

THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD PIPE BAND CHAMPIONSHIPS

The World Pipe Band Championships (WPBC) is the main event in the annual calendar of the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association (RSPBA). The Championships have a long history stretching back to 1906, but were not organised by the RSPBA (then SPBA) until 1947. Initially the Championships were part of the Cowal Highland Gathering in Dunoon, Argyll. Since 1947 they have been held in various UK locations but in recent years the venue has always been Glasgow Green, in Glasgow, organised by the RSPBA in conjunction with the City of Glasgow Council and its commercial arm, Glasgow Life. The event can attract up to 230-240 individual pipe bands, approximately 60 of which can be from other countries, reflecting the world-wide interest in Scotland's national music.

The Grade 1 Finals, the premier competition, are filmed by BBC Scotland and are also now streamed world-wide live over the internet. It is estimated that overall the WPBC contribute at least £20 million to the Glasgow economy. That figure is likely to be higher Scotland-wide as many of the overseas pipe bands and their followers take the opportunity to extend their stay to visit other parts of the country. Apart from the hospitality sector, many other Scottish businesses also benefit such as manufacturers of bagpipes, and highland dress and equipment suppliers.

The Championships now also are the pinnacle to a week of piping events in Glasgow as they coincide with the end of the Piping Live Festival which is run separately by the National Piping Centre. As many competitors and spectators come to Glasgow for both events there is an additional boost to the Glasgow and Scotland-wide economies.

The Cowal Highland Gathering

The first Cowal Games were held in Dunoon, Argyll in 1894, attracting fewer than 2,000 spectators. The Games were primarily about athletic and traditional highland "heavy" events. By 1901 they had attracted attendances of 5,000 and also overseas participants. By 1946, after a break during the years of World War 2, attendances had reached 28,000 and have since reached even higher levels.

Pipe band competition was first introduced to Cowal Games in 1906. The Argyll Shield for the winning Grade 1 pipe band was donated by Her Royal Highness The Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyll. Between 1906 and 1946 the Grade 1 competition was recognised as the World Pipe Band Championships. The competition was held annually, except for the World War 1 years between 1914 and 1918; and World War 2 years between 1940 and 1945.

The winners between 1906 and 1946 were:

Year	Pipe Band	Venue	Pipe Major
1906	1st Vn. Bn Highland Light Infantry	Cowal	John M Gillies
1907	3rd Bn. Lanarkshire Vn. Regiment	Cowal	E MacPherson
1908	5th Vn. Bn. Highland Light Infantry	Cowal	John M Gillies
1909	Stonehouse	Cowal	Hector McInnes
1910	5th Vn. Bn. Highland Light Infantry	Cowal	John M Gillies
1911	5th Vn. Bn. Highland Light Infantry	Cowal	John M Gillies
1912	5th Vn. Bn. Highland Light Infantry	Cowal	John M Gillies
1913	7th Vn. Bn. Highland Light Infantry	Cowal	Farquhar MacRae

1914 - 1918 World War 1

1919	Edinburgh City Police	Cowal	Hugh Calder
------	-----------------------	-------	-------------

1920	City of Glasgow Police	Cowal	William Gray
1921	City of Glasgow Police	Cowal	William Fergusson
1922	City of Glasgow Police	Cowal	William Fergusson
1923	City of Glasgow Police	Cowal	William Fergusson
1924	Millhall Scout Pipe Band	Cowal	George D MacDonald
1925	Clan MacRae Society*	Cowal	William Fergusson
1926	Millhall Scout Pipe Band	Cowal	George D MacDonald
1927	MacLean	Cowal	William Sloan
1928	MacLean	Cowal	William Sloan
1929	Glasgow Corporation Tramways	Cowal	Gavin L Robertson
1930	Millhall Scout Pipe Band	Cowal	George D MacDonald
1931	Glasgow Corporation Tramways	Cowal	Peter Fleming
1932	Clan MacRae Society*	Cowal	John F Nicoll
1933	Clan MacRae Society	Cowal	John F Nicoll
1934	Cowal Clan MacRae Society	Cowal	John F Nicoll
1935	MacLean	Cowal	William Sloan
1936	City of Glasgow Police Pipe Band	Cowal	John MacDonald, South Uist
1937	City of Glasgow Police Pipe Band	Cowal	John MacDonald, South Uist
1938	City of Glasgow Police Pipe Band	Cowal	John MacDonald, South Uist
1939	City of Glasgow Police Pipe Band	Cowal	John MacDonald, South Uist
1940 - 1945 World War 2			
1946	City of Glasgow Police Pipe Band	Cowal	John MacDonald, South Uist

