



Alnwick Pipers' Society

NEWSLETTER

Issue 9 September 2011



APS band at St Mary's Church Wooler in 2010

Welcome

2011 seems to be passing by at an alarming speed, and autumn is almost upon us. Spring & Summer gave us plenty of opportunities to play in public and to promote piping and this issue throws some light on how young people particularly are being given opportunities to experience the Northumbrian Pipes together with other traditional instruments.

There is also a report of a cyclone 'down under', music for a tune played by Joe Hutton, details of our fund-raising concert earlier in the year, and an update on the popular monthly tunebook meetings.

Please keep your contributions coming.

Di and Louise

Forthcoming Events

Sep 18th (Sunday) - Monthly tunebook meeting at Newton-on-the-Moor Village Hall 2.00pm. All welcome. Please bring small contribution for a pooled tea. Any query contact Susan 01665 575232.

Sep 28th (Wednesday) - Monthly meeting at the Farriers Arms, Shilbottle 8.00 pm.

Oct 9th (Sunday) - Monthly tunebook meeting at Newton-on-the-Moor Village Hall 2.00pm. [Details as for Sep 18th]

Oct 22nd (Saturday) - APS performing group doing a spot at a Traditional Music Evening at Newton-on-the-Moor Village Hall 7.30pm.

Oct 26th (Wednesday) - Monthly meeting at the Farriers Arms, Shilbottle 8.00 pm.

Nov 11th (Friday) - APS performing group doing a spot at fund-raising concert at Rennington Village Hall in aid of the Grange Nursing Home in Rennington.

Nov 12th (Saturday) - APS piping afternoon at Newton-on-the-Moor Village Hall. More details to follow.

Nov 23rd (Wednesday) - Monthly meeting at the Farriers Arms, Shilbottle 8.00 pm.

Apple Blossom



The tune above featured on a cassette recorded in 1989 by Joe Hutton (with Hannah Hutton on vocals) entitled 'The Border Piper'. We hope you enjoy playing it!

APS Chairman Richard Johnstone, the Duke of Northumberland's Piper, Richard Butler, and the Chairman of the Northumbrian Pipers' Society, Andrew Davison played in honour of the Queen's visit to Alnwick in June.



TUNEBOOK UPDATE

This year has seen the re-assessment of the Tune Book used by the members who take part in public performances. It must be ten years now since the original selection was put together and a worthy record of this can be heard in the APS first CD 'In the Alnwick Garden'.

Looking at the current selection of sets, twenty-five in number, we can see some of these original tunes have continued to be included proving their lasting popularity. Amongst the new sets, three in particular, are marches, local tunes, and music from the Shetland Isles. Luckily at our recent Sunday meetings, which began in April, all the new sets seemed to work and have been acceptable to Band members (a very discerning bunch!)

It is important, however, that all members of the Society should feel free to come to Sunday 'Tea & Tunes' to join in with the practice, even though they may not feel ready to perform. Meetings begin at 2pm, playing from 2.30 until around 4pm approx. (Sundays vary.)

A big thank you goes to Di Jevons for making excellent copies of the music available to everyone either as plain tunes or with added harmonies for fiddles or pipes.

There is a Tune Book sub-committee which is receptive to new suggestions for music suited to our group (currently 20-25 players with more than half attending). Contact Jimmy, Di, Susan, Hilary, Louise with your ideas and we will put them to the test. (No Beatles tunes please)

Lastly, many thanks to all members for the spirit shown in turning up for meetings & performances, and who, in the words of Wilfred Pickles, have been willing to 'Have a Go'.

Susan Clarke

[Ed – a big thank you must go to Susan for her gem of an idea for a monthly tunebook meeting in the first instance, for putting the majority of the new sets together, and for gamely leading the Sunday sessions. NB next one is Sunday 18th September.]

Alnwick Pipers In Concert

The Society held its annual concert at the Playhouse this year on Friday 4 March. We had a great line-up, including Bob Bolam, Malcolm Bennett and Avril Huntly. Ernie Coe did his usual professional job of holding everything together whilst the performers somehow got themselves on and off the stage, and had the audience in fits of laughter with his banter. The Monkseaton Morris Men, and of course their ladies, did a great performance, and teamed up on the stage at the end of the concert with not only the Alnwick Pipers Band, but also a good number of the audience!

We were delighted to raise £250 for our chosen charity, the Great North Air Ambulance, from the proceeds of the concert.



From the Alnwick Northumbrian Gathering Committee

As most of you will know by now, there will sadly not be an Alnwick Northumbrian Gathering in November 2011. After much soul-searching the Committee came to the decision that due to lack of support for all activities in 2010 - competitions, workshops, ceilidh and concert - that it was not a viable or sensible proposition to continue to hold a Gathering in the same format in 2011.

The Committee have their next meeting during the Autumn and will decide then on how to proceed for 2012.

Books in need of a good home!

