCH

Lady Dorothea Stuart Murray
Redford Cottage

IMPORTANT PHOTO OP

Please meet next to the stage immediately following the final 6/8 March performance for the official 2026 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. COLIN RICHDALÉ

The King's Taxes
Black Donald's March
Corrienessan's Salute

2. BRADY WEBB

The Rout of the Lowland Captain
Colin Roy MacKenzie's Lament
Lament for the Dead

3. GREG BOWEN

Lord Lovat's Lament
Beloved Scotland
The Rout of Glenfruin

4. LUKE BALTRUSAITIS

Lament for Mary MacLeod
The Unjust Incarceration
The MacFarlanes' Gathering

5. LIAM HORNE

In Praise of Morag
The Unjust Incarceration
Lament for the Iolair

6. LOGAN GORSUCH

Nameless Hiharin dro o dro
Lord Lovat's Lament
The Earl of Seaforth's Salute

7. OLIVIA CORCORAN

Tulloch Ard
Lament for Mary MacLeod
MacDonald of Kinlochmoidart's Lament (No. 1)

8. JACK MARTIN

Fair Honey (Angus MacKay Setting)
The Battle of Auldearn (No. 2)
Grain in Hides and Corn in Sacks

9. ABBY LONG

Lachlan MacNeill Campbell of Kintarbert's Fancy
Lord Lovat's Lament (Angus MacKay Manuscript)
The Park Piobaireachd (No. 2)

10. HAZEN METRO

Lament (Salute) for the Young Laird of Dungallan
The Unjust Incarceration (4-Line Version)
In Praise of Morag

MARCH, STRATHSPEY, AND REEL

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

1. LUKE BALTRUSAITIS

2/4 Marches:

Captain Campbell of Drumavisk / *The Duke of Roxburghe's Farewell to the Blackmount Forest*

Strathspeys:

Lady MacKenzie of Gairloch / *Catlodge*

Reels:

Dolina MacKay / Broadford Bay

2. LIAM HORNE

2/4 Marches:

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

Strathspeys:

Cabar Feidh / *Lady Loudon*

Reels:

Major Manson / *Broadford Bay*

3. LOGAN GORSUCH

2/4 Marches:

Clan MacColl / Arthur Bignold of Lochrosque

Strathspeys:

The Ewe with the Crooked Horn / *Cabar Feidh*

Reels:

The Grey Bob / Alick C. MacGregor

4. OLIVIA CORCORAN

2/4 Marches:

The Duke of Roxburghe's Farewell to the Blackmount Forest / *Donald MacLellan of Rothasay*

Strathspeys:

Susan MacLeod / Dorrator Bridge

Reels:

Alick C. MacGregor / Fiona MacLeod

5. JACK MARTIN

2/4 Marches:

South Hall / *Knightswood Ceilidh*

Strathspeys:

The Cameronian Rant / *Inveraray Castle*

Reels:

The Smith of Chilliechassie / Miss Proud

6. ABBY LONG

2/4 Marches:

The Braes of Brecklet / *Bob Brown's Farewell to the Ballochbuie*

Strathspeys:

The Shepherd's Crook / *Mrs. Donald MacPherson*

Reels:

Jacky Latin / Roddy MacDonald's Fancy

7. HAZEN METRO

2/4 Marches:

Knightswood Ceilidh / *Hugh Kennedy*

Strathspeys:

Stac Polly / Susan MacLeod

Reels:

John Garroway / *Drumlithie*

8. COLIN RICHDALE

2/4 Marches:

William MacDonald / *Mrs. John MacColl*

Strathspeys:

Maggie Cameron / *Blackley of Hillsdale*

Reels:

The Sheepwife / Dolina MacKay

9. BRADY WEBB

2/4 Marches:

Brigadier General Ronald Cheape of Tiroran / The Clan MacColl

Strathspeys:

The Bob of Fettercairn / Catlodge

Reels:

Cecily Ross / *Lieutenant Colonel D.J.S. Murray*

10. GREG BOWEN

2/4 Marches:

Mrs. John MacColl / *The Lochaber Gathering*

Strathspeys:

The Doune of Invernochty / Lady Loudon

Reels:

Alick C. MacGregor / *Sandy Cameron*

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.”



