

James Campbell

Born 27.7.1916.

Life story by Jonathan Gillespie.

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Photograph of James Campbell from his obituary in The Times.

The following account of the life of James Campbell, who died on 6th December 2003, is reproduced with kind permission of the author, Jonathan Gillespie. It is the text of the College of Piping Lecture given by him on 21st March 2014. Some images have been added.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a great honour for me to be invited to speak this evening. For a few years now my work commitments have prevented me from accepting Dugald's invitations to speak about James, but Dugald is a tenacious man, and so here I am! I am also conscious that it is now almost 20 years since I was competing, but my love for the great music has not diminished in that time, despite being domiciled on the South Coast for the best part of the last decade and very much detached from the piping mainstream.

I must establish from the outset that I am neither an 'authority' on James Campbell nor will I pretend to be one this evening. I am merely someone who had the great

fortune to be taught by James and through that process to come to count him as a friend. Others whom James taught would be just as qualified as me to speak – no doubt Roddy Livingstone or Pat Terry or Neil Mulvie or Neil Esselmont would have other perspectives to bring and anecdotes to relate, as would others who had the privilege of knowing James for a lot longer than I.

As for me, I owe James a great debt, both in the friendship he showed to me as well as his guidance and encouragement of my piobaireachd playing, and it is for that reason that I am pleased to be here to speak about him this evening. I have decided to structure my text around a tribute I wrote for the Piping Times shortly after James' passing in December 2003 into which I shall weave others' words as well as James' own. In particular I have drawn on obituaries published in the Piping Times and in the national press; on text from the programme of a celebration of James' life held at Pembroke College, Cambridge in June 2004 at which I was invited to play; and on James' own words from an interview conducted by Dr John MacAskill in The Voice magazine published in early 2000. I shall also quote from personal letters from James to me. But I must from the outset establish that I have relied heavily on other sources, not least James himself, in order to speak authoritatively about him, so I claim little of what follows as my original work. I have also tried to focus exclusively on James and his work rather than on his father.

So let us begin with some biographical detail:



Gravestone of James' mother, Violet Beadon, at St.Mary & St.Michael churchyard, Trumpington, Cambridgeshire.

James, his two brothers and twin sister were born into the Indian Civil Service. Their mother, Violet Beadon (who died in 1949), was the younger daughter of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, and their father Archibald (1877-1963), Puisne judge in the High Court at Lahore, needs no introduction in piping circles. In his own time James was to add to his father's seminal work two Side Lights to the Kilberry Book, although he confessed his greatest pride to be "The Elusive Appoggiatura," a contribution of his to the Piping Times of June 1988.

James had no memory of India as the family returned home in 1917, the year after his birth, when his father had accumulated a year's leave. At the end of that year,

Archibald returned to India whilst James and his siblings spent most of the next ten years under the eye of their grandmother and other indulgent relations in England. Their parents came home at regular intervals, but it was not until his father retired in 1927 that James remembered any sort of family home.



James is in the centre playing for his schoolmates after a Harrow rugby victory probably in the early 1930s

James went to prep school at Seaford House in Littlehampton, Sussex, by coincidence very close to Lancing College where I have been Head Master for the last eight years. James followed in his father's and brother's footsteps to Harrow School, and then followed them again to Pembroke College, Cambridge to read law.

Of his introduction to piping James said that he was taught the scale and gracenotes at a quite early age but had no zest for the music until he was about 15. A small class was held at Harrow taken by PM David Taylor, formerly of the Scots Guards and trained by Willie Ross, who was then in charge of piping at the Royal Caledonian School, a few miles away in Bushey. As a result of a prod from his Housemaster James joined this class. According to James the Housemaster knew nothing about piping but was well disposed to it and wisely spotted that it was a field in which James could compete successfully with a more precocious younger brother. So it was by dint of that spur of encouragement that he made a start. James admitted to having been quite a bolshie teenager (times may change but teenagers, I suspect, do not!) and that any pressure from home on the subject of piping would probably have soured him for life. Fortunately his father had the great wisdom to appreciate this and his forbearance, plus the acumen of the Harrow Housemaster and the skilled tuition of PM Taylor, set him off on the right track and fired his enthusiasm.