Scottish Pipe Band Association (SPBA)/Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association(RSPBA)

The SPBA was formed in 1930 and “Royal” status was subsequently conferred on the Association by HM The Queen in 1980. The objectives of the Association from the outset, which still remain the same, were:

- *To promote and encourage the culture and advancement of Pipe Band Music internationally, and to sponsor a Pipe Band College;*
- *To create and maintain a bond of fellowship with all Pipe Band personnel throughout the world without discrimination as to colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origins;*
- *To devise and operate a proper system of Pipe Band Contest Rules; and*
- *To organise the World, European, British, Scottish and all Major Championships held within the United Kingdom.*

The first Pipe Band competition to be run by the SPBA was at Forthbank Park, Stirling on 18 June 1932. Fifteen Grade 2 bands competed (*Scottish Motor Traction Co; Denny and Dunipace Ex-Service; Glasgow Caledonia; Lochgelly Public; Mar; Parkhead; Barry Ostlere and Shepherd; Dalzell Thistle; Bowhill Colliery; Michael Colliery; Ardrossan Burgh; Dunfermline City; Rutherglen Rechabites; Singer; and Lochore and Crosshill Public*). The competition format was March, Strathspey and Reel (MSR). In the same competition in 1933, ten bands competed in Grade 3 and nineteen in Grade 2.

Following lengthy acrimonious debate it was eventually agreed with the Cowal Highland Gathering that the SPBA would take over responsibility for the World Pipe Band Championships; and the first WPBC run under SPBA rules were held at Murrayfield Stadium in Edinburgh in 1947. This was an “open” competition (i.e. not restricted to Grade 1 pipe bands) which was won by the Bowhill Colliery Pipe Band from Fife. The competition format again was MSR. Twenty-six pipe bands competed (*Bowhill Colliery; Pumpherson; Renfrew; Michael Colliery; Shotts and Dykehead Caledonian; Edinburgh Corporation Transport; Lowland Brigade Training Centre; Edinburgh Special Constabulary; Edinburgh City Police; Highland Brigade Training Centre; Newtongrange Lothian; The Clan MacRae Society; Bonhill Parish; Clan MacKenzie; Dalzell Highland; Rutherglen; Clan Fraser; National Fire Service (Western); Muirhead & Sons; MacLeod (Dundee); MacKenzie (Dundee); Lochore and Crosshill; Airdrie Highland; Glasgow Shepherds; Glasgow Corporation Transport; and City of Dundee*). It was not until 1970 that Musical Medley competitions were introduced at RSPBA Major Championships, at the same time as “Ensemble” adjudication.

Since 1947 the WPBC have continued to be organised annually by the SPBA/RSPBA. The Cowal Highland Gathering, however, did not lose out completely as the Cowal Pipe Band Championships became one of the SPBA/RSPBA’s five annual Major Championships, the Argyll Shield still being awarded to the winning Grade 1 pipe band. This arrangement was sustained until 2013, when it was decided that the pipe band Major Championships competitions had outgrown the limited facilities at Dunoon Stadium. As a consequence a reduced pipe band competition was retained at the Cowal Highland Gathering as an RSPBA-supported local event; and the fifth RSPBA Major Championships became known as the UK Pipe Band Championships, which have since been held in Northern Ireland (initially in Belfast and in 2019 Lurgan).

Since 1947 the WPBC have been held in a variety of Scottish locations, ranging from Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee, Ayr, Aberdeen, Stirling, Paisley, Kirkcaldy, Inverness, Dumfries, Forfar, Oban, Grangemouth, Perth, Lanark, Hawick, Glenrothes and Hamilton. The Championships have also been held in Northern Ireland on one occasion (Belfast in 1962) and in England on two occasions (Corby in 1975 and Nottingham in 1979). Since 1986 the Championships have always been held in Glasgow.

