

Table II/1

"Places of Public Amusement During the Race Week in Edinburgh."											
	Plays	Races	Assemblies	Concerts	Highland Pipers	Circus	Weir's Museum	Public Breakfasts	Royal Archers	Balls & Suppers	SOURCE
1790	6	6	3		1	9	6				<u>Cal Merc</u> July 15 1790
1797	6	6	2	1	1						<u>Scots Mag</u> 59 (July 1797):50
1799	6	6	3	1	1						<u>Scots Mag</u> 61 (Aug 1799):574
1802	6	6	3		1			6	1	2	<u>Scots Mag</u> 63 (Aug 1802):705
1803	6	6	3	3	1				1		<u>Scots Mag</u> 65 (Aug 1803):581

Table II/2

<u>J. G. Dalryell's Advice to Competitors, 1841.</u>	
<p>"1. All must be perfectly sober at public competition.</p> <p>2. Bagpipes to be in perfect order. Every piper should play on his own pipe, he was best acquainted with it. A minister preached best in his own pulpit.</p> <p>3. All previous tuning to be as far as possible beyond hearing of the audience. Pipe never to be touched for tuning in the course of performance.</p> <p>4. While performing to front the audience and not the judges.</p> <p>5. His piece must close with a note on the key or in unison with his drones."</p>	
[Dalryell Gen.374D:14]	

(2) The Competition and Race Week: A Theatrical Dimension

With the possible exception of the annual Grants Whisky competition, held in the antlered splendour of Blair Castle, no modern piping competition could hope to rival the spectacle of the Edinburgh competitions in their heyday - precision-run events playing to packed houses in the best theatre in town.

Where the modern competitor tends to be greeted by a hushed and intense smattering of kilt-clad cognoscenti, his counterpart in 1820 would observe from the stage of the Theatre Royal the ranks of the most fashionable society in town, occasionally exuberant to the point of disorder [Dalyell Gen 360D:41, 379D:11], scarcely well-versed in the intricacies of Ceòl Mòr. In 1787 there were six hundred people in the audience; in 1835, over fifteen hundred. Why did they come?

At the broadest level we can point to the prevailing literary romanticism of the period, which undoubtedly contributed to the popularity of a 'National Exhibition' of this kind, bringing as it did the Romantic Gael, with his music and dance, onto the Edinburgh stage. At a more immediate level, the competition was a success because it was well-run and interesting, and because it coincided with the Leith Races, a week-long carnival attracting both high and low society to town, intent on entertainment.

The idea of holding the competition during the Races, usually in late July, was first mooted by John Clerk of

Elden in 1784. He considered this a suitable time, being "after the hay season and before the general harvest when the pipers as servant farmers or others cannot so conveniently be absent from their homes." [HSS Sd. Bk. I: 47-9]. The Races themselves had a chequered history. In 1665 the King and the Edinburgh Town Council each donated a silver cup for competition on Leith Sands. By the mid eighteenth century a two-day meeting had been prolonged to a week, with a daily race generally run over twelve miles. By the end of the century the event had developed a rather unsavoury reputation, with the final day often degenerating into "a chaos of fighting, destruction and debauchery." [Marshall 1976: 54] It is this ruder aspect of the meeting, with its colourful panoply of hawkers, hucksters, brew-wives and buskers, which Robert Fergusson commemorates in his poem Leith Races (1773):

The tinkler billies i' the Bow
Are now less eidant clinking,
As lang's their pith or siller dow,
They're daffin, and they're drinking.
Bedown LEITH-WALK what burrochs reel
Of ilka trade and station,
That gar their wives an' childer feel
Toom weyms for their libation
O' drink their days.
[Fergusson Leith Races 1925: 35]

Not all was intemperance, however. A child who visited the 1797 meeting remembered "the usual sprinkling of 'rolly-polly' men, ballad singers, recruiting parties, bagpipers and organ grinders" [Philo Scotus 1861: 77], and for genteel society, Race Week provided a daily diet of

plays, assemblies and concerts to supplement the equestrian amusements. The organisers of the piping competition cannily pitched their event in this vein: an English visitor in 1807 recorded that "the pipers are intended as a sort of dessert to the Leith Races ... as soon as the Races are concluded it is the fashion to attend the theatre." [Carr 1809: 178] That the competition came to be seen as a Society event, is confirmed by the fact that for several years it was advertised amongst other "places of Amusement during the Race Week." (Table II/(1)).