THE INSTITUTE OF MUSICAL TRADITIONS

IMT is an independent, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization which preserves and promotes American and international folk music traditions and nurtures new styles evolving from these cultural roots by presenting concerts, workshops, and educational programs. IMT was born in 1988 from a concert series started by David Eisner, the owner of the House of Musical Traditions in Takoma Park, Maryland. IMT’s world-class performances, programs, and other activities are funded through corporate donations, foundations and public funding agencies, but mostly through ticket sales and contributions from individual supporters.

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

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.)



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MBE



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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	2007	Alastair Lee
1988	Daniel Whatley	2008	John Lee
1989	Ken McKeveny	2009	Anthony Masterson
1990	Robert Boyd	2010	Glenn Walpole
1991	Alan Bevan	2011	Ursa Beckford
1993	Paula Glendinning	2012	Alexander Schiele
1994	Jason Briscoe	2013	Liam Hilder
1995	Michael Rogers	2014	Liam Hilder
1996	Michael Rogers	2015	James Dyson
1997	Steven Tripp	2016	Austin Diepenhorst
1998	Andrew Douglas	2017	Alistair Bevan
1999	Glenn Brown	2018	Filemon Tan
2000	Glenn Brown	2019	Joseph Horwath
2001	Lionel Tupman	2020	Henry Michael Paluch
2002	Lionel Tupman	2021	Henry Michael Paluch
2003	Lytic Todkill	2023	Cameron Bonar
2004	Andrew Lewis	2024	Gillian Blaney
2005	Alex Gandy	2025	Alex Pavlovic
2006	Micah Babinski		

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	Lytic 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
2025	Liam Horne



Nicol-Brown Chalice For Piobaireachd

1982	Nancy Crutcher: "Lament for Donald Duaghal MacKay"	2004	Eric Ouellette: "Scarce of Fishing"
1983	Ian Beatty: "Black Donald's March"	2005	Colin Lee: "The Desperate Battle"
1984	Robert Minnear: "Lament for Donald Duaghal MacKay"	2006	Cameron Scott: "The Old Men of the Shells"
1985	Kenneth Garson: "The Vaunting"	2007	Alastair Lee: "Melbank's Salute"
1986	June Potter: "The Park Piobaireachd" #2	2008	Johnny Bassett: "The MacGregors' Salute"
1987	Joyce McIntosh: "The Old Men of the Shells"	2009	Anthony Masterson: "The Mackays' Banner"
1988	Daniel Whatley: "The Park Piobaireachd" #2	2010	Robert Durning: "Lament for the Viscount of Dundee"
1989	Katy Rashid: "The MacDougalls' Gathering"	2011	Joseph Stewart: "The Red Speckled Bull"
1990	Daniel Kenny: "The Desperate Battle"	2012	Alexander Schiele: "The King's Taxes"
1991	Skip Cleavinger: "The Earl of Seaforth's Salute"	2013	Andrew Mackay: "The Massacre of Glencoe"
1992	The contest was not held.	2014	James Dyson: "MacCrimmon's Sweetheart"
1993	Paula Glendinning: "The Desperate Battle"	2015	Kevin McLean: "The Red Speckled Bull"
1994	Andrew Hoag: "Beloved Scotland"	2016	Andrew Hutton: "MacLeod of Raasay's Salute"
1995	Paula Glendinning: "The Desperate Battle"	2017	Laureano Thomas-Sanchez: "Lament for the Earl of Antrim"
1996	Ryan MacDonald: "Grain in Hides, Corn in Sacks"	2018	Filemon Tan: "Lament for the Only Son"
1997	John MacPhee: "The Battle of the Pass of Crieff"	2019	Blaise Theriault: "The Massacre of Glencoe"
1998	Brian May: "The Prince's Salute"	2020	Stuart H. Marshall: "The MacLeods' Salute"
1999	Maureen Connor: "The Marquis of Argyll's Salute"	2021	Callum Bevan: "Corrienessan's Salute"
2000	Erin McCarthy: "The Rout of Glenfruin"	2022	The contest was not held.
2001	Erin McCarthy: "The Rout of Glenfruin"	2023	Colin Forrest: "The Groat"
2002	Jeremy Freeman: "The Old Men of the Shells"	2024	Gillian Blaney: "The Big Spree"
2003	Lyric Todkill: "Lament for the Only Son"	2025	Alex Pavlovic: "Lament for Patrick Og MacCrimmon"