Undoubtedly James' exposure to piobaireachd as he grew up influenced him. James admitted that even as a child one subconsciously absorbs the sound of piobaireachd playing, however uninteresting and unmusical it may seem at the time. This unconscious absorption, he maintained, stands you in good stead when the time for pleasurable application comes. And if that time never comes, an early and unwilling familiarity with the sound of the music is liable to leave its mark. He related that his sister endured the sounds and conversations of four besotted male pipers in the family, plus those of similarly infected visitors to the house, and though she had since never voluntarily attended a piping function, she could put the name to many of the tunes when caught off her guard!

Sticking initially to ceol beag, it was in 1935 in Edinburgh, as he was about to go up to Cambridge, that he heard two piobaireachd which set him off and thereafter it was ceol mor all the way. We will return in a short while to this moment in James' life. Within a couple of years he was judging for the Piobaireachd Society, on whose Music Committee he would serve for the following forty years, latterly also as Honorary President.

In 1939 at Stirling Castle James joined the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders, as a subaltern in the Territorial 8th Battalion, 154th Infantry Brigade. They were in the British Expeditionary Force to France, narrowly escaping through Le Havre in June 1940, when the rest of the 51st Division were taken prisoner. In the hasty retreat James, one of the fortunate few to get away, lost a valuable set of pipes. The 8th Argylls regrouped into the 78th Division, arrived in North Africa in November 1942, saw action notably at Tebourba Gap (in December 1942) and at Longstop Hill (in April 1943), where in an afternoon dash through heavy machine-gun fire they captured the Western ridge. Landing in Sicily in late July 1943 they were in on the 78th Division's long haul up the length of Italy, past Cassino-Two, to the woods along the Senio behind Florence, and then on to the breakthrough at Argenta Gap (in April 1945). James' calm in the gruelling business was an inspiration to a shell-shocked junior officer.



Military Cross

He was twice wounded and awarded the Military Cross after Monte Spaduro (in November 1944). The citation for the award of the Military Cross reads:

Captain Campbell, as Officer Commanding Headquarters Company, has always been given, when the Battalion is in action, the responsibility of supervising the maintenance of the forward troops. [This period] has been one when the difficulties of administration have demanded the very utmost of those whose lot it fell to. The areas where the Battalion was in action, and the approaches to them, were constantly under enemy mortar and shellfire, especially directed to harass the lines of maintenance. Supplies had to be brought by mule at night over miles of track often knee deep in mud, sometimes over uncharted ground from which the mines had still to be cleared. Night after night Captain Campbell led the mule train up; when shelling had reduced it to complete disorder, as very often happened, the utmost drive, tenacity, and courage were needed to restore control. Captain Campbell showed all these qualities and more. His gallant example and complete disregard for his own safety when shelling was at its worst were entirely responsible for the consistent regularity with which the supplies came up. His bravery and conduct under stress has always been of the highest order and worthy of the greatest praise. Captain Campbell, who has served with this battalion throughout the North African, Sicilian and Italian Campaign, has commanded Headquarters Company since October 1943. During the whole of this long and difficult period he has at all times shown the greatest bravery, energy, and devotion to duty.

And now - at last, I hear you say! - to our first tune of the evening. Let me take you back almost eighty years - to Edinburgh in 1935 - when, having left Harrow and just before going up to Cambridge, we are told that James heard two piobaireachd which set him off on his lifetime's journey with our great music. Those tunes were Lament for Sir James MacDonald of the Isles played by the great Willie Ross and Lament for Mary MacLeod. It is the latter will shall hear this evening, chosen by me as a memory of James' teaching of this tune, in particular ensuring the correct emphasis of the hiharin (on the low A, of course, rather than the introductory E) and the timing of the ground and the first variation. I recall my pride at having been identified as a pupil of James' in one of my early competitive appearances playing for the Dunvegan Medal in the late 1980s, this from my timing of the ground and in particular the hiharin (of which more later) which was subsequently featured briefly in an episode of Pipeline. Now that I look back with the wisdom of hindsight I can say that this recognition amply makes up for the inadequacy of the judging in not placing me on that occasion! In 1935 the piper who inspired James Campbell was Lewis Beaton; this evening it is Euan MacCrimmon.