The securing of a good audience was a constant preoccupation of the competition committee. Newspaper reports flattered the "numerous, genteel and fashionable" audiences, and thanked them profusely for their countenance and support. [eg Cal. Merc. August 6, 1807, July 19 1817]; and when in 1824 the Races were re-scheduled for mid-June, it was deemed necessary to hold the competition "at some convenient time towards the end of July, when preparatory to the shooting season a good many strangers are usually in town, and when there may be some actor of eminence at the theatre." [HSSPMB:2]

Ever-mindful of the precept that a large and happy audience helps to balance the books, great pains were taken to diversify the entertainment to make it palatable even to those who disliked the bagpipe. Highland dances were regularly interspersed between tunes; former winners played special exhibition pieces; youthful performers, such as 12 year old John MacDonald from Fortingall (1824),

and four boys including Angus Mackay in 1825, were encouraged as particularly endearing to the audience; war veterans were paraded and commended; and all appeared spectacularly clad in the Highland Dress. To top it all, the Preses concluded with a suitably stirring oration: "There is not sound", declared Sir John Sinclair in 1813, "which the immortal Wellington hears with more delight, or the Marshalls of France with more dismay, than the notes of the Highland pibroch." [Cal. Merc. July 31 1813]

The organisers were also sensitive to the need for a professional and slick display. Rehearsals were held to brief the competitors and weed out the poorer performers. Table II/(2) contains a summary of advice given by organiser J.G.Dalyell to the competitors before the 1841 competition (using his own words, as recorded in his notebook). Much of this advice holds good for today, and many a modern audience would be delighted if tuning were now kept to a minimum as Dalyell then insisted. The purpose of these strictures was to ensure that the competition ran smoothly, and ran to time. [Dalyell Gen 350D: 36].

Finally, we might consider some of the purely theatrical aspects of the performance. "Highland scenery" was first used when the competition was held for four years (1790-94) at The Circus, a venue which concentrated on circus and equestrian displays. [Cal Merc 12/7/1790]. Gas lighting was introduced in the Theatre Royal in the mid-1820s, and was much praised. (It produced "a softness

and delicacy of shade which harmonised very well with the display of beauty and fashion in the boxes". [Cal. Merc. July 11 1825]) And the idea of lining up competitors on stage before the opening curtain, for them to be "beheld as descending from their native mountains while the curtain rises", was first implemented on the suggestion of J.G.Dalyell in 1821. [Cal. Merc. Aug 4 1821, Dalyell 350D:36] This had been refined by 1844 to the point where competitors traversed the stage "entering behind the screens and coming from behind them so that their numbers were apparently doubled". [Dalyell Gen 379D:10]

The payoff, for the organisers and competitors alike, came in the form of packed houses, good theatre takings, lavish prizes, and the potential for the competitor to be spotted, and employed. For the audience this was more than just a piping competition, it was a "National Exhibition", and it was worth attending. In 1822, for instance,

..."the house was crowded in every part; in the boxes particularly, there was a most brilliant assembly of our fair countrywomen, some of whom were in the full highland costume of tartan robes and bonnets. When the curtain was raised the whole competitors, pipers and dancers, were seen arranged round the stage, and the various chequers of the lively tartans worn by above sixty five Highlanders in their full native dress, had a very grand effect." [Cal. Merc. Aug 3 1822]

Theatrical Offshoots

One indicator of the success of the Edinburgh competition as a stage spectacle, is seen in the fact that

it soon spawned theatrical imitations. The prime example of this was a show mounted by entrepreneur William McGlashan in Edinburgh and London in 1817/1818, but as early as 1792 pipers and dancers were to be found performing amongst the wire dancers and slack rope walkers at The Circus. [Cal Merc. July 26 1792].