Harmony by Walter Piston, Professor of Music at Harvard University, author of "Counterpoint" and "Orchestration" first published 1950

The Oxford School Harmony Course Book One by James Denny published in 1960

A Book of Old Ballads selected and with an introduction by Beverley Nichols (this is dated 1934, illustrated with plates and looks at first as if it would be valuable, but there is a note in the front to say it is damaged by damp - priced at 5 shillings!)

Contact: Wendy Fergie 01670 787746 fergiefam@hotmail.com

Rosemary and her pipes face Cyclone Yasi!

Just happy to survive and still be here, when one Wednesday recently we faced a situation which was so uncertain. When we first arrived in Townsville, (on the north east coast of Australia) and went to the library, we were given a New Residents' Pack which included information on cyclones and having a Cyclone Kit. Useful information like having important documents in waterproof plastic, photo albums, medication, etc. *(And her Northumbrian Pipes?)* As we were all electric, I realised we'd need a camping stove, but had only just got round to buying one.

We first realised there was a really big one on the way on the Monday. We decided to stay put in Townsville as we'd been offered shelter in a new brick house. On the Tuesday we started putting things up as high as possible as a storm surge was predicted and our landlord and neighbour told us we would definitely flood to the deck level or maybe higher. I went to a neighbour's house to ask if I could store our photo albums upstairs in her house. *(What about the pipes?)*

We'd done all we could to secure the house, pot plants huddled together, taped the windows to reduce flying glass, one window on either side slightly open to stop a vacuum being created and popping the roof off, some hastily bought small tarpaulins to wrap over books on tables in case the roof did go and the rain came in.

The centre of the storm was due to hit between 10 and 12 pm. We were feeling as safe as was possible and strangely calm as there was nothing to do but wait. The wind and rain had picked up and at 9pm we went upstairs to sleep. We lay on the floor near the door with plans to move into the passage way with the sleeping bags and pillows on top of us if the roof came off. Amazingly we must have slept for a while, being exhausted from the preparation effort and stress, but woke later to great shuddering bangs that sounded like large pieces of furniture being dropped from a height. But in the morning all was well and it must have been tree branches flying into the house. I had a head torch, a good book and suduko to do, but after a while, dropped off to sleep again and we woke at 7 to find – we were still alive! Oh Bliss. Thank you!

The writing of this is a post-Cyclone therapy – sharing our experience with you. I feel very much alive, grateful, humbled by nature's power.

Rosemary Srinivisan

[Ed - Cyclone Yasi hit Queensland in early February and Rosemary, do please tell us where you put your pipes for safekeeping!]



**Those pipes must have survived because
Here is a recent photo of the band!**

Taking Northumbrian Piping to Young People

Last year Andrew Davison, Chairman of the Northumbrian Pipers Society, gathered together a number of people with an interest in encouraging young people to play the Northumbrian pipes. Since then a number of meetings have been held with about 20 people with a range of interests and skills in this area, and representing a number of organizations involved with both music and children.

It became clear, that although this is a massive undertaking and success will not happen overnight, many great projects are already in progress in the region. Through this group ideas have already been exchanged and great strides have already been made.

A brief list of projects already happening include:

- Richard Johnstone and Dave Medd (APS Chairman and Vice Chair), with their Northumberland Creative and Performing Arts (formally Northumberland County Music Service) hats on - have been working in schools in Northumberland for several years, teaching and demonstrating the pipes. They have now begun to put together a grading structure for traditional music (as apparently children like to do this sort of thing), along with a draft tutoring pack, so when children get together they have covered some common ground. This pioneering project has enormous potential to establish widely recognised levels of attainment in the world of Northumbrian piping.
- Gill Sergeant and Richard Heard (also APS committee) having been working in North Tyneside, giving primary school children both presentations and mini "have-a-go" sessions. One 'spin off' from this is that a pack of factsheets and worksheets is being put together, with the first few being already in circulation for general use.
- Susan Craven (music co-coordinator for Pipers' Fancy, the performing group of the NPS) and Jo Kemp (Primary Music Specialist for the Northumberland Church of England Academy, Ashington) have visited primary schools in that pyramid demonstrating the pipes to over 500 children.
- Michael Ratcliff, working in Gateshead is visiting schools and demonstrating traditional instruments and music to children.
- Kathryn Tickell brings a wealth of experience working with children through her work with Folkestra at the Sage.

The most inspiring and motivating aspects of the group are seen in its aims to co-ordinate the existing excellent projects and so avoid duplication of effort, and to promote active and positive co-operation, both between individuals and between the various organisations.

This is a really exciting group of projects involving a vast amount of expertise. It is however the tip of the iceberg, as although we live in a sparsely populated area of the country, there are many thousands of people who don't even know of the existence of Northumbrian Pipes.

If you would like to become involved in any way, please contact a member of the committee.

Sandra Rolls & Richard Heard

Your 2011/12 committee and their contact details are:

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