Lament for Mary MacLeod

James Campbell – lawyer and Cambridge Don, and man of Argyll

At Cambridge James had taken first classes in the Law Tripos and read for the Bar. De-mobbed in 1946 he became a tenant at 1 Brick Court. The head of chambers, Colin Duncan KC, was a libel specialist, and there James was said to have been his industrious devil. On occasion the famous Duncan's mastery of his brief was memorably confounded by his junior's more precise knowledge of the law. It is

said, however, that, practising on the Oxford Circuit, James earned more by playing bridge in the Bar mess than from the dock briefs available at Quarter Sessions. He continued at the bar until his feline skill in cross-examination was frustrated by the infantry-man's wartime legacy of hard-hearing. In 1952 he became Director of Studies in Law at Pembroke, his Cambridge College, and the teaching of its undergraduates became the focus of his activity.



Pembroke College Cambridge

James taught Roman law, contract and tort, and particularly the law of evidence. We are told that it was teaching exemplary in accuracy, style and pitch; not coaching or question-spotting. To pupils of every kind – through a rare combination of kid-glove discipline and no-nonsense acumen about strengths and weaknesses – he was altogether special. Years after their graduation he had instant recall of them, zest to know their doings and those of their friends, their children, wives and former wives. Those whom he taught or tutored, or whose sports he turned out to watch in even the foulest weather, felt they had been looked after with superb efficiency; and in return gave lifelong affection.

One of his former pupils, a Lord Justice, wrote in *The Times* (the London Times, that is!) in December 2003 of James "*uncanny ability to dispense a wee snifter or nightcap of gin and not a lot of tonic in a half-pint tankard. He was the one don known to everyone in the college. No matter how inclement the weather, James would be on the touchline or on the towpath to smile at our incompetence or to rejoice in our success. He never forgot us*".

James memory was prodigious, developed from his prep school where he learnt the batting and bowling averages of generations of English cricketers. When a lawyers' dinner was arranged to mark James' retirement in 1984 they had to turn to James for help as only he could remember the undergraduates (and most of their wives and children – and their dogs) and place them in their right years.

Another former pupil who played a part in arranging a dinner given in honour of James' 80th birthday recalls the Old Hall in Lincoln's Inn being filled with "his" lawyers, the top table comprising one Lord Chief Justice, two Lords of Appeal, and

countless High Court and other judges and QCs. James requested no speeches but allowed his toast to be proposed shortly, after which he spoke for 40 minutes without a note, keeping the assembled company in thrall with tales of his life and times. The account concludes: we adored him. In the early 1980s James had been one of a handful of Fellows who, each for their own good reasons, had been inclined against the admission of women to Pembroke. But no sooner had they arrived (in 1983) that they found in him a wonderfully well-informed and appreciative follower of their progress. When, after close to a quarter-century on X staircase, he had on his retirement moved over the wall to 3 Cosin Court, he would on his morning rounds in College – always taking in the lodge and the linen room – drop off little postcards, in a hand unchanged from the minute-book entries of the 1930s, that summoned those he knew (still more than half the College) and their friends, in rotation, to drinks on Saturdays.

In the Lents and in the Mays (rowing races, to translate the Cambridge vernacular!) James' station, four afternoons in a row from last to first division, was on a folding chair in the Long Reach – the chair conveyed there on the back of his bicycle. At the Christmas staff party, as at the London dinners of the Pembroke Society, he would effect his circle round the room to be sure to see as many as possible. A lifelong Arsenal supporter, on Saturday afternoons in the vacation he would listen to the match on a small wireless, with the Fellows' television sound off, and the picture blurred into blues and greens because the remote control had been trodden on by an irate lawyer (needless to say, not James) during the 1974 election.

One of his former pupils at Pembroke recalled in *The Times* in January 2004 of the time when, as a law undergraduate shivering, in thin denim, through the college courtyards he encountered James who asked with some disbelief whether he had nothing warmer to wear. He did not and so James gave him one of his tweed overcoats which he treasured thereafter.