McGlashan's show was staged at Corri's Pantheon in August 1817, featuring several performers from the piping competition of that year. In format it was identical to the competition, with profits destined "for the support of those decayed Highlanders who have competed before the public for a number of years." [Scrapbook of Musical Activities, Edinburgh Central Library, III:41]. This seems to have been reasonably successful, and the show moved to London, under the patronage of the Duke of Sussex, in February 1818. There a "competition of Highlanders on the Great Bagpipes, the Broadwords, the Dirk and Target" was mounted at the Royal English Opera House. [Letter Arnold/MacGillivray, 4 February 1818, HSL 268 Box 1]. One person who saw this show was the historian James Logan [1876 II: 312], but on the whole the Londoners showed little interest, and by July McGlashan and his performers were forced to seek financial help from the HSL. McGlashan put his misfortune down to "the novelty of the entertainment which is purely Scottish", and pleaded that he had "ruined himself entirely for the support of his countrymen." [Letter McGlashan/MacQueen July 21 1818, HLS 268 Box 1].

A more dignified petition from the performers showed that they had been duped by a worthless £190 Bill, and by the promise that prizes were to be bestowed for their performance, as in Edinburgh. Amongst the signatories were William MacKay, later piper to the Celtic Society, and Donald MacDonald, pipe maker in Edinburgh. [Petition July 1818, 268, 1]. The HSL's reaction is not on record.

Table II/3

YEAR	DATE	VENUE	Pipers	In Public	Eliminated at Rehearsal	Others	COMPETITION DATA	Cash from HSL	£-s-d Cash at Door	Balance after Outlay
							REGULATIONS			
1781	Oct 20	Mason Lodge, Falkirk	13	-	-		4 tunes each. Lots drawn. 3 prizes. Held in courtyard.	na	-	-
1782	Oct 15	Mason Lodge, Falkirk	na	-	-		4 tunes each. Performance in separate room from judges.	na	-	-
1783	Oct 15	Falkirk	17	-	-		Audience in attendance.	17-7-2	-	-
1783	Oct 22	Dunn's Assembly Rooms	12	-	-		Tunes prescribed by John MacArthur.	na	-	-
1784	Oct 19	Assembly Hall, High St.	16	-	-		<u>Glasgheur</u> + tune of choice.	20-0-0	-	-
1785	Aug 30	Dunn's Assembly Rooms	24	-	3		<u>Faillte a Phrionnsa</u> + tune of choice.	22-15-0	-	-
1786	July 31	Dunn's Assembly Rooms	26	-	2		Highland Dress obligatory. One tune entered and played.	20-0-0	-	-
1787	July 23	Assembly Rooms, George St.	na	-	-			20-0-0	-	-
1788	July 28	Assembly Rooms	na	-	-			20-0-0	-	-
1789	Aug 3	Assembly Rooms	na	-	-			20-0-0	-	-
1790	July 13	The Circus	9	-	4			20-0-0	-	-
1791 to 1805	July 9/ Aug 6	The Circus (1791-3) Theatre Royal (1794-1805)	na	-	-		No information.	20-0-0	na	na
1806	Aug 5	Theatre Royal	22	-	2		6 tunes entered. Judges' choice. Disqualification for dissent.	20-0-0	127-12-0	na
1807	Aug 4	Theatre Royal	22	-	3			20-0-0	88-2-0	zero
1808	July 26	Theatre Royal	19	-	-			20-0-0	130-3-0	na
1809	Aug 1	Theatre Royal	20	-	3		Prizes increased to 5.	20-0-0	134-5-0	9-19-6
1810	July 31	Old Theatre Shakespeare Square	13	-	4			20-0-0	130-1-0	8-7-2
1811	July 23	New Theatre Royal	14	-	5			20-0-0	140-15-6	16-9-5
1812	July 28	ditto	13	-	4			20-0-0	136-3-0	17-0-10
1813	July 28	ditto	12	-	2			20-0-0	118-15-0	na
1814	Aug 3	ditto	14	-	5			20-0-0	120-15-0	na
1815	July 26	ditto	23	-	5			20-0-0	163-17-0	8-4-3
1816	July 31	ditto	23	-	3			20-7-4	125-0-0	na
1817	July 17	ditto	24	-	3			20-0-0	na	na
1818	July 23	ditto	22	-	3		Dress prizes introduced.	26-6-0	137-10-0	na
1819	July 28	New Theatre Royal	16	10	3		Eliminations at Rehearsal. "Extra Prize" introduced.	26-6-0	114-9-0	na
1820	July 19	ditto	16	11	4			26-6-0	121-2-6	na
1821	July 31	ditto	17	6	4			26-6-0	138-0-0	- 1-3-3
1822	July 30	ditto	17	17	6			26-6-0	140-0-0	- 1-10-3
1823	July 29	ditto	16	12	2		12 tunes entered. Disqualification for drunkenness.	26-6-0	154-0-0	5-19-2
1824	July 28	ditto	16	12	1			26-6-0	136-0-0	na
1825	July 9	ditto	14	13	-			26-6-0	114-6-0	zero
1826	June 19	ditto	15	11	-			26-6-0	83-5-0	- 2-12-7
1829	July 29	ditto	15	10	1		Triennial competition. Testimonials required. Dancing prizes.	73-10-0	129-4-0	na
1832	July 25	ditto	15	9	1			73-10-0	150-18-0	5-8-0
1835	July 22	ditto	13	17	-		Gold Medal competition (5 entered).	78-15-0	190-11-0	11-7-0
1838	July 21	ditto	15	6	-			73-10-0	162-12-0	12-1-5
1841	July 17	ditto	17	4	-			73-10-0	167-18-0	- 4-17-9
1844	July 10	ditto	14	14	-			73-10-0	150-0-0	- 9-3-6