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THE PIOBAIREACHD SOCIETY

The Nicol-Brown Invitational is grateful to have received grant funding in 2026 from The Piobaireachd Society to support our judges' recital, our competition, and our scholarships.

The aims 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.

Membership is open to all
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 Pipe Major 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 19th 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 2026 will win \$1000.00 USD for travel expenses to compete in a major competition in 2027, 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
Kathleen Brown
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



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.
Charlie and Paula Glendinning's donation was given in memory of Susan Walker, one of the founders of Walker Metalsmiths.
Catriona Hill's donation was given in memory of her friend, Connie Powell, who loved piping very much.
Cathi Nixon's donation was given in memory of her father, Sandy Jones.
Rick Woolard's donation was given in memory of Ronald Morrison of South Uist.

DONORS AND VOLUNTEERS

Luke Ashton
John Bertino
Kathleen Brown
Melanie Brown
Joan Bull
Michael and Mary Jane Cole
Betsy and Bruce Douglas
Phyllis and Martin Dow Memorial Education Trust
Keith Earle
Eastern U.S. Pipe Band Association
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Walker Metalsmiths Celtic Jewelry
Rick Woolard
Bob Worrall



RESULTS OF THE 2026 NICOL-BROWN AMATEUR INVITATIONAL COMPETITION

October 10, 2026 ♦ Rockville, Maryland
Judges: Craig Sutherland & Skip Cleavinger

OVERALL NICOL-BROWN CHAMPIONSHIP

1. _____ The 2026 Nicol-Brown Champion's Chanter — a Duncan MacRae blackwood pipe chanter with a custom-designed sole — donated by McCallum Bagpipes; plus travel expenses up to \$1000, donated by the NHSCOT Fund, to be used to compete in a major solo contest in 2027 to be approved by the Nicol-Brown committee.
2. _____ \$500 piping scholarship donated by Cathi Nixon in memory of her father, Sandy Jones.
3. _____ \$400 piping scholarship donated by Doreen Forney in memory of Pipe Major Angus Macdonald.
4. _____ \$300 piping scholarship donated by Jane and Jim Spicer.
5. _____ \$250 piping scholarship donated by Tom Fennell.

THE ROBERT NICOL-ROBERT BROWN CHALICE FOR PIOBAIREACHD

1. _____ (9 points) A Peter Henderson Heritage Celtic Silver bagpipe donated by The Phyllis and Martin Dow Memorial Education Trust; plus a bound copy of the Piobaireachd Society Collection, Volumes 1–16, with personalized presentation page, donated by Jon Maffett of The Piper's Hut.
2. _____ (7 points) A vintage Peter Henderson bagpipe, refurbished by Dunbar Bagpipes with holly mounts and engraved nickel, donated by The Phyllis and Martin Dow Memorial Education Trust.
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 blackwood practice chanter with engraved presentation ferrule, donated by The Piper's Dojo.
2. _____ (6 points) A Peter Henderson Heritage model blackwood practice chanter with hand engraved celtic silver ferrule and a boxwood sole donated by The Phyllis and Martin Dow Memorial Education Trust.
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.
2. _____ (4 points) An ES Session Chanter donated by Henderson Imports, Ltd.
3. _____ (3 points)
4. _____ (2 points)
5. _____ (1 points)

DRESS AND DEPORTMENT

- _____ A \$100 gift card donated by Henderson Imports, Ltd.

SAVE THE DATE FOR NEXT YEAR!

October 9, 2027

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

nicol-brown.org