He relates another apocryphal tale of some hapless undergraduate staggering out of one of James' "At Home" parties, empty glass in hand, and collapsing down the stairs in an unconscious heap at the bottom. Alerted by the commotion James appeared at the head of the stairs and peered down owlishly at the debris. He disappeared again and having emerged with a decanter, cantilevered himself carefully down the stairs, and refilled the empty, but still upright, glass before returning to the party.

Although James was very much a Cambridge man, and particularly a Pembroke College man, a hugely popular don, steeped in its ways and traditions and people, he was also clearly proud of his family's roots in Argyll. The Campbells of Kilberry apparently go back to the earliest of the Argylls in the 13th century. There was always an even greater sparkle in James' eye when speaking of Kilberry. I noticed a similar sparkle when, having been summoned to play at a Campbell family wedding, I moved as instructed from *Highland Wedding* into *The Campbells are Coming!* He relished a particular connection with certain Argyll tunes, and most particularly the tune we are to hear next, recounting the site of the eponymous grave, just a few miles down the road from Kilberry. Our second piper this evening is Dr Jack Taylor, and his first tune is *Lachlan MacNeill Campbell of Kintarbert's Fancy*, following which we shall have the opportunity to enjoy some welcome

refreshment. Incidentally, I thought you might enjoy another reference to this tune from a letter James wrote to me in June 2002. He writes: *Many thanks for sending the enclosed tape. I got wind of the intended broadcast from Kilberry and was able to feed my nephew with some information (he knows nothing about pipers or piping) and I was hoping that you would be able to tape the broadcast. Robert Wallace is defective in his knowledge of geography (apparently the location of Kilberry was inaccurately described!) but he is a fine player of ceol mor and his playing of the ground of Lachlan MacNeill Campbell's Fancy was a class ahead of anything else on these tapes*". So bottom of Geography class Robert! But you can stay in the top class for piobaireachd ... now over to Jack.

Lachlan MacNeill Campbell of Kintarbert's Fancy

My memories of James

It was in 1986 as an undergraduate at Cambridge that I was first introduced to James at a dinner hosted by good friends, Ron and Susan Nedderman. Inevitably a tune was called for later in the evening. I thought that I played Salute to Donald pretty well, but how much better it was after a couple of sessions with James! He did not have regular pupils as such, but he generously took me under his wing thereafter, and for the next ten years or so many a fascinating afternoon was spent in his little flat off Trumpington Street, behind Pembroke College, going through tune after tune. Silver Medal tunes to begin with, then, when he thought me ready, the big tunes and those set for the Gold Medal. Playing was always on a practice goose as space and near neighbours did not permit the full pipe. James in his armchair would often seem to have drifted off to sleep, but anything wayward would elicit clear hand signals to help get the tune back on the rails. Even when I thought the tune went well, the clarity of his critique left no doubt that his concentration on the playing had been total. This written comment on my tape recording of *The Battle of Waternish* is typical of his teaching: *I think you are quite right to aim at a slight shading of the cadence Es and the following low notes in the Ground. But on this principle might there be a bit more to the low A in bar 2? These things need thinking out. You (rightly, I reckon) give a bit more to the low G in bar 3 than to the low G in bar 4 and a corresponding shortening and lengthening of the pre-cadence Es. This is the sort of subtle point that a mature player works out for himself. You can't lay down a firm rule. This "working out" process is well detectable in your playing, and well illustrated in your handling of Var 2 of the Battle of Auldearn.*

And we would continue hour after hour, fortified in the latter part of the afternoon by a generous spread for tea and discussion of all sorts of important topics, not the least the current fortunes of his beloved Arsenal football team. He was fascinated by developments in pipe bags and reeds – he was a happy convert to the Canmore bag and Ezeedrone reeds.

It is remarkable that many Pembroke College men and women whom I have met, who knew James as a teaching fellow, tutor and supporter of college sport, are completely unaware of his passion for, and expert knowledge of, piobaireachd.