Source: Competition Data.

(3) JUDGING AND MANAGEMENT

a. Entrance Requirements

Table II(3) contains a synopsis of data concerning the competition, including dates, venues, and regulations for competitors.

Tunes. Probably the major issue from the competitor's standpoint concerned the number of tunes required. As already stated, in 1781 and 1782 each competitor played four pieces, and in 1784 and 1785 a test piece was played in addition to a tune of the competitor's choice. This process proved time-consuming, and between 1786 and 1806 only one tune, of the competitor's choice, was entered and played [Cal. Merc. July 29 1786]. Between 1806 and 1823 six tunes were required, the judges selecting the tune to be played both at the rehearsal and at the public contest. [HSS Sd. Bk. 4/1: 234]. From 1823 until the conclusion of the competition in 1844 twelve tunes were required from each competitor. The judges selected the tune to be played at the rehearsal; the competitor selected the tune for the competition. [HSSPMB: 9, 10].

Drawing Lots. The precedent of drawing lots to determine order of play, set between 1781 and 1784, was entirely abandoned until 1826, when it was reintroduced on the grounds that those playing towards the end were believed to stand the better chance of winning. [HSL 268, 2: 27/10/1826].

Testimonials. Up until 1829 the only other requirements made of competitors were that they wear the Highland dress (from 1786), and that they abide by the disciplinary code of the contest. In 1829 it was further decided that in order to be allowed to play, each piper should produce either a certificate showing that he had won a prize at a local meeting, or a testimonial from his Commanding Officer (if a Regimental piper), or from three local Gentlemen. The object was to deter entries from pipers "not properly qualified", and also to encourage competitions "at the provincial and district Highland Societies". [HSL 268, 27, 3 May 1828].

b. Rehearsals

Rehearsals were a regular feature of the competition and fulfilled three main functions. In the early years they afforded an opportunity for pipers and dancers to practice their material; from 1819 they acted as an elimination round to keep numbers performing in public down to approximately fifteen; and from 1829, a special "rehearsal" was held at which the dancing prizes were adjudicated.

From the start the rehearsals provided an opportunity for judges to familiarise themselves with the competitors, a system of pre-adjudication which was formalised in 1819 when it was decided to eliminate poorer candidates at the rehearsal. This was essential, as

entries had been boosted by the end of the Napoleonic Wars, and the return of Army pipers to civilian life. Some committee members considered twelve competitors sufficient for the public performance ("so as not to tire the audience"), but in practice fourteen to seventeen performers proved the norm. [HSSPMB : 34]. The process of elimination was eased by the attendance of several competitors "of such inferior attainments as to preclude all chances of success". [Dalyell 1849 : 98].

c. Appointment of Judges

There can be little doubt that by modern standards the quality of judging at the Edinburgh competitions was low. Judges were drawn from the class of Society which patronised piping, whether it be in the army or on the estate, and were often members of the London and Scottish Highland Societies. The main qualities sought were enthusiasm and support for the Highland lifestyle; knowledge of pibroch was a secondary, though valued, accomplishment.