WPBC Winners Since 1947

The winners of the RSPBA World Pipe Band Championships since 1947 have been:

Year	Pipe Band	Venue	Pipe Major
1947	Bowhill Colliery	Edinburgh	Chris Sutherland
1948	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia	Glasgow	Tom McAllister Snr BEM
1949	City of Glasgow Police	Edinburgh	John MacDonald
1950	Edinburgh City Police	Dundee	Donald S Ramsay
1951	City of Glasgow Police	Edinburgh	John MacDonald
1952	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia	Ayr	Tom McAllister Snr BEM.
1953	Clan MacRae Society	Edinburgh	A MacLeod
1954	Edinburgh City Police	Aberdeen	Donald S Ramsay
1955	Muirhead & Sons	Stirling	Jackie Smith
1956	Muirhead & Sons	Belfast	Jackie Smith
1957	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia	Paisley	John K MacAllister
1958	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia	Aberdeen	John K MacAllister

1959	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia	Kirkcaldy	John K MacAllister
1960	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia	Inverness	John K MacAllister
1961	Muirhead & Sons	Edinburgh	Jackie Smith
1962	227 A &SH Regt.R.A. (T.A.)	Belfast	John Weatherston MBE, BEM
1963	Edinburgh City Police	Dumfries	Iain McLeod
1964	Edinburgh City Police	Ayr	Iain McLeod
1965	Muirhead & Sons	Forfar	Robert Hardie
1966	Muirhead & Sons	Inverness	Robert Hardie
1967	Muirhead & Sons	Oban	Robert Hardie
1968	Muirhead & Sons	Grangemouth	Robert Hardie
1969	Muirhead & Sons	Perth	Robert Hardie
1970	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia	Aberdeen	Tom McAllister Jnr
1971	Edinburgh City Police	Lanark	Iain McLeod
1972	Edinburgh City Police	Hawick	Iain McLeod
1973	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia	Ayr	Tom McAllister Jnr
1974	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia	Stirling	Tom McAllister Jnr
1975	Lothian & Borders Police	Corby	Iain McLeod
1976	Strathclyde Police	Hawick	Ian McLellan BEM.
1977	Dysart & Dundonald	Aberdeen	Robert T Shepherd MBE
1978	Dysart & Dundonald	Lanark	Robert T Shepherd MBE
1979	Strathclyde Police	Nottingham	Ian McLellan BEM.
1980	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia	Glasgow	Tom McAllister Jnr.
1981	Strathclyde Police	Aberdeen	Ian McLellan BEM.
1982	Strathclyde Police	Glenrothes	Ian McLellan BEM.
1983	Strathclyde Police	Glasgow	Ian McLellan BEM.
1984	Strathclyde Police	Glasgow	Ian McLellan BEM.
1985	Strathclyde Police	Hamilton	Ian McLellan BEM.
1986	Strathclyde Police	Glasgow	Ian McLellan BEM.
1987	78th Fraser Highlanders (Canada)	Glasgow	William Livingstone
1988	Strathclyde Police	Glasgow	I. McLellan BEM
1989	Strathclyde Police	Glasgow	I. McLellan BEM
1990	Strathclyde Police	Glasgow	Ian McLellan BEM.
1991	Strathclyde Police	Glasgow	Ian McLellan BEM.
1992	Field Marshall Montgomery	Glasgow	Richard Parkes MBE
1993	Field Marshall Montgomery	Glasgow	Richard Parkes MBE
1994	Shotts and Dykehead Caledonia	Glasgow	Robert Mathieson

1995	Simon Fraser University (Canada)	Glasgow	Terry Lee
1996	Simon Fraser University (Canada)	Glasgow	Terry Lee
1997	Shotts and Dykehead Caledonia	Glasgow	Robert Mathieson
1998	Victoria Police	Glasgow	Nat Russell
1999	Simon Fraser University (Canada)	Glasgow	Terry Lee
2000	Shotts and Dykehead Caledonia	Glasgow	Robert Mathieson
2001	Simon Fraser University (Canada)	Glasgow	Terry Lee
2002	Field Marshall Montgomery	Glasgow	Richard Parkes MBE
2003	Shotts and Dykehead Caledonia	Glasgow	Robert Mathieson
2004	Field Marshall Montgomery	Glasgow	Richard Parkes MBE
2005	Shotts and Dykehead Caledonia	Glasgow	Robert Mathieson
2006	Field Marshall Montgomery	Glasgow	Richard Parkes MBE
2007	Field Marshall Montgomery	Glasgow	Richard Parkes MBE
2008	Simon Fraser University (Canada)	Glasgow	Terry Lee
2009	Simon Fraser University (Canada)	Glasgow	Terry Lee
2010	St. Laurence O'Toole (Dublin)	Glasgow	Terry Tully
2011	Field Marshall Montgomery	Glasgow	Richard Parkes MBE
2012	Field Marshall Montgomery	Glasgow	Richard Parkes MBE
2013	Field Marshall Montgomery	Glasgow	Richard Parkes MBE
2014	Field Marshall Montgomery	Glasgow	R Parkes MBE
2015	Shotts and Dykehead Caledonia	Glasgow	R Canning
2016	Field Marshall Montgomery	Glasgow	R Parkes MBE
2017	Inveraray & District	Glasgow	Stuart Liddell
2018	Field Marshal Montgomery	Glasgow	R Parkes MBE