James had clearly inherited what he described in his Preface to the Side Lights on the Kilberry Book as his *father's lifelong distaste for seeking to dogmatize*. In

introducing a tune he would expound not only his own way of playing the tune, but many of the other possible interpretations. His was the exemplary teaching technique – explain the 'dos' and the 'don'ts' and then allow the pupil to develop his interpretation within those limits. That said, James was clear that a certain dogmatism on all points is appropriate with the teaching of beginners, it being of no help to a beginner to be treated to an erudite discourse on different ways of playing the tune under investigation: he will find out all that for himself later on. James was very firm on the importance of being able to „put a tune together“ with controlled changes between the variations and of getting the short notes just the right length (and certainly never cut away to nothing!). This was a constant theme of James“ critique of my playing. James believed that the neglect of the art of putting a tune together may have been caused by the treatment of tunes in broadcasts in which often only snatches are put out. James saw this as understandable due to the time factor but felt it encouraged relegation of the later variations to mere mechanical appendages to what had gone before.

James is on record that he had only one teacher in piobaireachd – his father – and it was by him that he was schooled in the precepts and principles recorded in Side Lights on the Kilberry Book and stemming principally from the teaching of Sandy Cameron in 1911. This is an interesting point: James was clear in referring to his teaching as “1911 Cameron” as he did not deny the possibility that Cameron may at different times, have taught different things on points of detail. He thought that there were a lot of minor inconsistencies in the teaching of the 19th century masters and that it was certainly present in abundance in the teaching of John MacDonald. James went further, hazarding a two-fold classification. There are those, he stated, who adhere to the precise teaching which they have received from a master player without an iota of deviation, and there are those who adhere to the basic principles so received but feel themselves at liberty to experiment with minor deviations either of their own invention or taken from other sources. James placed John MacDonald in this second category, his main teachers having been Cameron-based coming from Donald Cameron“s sons and from Malcolm Macpherson who, in spite of much lore to the contrary, was heavily influenced by his association in Greenock with Alexander Cameron senior. But there were according to James other strands in John MacDonald“s make-up and his great legacy James saw as being an individual sub-style stemming from various traditional sources which, fortunately, survive to this day through the teaching of the Balmoral pipers, both of whom James placed in his first category.

In writing about his great friendship with Andrew McNeill, James makes interesting further comments about idols and instructors. Andrew“s was Robert Reid and as Andrew had not himself been in the competition swim, as James put it, he had never encountered a temptation to trim his sails to any judicial winds. McNeill was therefore to Reid, James claimed, as his father was to Sandy Cameron, as General Richardson and Sheriff Grant were to John MacDonald and David Ross (a close associate of James“ through the Scottish Piping Society of London) was to Willie MacLean. James saw none of these devotees as hidebound in the sense of being disrespectful of alternative preferences and you would not find them labelling as “wrong” an alternative depiction, either in writing or in playing, which happened to deviate from what they had been taught. James reckoned that there was and had

been too much wrangling among pipers over minor points of preference. James considered the myth of a Cameron/Macpherson disjunction typified in the teachings of MacDougall Gillies and John MacDonald to be probably too deeply enshrined in some quarters to be expunged, but it was his hope that his interview in *The Voice* would be effective in casting some discredit on it.

In his Editor's Preface to the *Side Lights on the Kilberry Book* James wrote: *Disagreements may exist on questions of style, but personally I have never had any great zest for such disputes. I believe that enough of the MacCrimmon tradition descended to John MacKay to ensure that what has radiated from him involves no violation of first principles. I also believe that one can pursue too far the mirage of continuity. Principles persist, but within their framework individual styles are developed. A devoted disciple is not necessarily a precise imitator. And I venture to doubt if John MacDonald played everything "as he got it" from various Camerons and Macphersons; if MacDougall Gillies played everything "as he got it" from Sandy or Keith Cameron; if Robert Reid played everything "as he got it" from MacDougall Gillies; if Sandy Cameron played everything "as he got it" from Donald Cameron. What is here published is not put forward as a guide to what is "right" or "wrong". Its value lies in its stamp of authenticity as a record of what was taught by particular people at particular moments of time at the beginning of this century. And such value is not lessened by the reflection that other people, and indeed the same people, may have taught differently at other times.*