Judges were appointed by the HSS committee responsible for the competition. A minimum quorum was five [HSS Sd.Bk.2:210], but in years such as 1800 as many as 26 were appointed, plus "any other members...from the Highlands, of known skill in the ancient military music who may come to town." [HSS Sd.Bk.1:60]. A proven interest in piping secured a place on the judges panel, as is

Table II/4

INDIVIDUALS WHO JUDGED ON THREE OR MORE OCCASIONS

Lord Viscount Arbuthnot (1821-3)*	Lamont of Lamont (1798-1811)
Arch'd Butter of Faskally (1829-41)	Major Menzies 42nd Regt. (1818-41)
Charles Campbell of Combie (1820-2)	Lord MacDonald (1795-1824)
Duncan Cameron of Fassiefern (1817-22)	MacDonald of Clanranald (1783-1807)
John Clerk of Elden (1784-93)	MacNab of MacNab (1785-1812)
John Clerk of Pennycuik (1784-93)	MacDonald of Staffa (1798-1835)
J.G. Dalryell (1816-44)	MacDonald of Sanda (1787-98)
General A. Duff (1821-9)	MacDonald of Dalness (1798-1832)
Admiral Fraser (1815-18)	Sir George Mackenzie of Coul (1816-18)
Mr. Fraser of Gortuleg (1787-98)	Sir John MacGregor Murray (1798-1818)
Earl of Fife (1817-25)	Colonel A. MacGregor Murray (1804-13)
Dr. Gregory Grant (1785-98)	Allan MacDougall of Hayfield (1786-93)
Mr. Isaac Grant (1786-93)	Colonel MacQuarrie (1810-23)
Mr. Grant of Corrymoney (1787-1813)	Lt. Colonel MacDonald, 92nd (1819-23)
James Grant (1816-25)	Lt. Colonel MacBean (1822-32)
Colonel F.W. Grant (1804-8)	George Robertson (1819-41)
Charles Gordon (1825-32)	Sir John Sinclair (1800-32)
Major John Gordon (1823-5)	General Stirling (1813-24)
Joseph Gordon of Carroll (1820-23)	Alex. Young of Harbourn (1823-32)
Gilbert Innes of Stow (1800-29)	

(* Brackets denote approximate years of involvement. Individuals did not appear in every year bracketed.)

Sources: Annual competition data.

Table II/5

RECOMMENDED JUDGES FOR THE 1826 COMPETITION

Mr. Stewart of Ardvorlich
 Mr. James Gillespie Davidson
 The Hon. John Stuart
 Colonel Gordon late 93rd Regiment
 Major Menzies
 Colonel Farquarson 26th Regiment

[HSSPMB:43]

demonstrated in the following correspondence between the Society's secretary, and Sir J.H. Mackenzie of Delvin in 1838:

"At a meeting of the Committee for conducting the competition of pipers, I mentioned to them, as I saw from the entries of intending competitors, that you encouraged the ancient music and kept a piper - they accordingly added your name as one of the committee of judges for awarding the premiums".
[Letter Gordon/Mackenzie 19 July 1838, HSSPMB:131]

Data concerning judges is available for 35 of the 52 competitions. At least 166 judges were involved, and Table II/4 lists 39 individuals who judged on more than three occasions. The normal pattern was for a hard-core of committee members to be joined, as available, by high-ranking chiefs and military officers. Typical of the active local membership were John Clerk of Elden (involved between 1784 and 1793), Dr Gregory Grant (1785-98), Gilbert Innes of Stow (1800-1818), George Robertson (1819-41), and John Graham Dalyell (1816-44).