Additional Factual Information

- Only 21 Pipe Majors have won the Grade 1 World Championships title since the competition has been run under the auspices of the RSPBA. In that time only 14 different Pipe Bands have won the title as some of them have been led by different Pipe Majors at different times. These statistics illustrate clearly the extent of the challenge of winning the title, and perhaps also the leadership qualities required. In alphabetical order the pipe bands and Pipe Majors are:

Bowhill Colliery (1 time)

(Chris Sutherland)

Clan MacRae Society (1 time)

(Alexander MacLeod)

Dysart & Dundonald (2 times)

(Robert T Shepherd MBE)

Edinburgh City Police/Lothian & Borders Police (7 times)

(Donald S Ramsay and Iain McLeod)

Field Marshal Montgomery (12 times)

(Richard Parkes MBE)

Glasgow Police/Strathclyde Police (14 times)

(John MacDonald and Ian McLellan BEM)

Muirhead & Sons (8 times)

(Jackie Smith and Robert Hardie)

Simon Fraser University (6 times)

(Terry Lee)

Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia (16 times)

(Tom MacAllister Snr, Tom MacAllister Jnr, John K MacAllister, Robert Mathieson and Ryan Canning)

St Laurence O'Toole (1 time)

(Terry Tully)

Victoria Police (1 time)

(Nat Russell)

227 Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders Regt. R.A. (TA)(1 time)

(John Weatherston MBE BEM)

78th Fraser Highlanders (1 time)

(William Livingstone)

Inveraray & District (1 time)

(Stuart Liddell)

- The Championships have been won by both Pipe Major Ian McLellan BEM of Strathclyde Police and Pipe Major Richard Parkes MBE of Field Marshal Montgomery on 12 occasions.

- Other multiple Pipe Major winners in alphabetical order are:

Robert Hardie, Muirhead & Sons	5 times
Terry Lee, Simon Fraser University	6 times
Tom MacAllister Snr, Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia	2 times
John K MacAllister, Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia	4 times
Tom MacAllister Jnr, Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia	4 times
John MacDonald, Glasgow Police	2 times
Iain McLeod, Edinburgh City/Lothian & Borders Police	5 times
Robert Mathieson, Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia	5 times
Donald Shaw Ramsay, Edinburgh City Police	2 times
Robert T Shepherd MBE, Dysart & Dundonald	2 times
Jackie Smith, Muirhead & Sons	3 times

- Since 1947 the top winning bands have been:

Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia	16 times
Glasgow Police/Strathclyde Police	14 times
Field Marshal Montgomery	12 times
Muirhead & Sons	8 times
Edinburgh City Police	7 times
Simon Fraser University	6 times

- The World Pipe Band Championships have been held in Northern Ireland on one occasion (Belfast in 1962) and in England on two occasions (Corby in 1975 and Nottingham in 1979).
- The Cowal Pipe Band Championships became one of the SPBA/RSPBA's five annual Major Championships in 1948. This arrangement was sustained until 2013. From 2014 the fifth RSPBA Major Championships became known as the UK Pipe Band Championships, which have since been held in Northern Ireland. The SPBA also held the first Scottish and British Pipe Band Championships in 1948 (in Blairgowrie and Renfrew respectively). The European Pipe Band Championships were first held in Dundee in 1949.
- Only one RSPBA Major Pipe Band Championships has been held outwith the UK (the European Pipe Band Championships, which were held at Alden Biesen Castle, Bilzen in Belgium in 2003).