James must once have been a fine player – even in his eighties he had a crispness of fingering on the chanter that would be the envy of many half his age. It is good that recordings of James' playing are now available on the Piobaireachd Society website. To hear him play the first line of what he told me was "probably" his favourite tune, *Lament for the Earl of Antrim*, was to be shown something of rare beauty – the hiharin with the correct emphasis on the low A, the semi-broken double echoes of bars 1 and 2 leading to the high A contrasting with the full double echo of bar 3. This leads me to introduce our third tune this evening, for which we welcome back Euan MacCrimmon. Others will no doubt have heard James speak of other tunes as among his favourites, but on the basis of what he said to me on more than one occasion, I thought it right that the *Lament for the Earl of Antrim* should be played this evening. To ensure his pipe is fully settled before starting this big tune Euan will begin with the *Retreat March Major James Campbell of Kilberry MC* by George McIntyre.

Lament for the Earl of Antrim

James' later years

In his later years at the big competitions James would naturally gravitate towards the junior events, preferring the opportunity to hear the promising young players which he saw as more of a visit to the unknown, affording an opportunity to get tabs on instructors who he considered to be worthy of the highest praise for their work. James wrote: *it is an exhilarating experience to witness the way in which the competitors in these contests have responded to instruction in the orthodox presentation of the music.* He did, however, use his interview in *The Voice* to draw to the attention of the instructors to a couple of important points. One concerned the

pre-cadence pause in crunluath singlings. James drew attention to the 1911 Cameron teaching on the subject to be found in the Side Lights on the Kilberry Book, there being a temptation to extend this pre-cadence pause to the taorluath variation which was at one time detectable in the playing of John MacDonald. James recorded that John MacDonald was later firm in his denial of the propriety of making any such a pause either in crunluath or taorluath singlings, a denial recorded by Sheriff Grant in his notebook of 1949. James was keen for instructors to be aware of this conflict of authority and in a position to answer questions or offer advice. In his teaching of me James was clear in his preference for a pre-cadence pause in the crunluath singling and also of the unacceptability of such a pause in the taorluath singling.

James also comments interestingly on the timing of the hiharin movement. He writes: *you do not have to go along with everything that has been written on this subject to accept that ordinarily the final A should be longer than the cadence E – maybe not by very much and to a greater or lesser degree according to context. For instance, a mature player might well give less to the A in bar 1 of Lament for Donald Ban MacCrimmon than he would give to the A in bar 1 of Lament for the Earl of Antrim. Students often try to learn from books and the books in current use print the E and the A as even crotchets. Intention to instruct beginners is firmly disclaimed in the Introductions but students do not read Introductions and some are in need of help in achieving flexibility on the handing of the hiharin movement.*

When my work brought me to Scotland in the late 1990s, we kept in touch regularly by post. I would send James recordings of piping programmes on the radio (he was, he wrote to me in December 2001, *much out of touch these days and the tapes which you send are of great value in keeping me informed of what is going on* and he would respond with his comments – always frank, pithy and not always complimentary of the player’s interpretation. In this he would give little respect to reputation – a poor tune was just that whoever played it, a good tune likewise. Just occasionally he would write that a particular tune had merited inclusion in his library of special performances – that really was the sign of approval.

Angus MacColl was one to receive praise in this way, James commenting in the year 2000 that his tune (Sutherland’s Gathering, I believe) *really had all the virtues which one looks for in a high-class competition*. Jack Lee with The Laird of Anapool’s Lament and Greg Wilson (The Phantom Piper) also received this accolade.

On another occasion praise was recorded of the playing of the *Nameless Tune* from the McArthur Manuscript which James said had served to soothe him after hearing the same player murder Willie Murray – *a perfect illustration*, James wrote, *of how not to play a competition reel!* Donald MacPhee’s playing of the same Nameless tune merited inclusion in James’s special library of recordings, this because of Donald’s rendering of the tune which purported to follow the exact writing which appears in the manuscript and unlikely to be heard again. James said that he himself had only played the edited version *which Archie Kenneth concocted*.

In September 2002 James wrote that he had not gone to Oban that year but had enjoyed the recordings of Iain Speirs’s King’s Taxes and Willie McCallum’s

Lament for Airs – both tunes were forthwith absorbed into his collection of first-class performances.