Of the more aristocratic members the outstanding figures were Sir John Sinclair (involved 1800-1832) and Sir John MacGregor Murray (1798-1818). Both acted as Preses on several occasions, delivering the prizes, and concluding the proceedings with a suitably stirring speech. The Preses was most frequently a Highland chief "selected on account of his rank, talents, acknowledged patriotism". [Dalyell 1849: 100]. Amongst the most enthusiastic supporters of the competition were the Laird of Lamont

(1798-1811), the Laird of MacNab (1785-1812), Lord MacDonald (1795-1824), and military men such as Colonel MacQuarrie (1810-1823) and Lt. Colonel MacBean of the 78th (1822-32). Also appearing on the judges panel from time to time were several Highland chiefs with long-standing piping ties: Alexander Chisholm of Chisholm (1832); James Grant of Glenmoriston (1824); Alexander MacLean of Coll (1782-1805); Murdoch MacLean of Lochbuy (1819, 20); MacDonald of Clanranald (1783-1807); MacDougall of MacDougall (1791); General Norman MacLeod of MacLeod (1798); MacLeod of Raasay (1805); the MacDonalds of Staffa, Sanda, Dalness and Glenaladale; and many more.

The Society were not altogether blind to the fact that impressive Highland pedigree did not necessarily make for astute judging. Prior to the 1826 competition a list of six "good judges of pipe music" was drawn up (Table II/5), and on several occasions it was suggested that judges might "take opinion of those who have formerly gained prizes". [Kilberry II: 39 (1823)]. This was most forcibly put in 1824, when it was suggested that two former winners should "take notes of the merits of the performers, and accompany the judges when they retire to state their opinions ..." [HSSPMB: 32]. The proposal was quashed on the grounds that pipers could not be trusted to give an impartial judgement. As a concession on this occasion, Donald MacDonald the pipe maker, and Donald MacLean, piper to the HSS, were instructed to attend on the stage, and make themselves available for consultation if required

[HSSPMB: 33]. Further proposals along similar lines in 1832 and 1838 fared equally badly, in 1838 on the grounds that "this course had been tried at some local competitions and had given great dissatisfaction to the competitors". [HSSPMB: 81, 141].

d. A Ladder of Preference

In practice, judges' decisions were made easier by the implementation of a system whereby competitors tended to move slowly up the prize list over the years. After 1785, when Donald MacIntyre from Rannoch won the prize pipe for a second time, a rule was introduced whereby a piper could only win a higher prize than he had previously gained, or nothing at all. This system was reinforced in 1829 when it was decreed that where pipers were of equal merit, the longest-serving competitor should be given the preference. [HSSPMB: 68].

Table II/6 outlines the competitive careers of six pipers to illustrate this point. Some, such as John Ban Mackenzie, progressed swiftly through the prize list; others, like Donald Scrymgeour from Strathtay, attended for over a decade before winning the top prize. Many never made the prize list at all. Angus Cameron from Rannoch, for instance, appeared faithfully at every contest between 1823 and 1844, and rarely made it beyond the rehearsal. Pipers who had won the prize pipe were allowed to continue attending the competition, but not to compete. They instead played "exhibition tunes", and were well paid for

Table II/6

COMPETITIVE CAREERS OF SIX PIPERS

John Campbell, Nether Lorn (Owner
of the Campbell Canntaireachd)

1808 - unplaced
1815 - 4th
1816 - 3rd
1817 - unplaced
1818 - 2nd
1819 - 1st

Peter Forbes, Foss, Perthshire

1805 - 3rd
1806 - unplaced
1807 - unplaced
1808 - 2nd
1809 - 1st

Adam Graham, Pipe-Major,
Roxburgh Militia

1810 - unplaced
1811 - 3rd
1812 - 2nd
1818 - unplaced
1819 - unplaced
1820 - Extra Prize
1821 - 1st

Malcolm MacGregor, Glasgow
(later piper to HSL)

1802 - 3rd
1803 - 2nd
1804 - 1st

John Ban Mackenzie

1820 - 4th (piper to G.L. Mackenzie of Applecross)
1821 - 3rd (piper to Duncan Davidson of Tulloch)
1822 - 2nd ditto
1823 - 1st ditto

Donald Scrymgeour, Strathtay

1812 - 5th
1814 - 3rd
1815-1821 - unplaced
1822 - Extra Prize
1823 - unplaced
1824 - 1st

SOURCES: Annual Competition Data,

their efforts. (Six former winners appeared in 1815, for instance, and received payments ranging from 3 guineas to 1 guinea. [HSL 268, 26: 119]).

The system had its flaws. Good pipers might be frustrated in having to serve time to win the prize pipe; poorer pipers might progress by virtue of long attendance, possibly assisted by some lobbying on their behalf by their patrons. This last issue is hard to judge. When J.H. MacKenzie lobbied for some special favour for his piper, John MacAllister, in 1844, Charles Gordon, the HSS Secretary, responded indignantly:

"He must stand on his own merits. You allude to my influence; but merit alone is the test at these competitions".
[HSSPMB: 6 July 1844].

This, however, did not prevent proprietors from trying: in 1819, for instance, Moray of Abercairney pleaded the case for his piper (William Fraser) who fared poorly at the rehearsal by virtue of "his reeds being new and having gone wrong" [Kilberry I: 9]; and in 1820 Farquarson of Invercauld remarked pointedly that his piper (William Fisher) had been to Donald MacDonald for tuition, and that he trusted "his exertions will be duly considered by the judges". [Kilberry I: 12, 13].

Dissent and Discipline. It is little wonder that pipers occasionally disputed the results, much to the embarrassment of the organisers. In 1806 Archibald

MacArthur from Ulva refused 2nd prize, and was disqualified. [Cal. Merc. Aug 7 1806]. In 1824 Kenneth MacRae, piper to the Earl of Caithness, refused the Extra Prize "in a very unbecoming manner on the stage", and declared himself "shamefully used". He too was banned. [HSSPMB: 11, 16, 17, 19]. And in 1841 the judges erred in failing to award the prize pipe to Donald Cameron, in favour of Donald MacInnes from Lochaber (4). (Cameron was second in 1838, and first in 1844.) Dalryell recorded in his notebook:

"... Great dissatisfaction prevails at the first prize having been voted to Donald MacInnes, as the general opinion is in favour of Donald Cameron as considerably superior ... This dissatisfaction has increased so much that it is now generally admitted that the committee has been mistaken" [Dalryell Gen. 374D: 18].

It was in order to avoid such embarrassing incidents, as well as to deal with problems such as drunkenness, that the Society implemented a severe disciplinary code:

TABLE II/7

Offences Leading to Disqualification	Year	Source
1. Refusal of a prize.	1806	HSS Sd.Bk.4/1:234
2. Disagreement on "any point connected with the competition".	1823	HSSPMB: 9,10.
3. Drunkenness.	1823	ibid.
4. Improper conduct on stage.	1826	HSSPMB: 46.
5. Intentional performance of wrong tune.	1826	ibid.

Several performers felt the weight of this code. In 1815 John Ross, piper in the 78th Highlanders, was returned to barracks in Aberdeen for some unspecified "irregularity" [HSL 268, 26: 120]; in 1825, 1829 and 1832 dancers were disqualified for drunkenness; in 1838 five dancers were caught wrongly claiming travelling expenses when they actually lived in Edinburgh [HSSPMB: 148]; and in 1823 an unfortunate piper from Golspie named Trentham Mackay was disqualified for disputing the quality of his instrument with a judge. [1823 Accounts, HSL 268, 19]. He was eventually reinstated in 1826 after an abject apology, and an assurance that he was not competing for the money, but to "make a periodic display of his improvement in the ancient music". [Petition May 1826, HSL 268, 2; HSSPMB: 30, 48].

One unsavoury feature of the competition was that jealousies and tensions between competitors occasionally surfaced. In 1821, for instance, "D. McK." (who might be

identified as Donald Mackay who was then present), informed the Society that John Cameron, piper in the Lanarkshire Militia, was

"always cursing and damning the members of the Society and he said there is no justice amongst you and he is going this only once for to hell with the whole of the body for their misconduct and not dealing with justice to him he says that he should have got the Pipes long ago". [Kilberry II: 3].

The informant signed himself "a well wisher to the whole Society". Donald Mackay was 2nd on this occasion, and John Cameron 4th. [Cal Merc. Aug 4 1821].