Elsewhere another top player is criticised for being *insufficient in the marking of his phrases in the ground and thumb*, and Bill Livingstone is praised for his rendering of Praise of Marion which James *said reminded me of John Wilson from whom I imagine that Livingstone learnt the tune in Canada*.

In his letters to me James did not limit his critique to playing but also commented on published interviews. Of one piping authority (better that he remain nameless, I feel) James wrote: *he seems to be quite happy to expound on a much wider selection of subjects that I would ever contemplate committing myself on*.

In what proved to be his final letter to me of 31 October 2003 James was still on sparkling form. Commenting on the playing of double echoes in the “George Moss” style in the Clasp at Inverness that year he wrote: *I find myself in agreement with the trenchant remarks on this subject of Robert Wallace in The Piping Times of October. The judges are placed in an impossible position when freedom is accorded to deviate from the normal style of playing “beat” movements.*” He went on to comment about players who ignored the warning given in the advert about misprints in the Piobaireachd Society book, this relating to the Salute to Sir James Macdonald of the Isles. James continues: *these misprints are not easily detectable other than by comparison with Angus MacKay’s book, and the tune is quite unsuited to be set until the errors are corrected. Again, the judges were put on the spot*.

A couple of months before that letter he had written lauding Donald Macpherson’s recording of the Big Spree which I think must be that which appeared on his 2004 CD A Living Legend. James wrote that Donald was: *really something of a marvel at the age of 86. I have always thought that the older you get, the better piobaireachd player you become, as long as the fingers last, which most of the time they do not. What is so amazing about Donald is that his execution is as good as ever*.

My final topic before our fourth piobaireachd of the evening which will precede my concluding remarks are James’ insightful views about the importance, and limitations, of old manuscripts. In a letter to me in October 2001 James expresses his concern about the apparent inability to distinguish between the way tunes were written and that way in which they are played: *the old manuscripts date from the days when published scores were less available than they later became, and a common practice of pipers was to collect scores from unpublished sources without bothering to edit them to conform to their own ideas on the subject of presentation. The resulting record was for their own use as an aide memoire and was certainly not for use as a means of instructing in the art of playing. That art had been, or was being, acquired by face to face instruction and to this day such instruction is the ideal for the acquisition of the nuances and shading of piobaireachd playing. It is quite impossible to convey these subtleties in staff notation, and it is a common failing to imagine that the old books etc can be effective in conveying with any certainty the writer’s style of playing. James continues: we are invited to accept that so-and-so “times” a particular ground or variation in such-and-such a way. It may be that at some time there were styles of playing which differed from what is*

heard today. What is heard today is the style which was channelled through John MacKay, and other styles (if they existed) have not survived. This may be a matter for regret, but any attempt to advance theories about alternative styles can only be based on an individual reading of the old writings. The old writings are valuable for the preservation of old settings (i.e. the bones of a tune, its structure, the number and nature of its variations). An example heard at Inverness was Bill Livingstone's adoption of the Donald Macdonald setting of John Garve, but note that the tune was played in the "MacKay" style, and not in any supposed style indicated by the way in which it was written.

In similar vein James said this at the Piobaireachd Society conference in 1986: *John MacDonald had his own ideas of course and I think there may well have been a certain pique in him to find that the scores of the Piobaireachd Society are in some way ex cathedra direction as to how the tunes should be played. You cannot get that out of people's heads, and that was particularly so in the case of John MacDonald who competed in the days when you jolly well had to play as per the Piobaireachd Society books. It wasn't easy for him to see that ... an editor can only choose one style to print as his main setting ... and refer in the notes to other styles. It is a temptation which persists to see the printed score as a directive.*

This accords with James' conclusion to the aforementioned article on The Elusive Appoggiatura (June 1988): *A literal reading of Donald Macdonald's depiction of these movements could found a belief that he aimed to record a style of playing alternative to and different from that which has reached us through traditional teaching. But the lack of the link of traditional teaching with any such alternative style could go to sustain any who are inclined to share Dr Bannatyne's contrary belief.*

And so to our final tune of the evening, chosen to mark our subject matter but also James' close connection with its composer, his cousin Archie Kenneth, with whom he collaborated on several books of the Piobaireachd Society collection but whose work James was anxious to promote above his own contribution. I may be biased but I think this a very fine tune indeed and like a few other modern compositions worthy of more frequent airing. So here is Dr Jack Taylor to play Salute to James Campbell preceded by a Retreat March, *The 8th Argylls* by William Lawrie.

Salute to James Campbell

Conclusion

James died in Oban on 6 December 2003 having left Cambridge for the final time in June that year. With him disappeared our final link with founding fathers of the Piobaireachd Society.

James was an erudite, modest and private man - a real gentleman - whom I was hugely privileged to know as a teacher, guide and friend for the last two decades of his life, a life which touched so many, pipers being only one part of his sphere of influence. Piping was a hobby he loved; the law and the teaching of the law was the profession he loved, but he was also a great teacher through his hobby as well as his profession.

Part of James' obituary in *The Times* reads: *Piper, soldier, lawyer, don: an unusual man in the microcosms of academe. Astute, accurate, unsentimental, extraordinarily effective, with a superbly retentive memory, shrewd judgement of form and skill, an instinct for tidiness, and the most efficient sort of kindness by stealth: "the sweetest modest man", an early pupil of his, then Lord Chief Justice, said seven years ago at a gathering in Cambridge indirectly in his honour.*

It was the same Lord Chief Justice, I believe, who wrote further of James: *We loved him. A modest man, he could not be drawn on how he had won his MC, saying simply he had forgotten or that it came with the rations. Friendship is a great art and very few are born with a natural gift for it. To James it was given in abundance.* Many in the piping world will attest to that.



James was arguably the last great amateur academic patrician of our art. In his interview for *The Voice* he gave a very good explanation of the difference between an amateur and a professional in the piping world of sixty years ago which time does permit to include now. James was certainly the product of a very different age; we should judge him, and indeed his father, by the standards and modus operandi of their age rather than of ours. What is clear to me, and I believe to many others, is that our knowledge of piobaireachd would be much the poorer today were it not for the rich depth of the Kilberry legacy to us. An Old-Harrovia Cambridge-Don piobaireachd amateur may be only slightly more politically acceptable in our devolutionary or independently-minded times than an Old Etonian Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, but do not let that distract from a very important source of information about, and insights into, our great music. If you are any doubt - and

even if you are not! - do re-read the prefaces to the *Kilberry Book* and to James' *Side Lights*.

In his editorial in the latest Piping Times Robert refers to the hurt caused to James by offensive comments about his family. This is detectable in, and between, the lines of James' letters to me, but I have decided, in accordance with the knowledge that James withdrew an article he had submitted for publication in response to some of the unjust comments, that it would not be appropriate for me to quote from personal correspondence in this regard. James' retraction of his response before the publication deadline is, I believe, typical of the man who is on record as saying: *I am myself reluctant to give any appearance of thrusting my opinions down the throats of others*. If only other members of the piping fraternity would be similarly reticent! Many of us know the truth behind James' subsequent and very modest statement that: *I have always been receptive to enquiries*. There are collections of letters from James in the homes of pipers across the world who sought advice and guidance from him. He must have written an extraordinary number of letters.

In January 2004 Robert Wallace commented on James' *touching filial piety* writing: *Nevertheless at no time did James adopt a defence or prosecution based on emotion or some skewed idea that he must, at all cost, defend the family reputation. As you would expect from a barrister and expert in law, his was a case meticulously prepared, measured, logical and powerful in its understatement. He was a master of his brief, his lucid explanations of piobaireachd's complex minutiae a tutorial for all who have designs on putting pen to paper on this subject. There was never any hectoring bombast, no hint of the didactic. His work oozed calm and reasoned authority. And if you want an example of oozed calm and reasoned authority James' Elusive Appoggiatura article is an example of his work at its very best.*

Before I finish may I express very grateful thanks on all our behalves to Euan and to Jack for their masterful playing this evening and to everyone at the College of Piping for organising this event.

My conclusion comes from a letter to me from James in November 2000. It has all the more resonance given knowledge of the detail of his life. He wrote: *at any rate the piobaireachd is a wonderful hobby to pursue, both in the playing and in the "academic side". Also it is a solace both in adversity and in old age. So keep it up!*

Keep it up, I certainly shall; I'm sure we all will

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