Despite such obvious flaws, it is likely that the best pipers did make it to the prize lists. Judges might not be au fait with the intricacies of pibroch, but they were assuredly aware of who the best pipers were in popular esteem, and acted accordingly. This was an era which produced pipers talked-of to the present day - Angus Mackay, John Ban Mackenzie, Donald Cameron - and all won the prize pipe in Edinburgh.

(4) Triennial Competitions: 1829-1844

The 1820s proved lean years for the Edinburgh competition. Competitors attended as enthusiastically as ever, but audiences fell off drastically.

In many ways the event was simply the victim of what Dalyell termed "the extraordinary depression of the times" - the fierce economic depression which followed the Napoleonic Wars. [Dalyell Gen 356D: 7]. Victory at Waterloo had ensured four or five good years as, basking in reflected glory, audiences had come to see the heroes of the continental campaigns. Door takings in 1815 were £163, a figure surpassed only in 1830s. By 1821, however, takings had fallen to £138, and the competition went into the red for the first time. In 1826 takings were a mere £83; expenses paid out to competitors (another useful indicator) were at an all-time low; and the competition was in debt to the tune of £2.12.7 [Financial Data, summarised in Table II(3)].

The HSS found a number of contributory causes for their misfortune: the popularity of the Edinburgh Races was much diminished, and audiences had declined correspondingly; provincial Highland Gatherings were beginning to prove a powerful counter-attraction; and Dalyell believed that the 1826 competition had been poorly advertised, and had suffered from being moved to June to accommodate the Races. [Letter Gordon/Wedderburn 27 Oct 1826, HSL 268: 2; Dalyell 356D: 7].

It was decided that the best way to revive the competition's flagging fortunes was to put it on a three-yearly footing. The HSL had previously considered, and rejected this expedient (in 1803/4), but was now happy to accept the HSS's request to "hold it only once in every two or three years, and let the prizes be increased or extended by the reservation of the usual annual vote entirely for this purpose". [Letter 27 October 1826 (op. cit.); HSL 268, 24: 35, 59] (6).

The first "Great Triennial Competition" was set for July 1829, and the prize money was increased to 70 guineas [HSSPMB: 67, 9]. The press were informed that the move had been made "... in order that the progressive improvement of the performers might be more sensibly manifested" [Cal Merc 1 Aug 1829]; Dalzell harboured the opinion that the change "to say the truth, resulted from avoiding the great trouble of the preliminary arrangements". [1849: 97]. By this stage the HSS was primarily a society of agriculturalists, with scant enthusiasm for such 'cultural' matters.

Dalzell himself was critical of the change, which he felt gave the pipers insufficient incentive to practice, and led to a decline in playing standards. Pipers were not to be encouraged by "hopes of recompense deferred, and distant prospects of victory". [Dalzell 1849: 97, 358D: 82, 369D: 49, 50]. This fear was to some extent confirmed by a letter from William Smith of the 92nd Gordon Highlanders in April 1828. Smith was of a well-known Inverness piping

family (his brother was piper to the Earl of Seafield), and served 21 years in the 92nd, retiring with the rank of Pipe Major in 1839. [PT Feb 1975: 31]. He wrote on behalf of "The North Country Pipers":

"The disappointment they met with this year has done them a great dale of harm, with regard to the studding of the Bagpipes music. In the event of no competition - the pipers will turn carless of learning - especially the young ones ... Strengthen the hands that hange down - and do not forget your ancistorale music."
[Letter Smith/MacDonald 2 April 1828.
HSL 268, 3].

In some ways such fears were justified, for the latter part of the nineteenth century did witness an alarming decline in the playing of pibroch, which occasioned the formation of the Piobaireachd Society in 1902. On the other hand, the provincial games, and the new competition music of the March, Strathspey and Reel, flourished, and there is no indication that either numbers or playing standards dropped as the century progressed. In the short term, the expedient of introducing a three-yearly competition was highly successful. The competition's financial fortunes were revived (door takings of £129 in 1829, £190 in 1835), and there is every indication that it remained a major and popular event until its demise in 1844.