

Pipe Major Alex M. MacIver



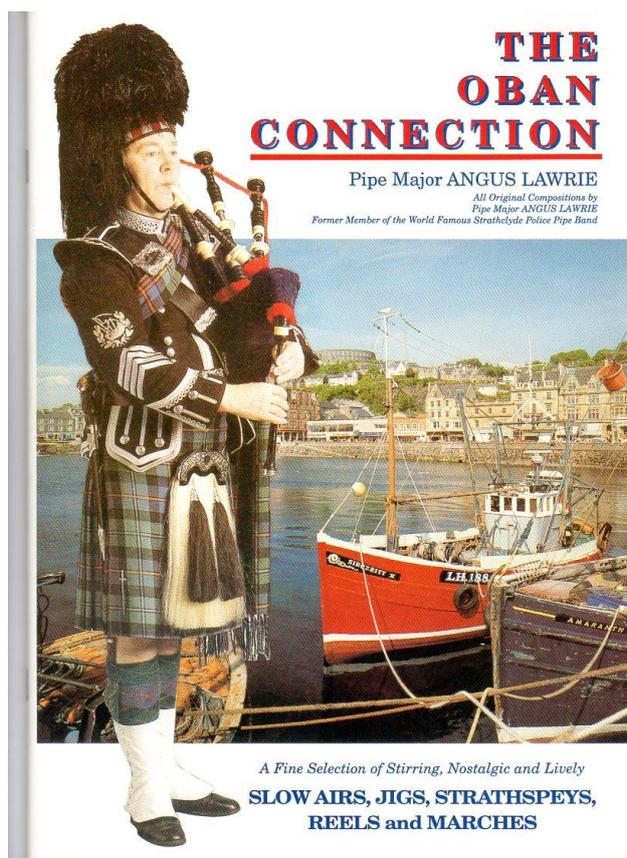
Alex MacIver

The tune “Pipe Major Alex M. MacIver” was written By Angus Lawrie to celebrate Alex’s retirement from the manager’s position he held in stockbroking in Glasgow. Angus, whose mother was from Lewis and his father from Oban, played the tune for Alex at the dinner held in the Dorchester Hotel to celebrate the occasion. The composition is included in the collection of Alex’s own compositions with Angus’s permission and he expressed his delight that his tune was to be added to the compilation, stating that he held Alex in the highest regard.

Angus is not only a prolific and imaginative composer but has also achieved remarkable success with many of his creations in recent years when composing competitions have become a regular and popular feature of the piping scene.

Angus is a composer with a considerable reputation and he published the march “Pipe Major Alex MacIver” in his first book of pipe tunes “*The Oban Connection*”. Angus, a cousin of “Big” Ronnie Lawrie, was a member of the Strathclyde Police Band when Ronnie was Pipe Major and then Pipe Major Ian McLellan BEM. Ian is a former member of the 214 BB and a pupil of Alex MacIver. Among many fine tunes which Angus has written are *Dugald Gillespie*, *Old Toasty* (Big Ronnie’s father), *Six in a Row* (celebrating the record six consecutive Grade one world Championship wins for the Police) and *The 1976 Tattoo* which featured several times in the Police winning medley selection. Angus is soon to publish his second book of compositions.

In early 2013 Angus wrote a march in Memory of Drum Major George Seymour. George was another of Alex’s pupils in the 214 B.B. and fronted the Strathclyde Police band as their Drum Major throughout its halcyon days.



Pipe Major Angus Lawrie

After the Second World War, Alex MacIver returned from active service in India, where he served with the 15th Scottish Division Royal Corps of Signals. He had been Pipe Major of the Regimental Pipe Band and then Company Sergeant Major, before being commissioned Captain.

In 1946 on his return to Civvie St. he assumed the leadership of the 214th BB Pipe Band as Pipe Major. He still had the redoubtable Alex Ibell fully committed to tutoring incoming pupils, as well as making and repairing pipes, practice chanter, reeds and drum sticks. The background team already included Joe King, another of Alex Ibell's pupils who was the man who, among many things in piping, was the master of tone. Joe was a piper with Rutherglen Pipe Band and also a mainstay of the Renfrew Pipe Band.

On his return from National Service Dan Finlay, also of Renfrew Pipe Band and the K.O.S.B., further augmented the training and coaching staff. All of these men (Ibell, MacIver, King and Finlay) would serve the 214 throughout the 1950s into the 1980s, when the company was absorbed elsewhere and its ancestral home, Gordon Park Church, was sold.

The band first entered SPBA competitions in 1951 and over the next 25 years won 11 Worlds, 16 European, 16 British, 11 Scottish and 13 Cowal Championships. In 1955 they won the British Grade 2 Championship at Renfrew. They were winners of the Glasgow Battalion Championship 27 times, 25 of these in successive years. Former members include Ian McLellan BEM, Alastair Ross, Alex Connell, Stirling McMurchie and George Seymour of the Strathclyde Police; John Findlay, Robert Wallace, Douglas Elmslie, Gordon Ferguson, James Hardie and Robert Turner of Muirheads; Hector Russell of Red Hackle; and Joe Noble of Renfrew, Toyota, British Caledonian Airways and City of Glasgow. Stephen McQuillan, a long standing drummer with Boghall and Bathgate Caledonia Pipe Band, is now the last 214 man standing as a Grade One competitor.

Donald Black, Scotland's premiere mouth organ player, has recorded the tune P.M. Alex MacIver for our collection. Donald was Alex MacIver's oldest and his last piping pupil.



Donald Black

Angus's composition written out in Alex's own hand dated 23-12-79.

PIPE MAJOR ALEX. M. MACIVER.

MARCH

ANGUS LAWRIE.

The musical score is written in purple ink on a white background. It consists of 12 staves of music, arranged in six pairs. Each pair of staves represents a different time signature or section of the piece. The first pair is marked '1ST TIME'. The second pair is marked '2ND TIME'. The third pair is marked '3RD TIME'. The fourth pair is marked '4TH TIME'. The fifth pair is marked '5TH TIME'. The sixth pair is marked '6TH TIME'. The music is written in treble clef and includes various notes, rests, and dynamics such as 'f' (forte) and 'ff' (fortissimo). The date '23-12-79.' is written at the bottom right of the page.

Alex was not only an active supporter of the S.P.B.A. where he served as a committee member including his role as branch auditor. Furthermore he was the organiser of the annual branch celidh which always proved popular and a worthwhile fund-raiser for the branch. His interest in piping also included his membership of The Scottish Pipers' Association. There he was elected to the position of S.P.A. composer at the AGM in 1987 and re-elected in 1988 and 1989, which was the year he died. In that role Alex succeeded John Scott who was composer in the 1970's, then Jim Wark who was followed by Iain MacPherson, brother of Donald MacPherson. Since Alex held the position in 1989 the role has remained vacant. In 1980 The SPA awarded Alex the Donald Macleod Tassie for his services to piping. There were three nominations and Alex won on the committee vote. More may be read about the Tassie in the article "Pipe Major Donald Macleod's Farewell to Fort George".

Alex was probably best known in Gaeldom as the producer of the famous Oidhche Challuinn Show. In 1933 this show was first introduced by the Lewis Society of Glasgow. Following their amalgamation with the Glasgow Lewis and Harris Association in 1946 this was revived by Alex. Not long before Alex died he was the first recipient of a new trophy which was to be presented annually to the person or persons considered by the committee to have made a real contribution to Gaelic drama.

Oidhche Challuinn translates as the "OLD NEW YEAR" and the theme was based on a ceilidh where the cailleach (a wise old woman) conducted proceedings. In this series the cailleach was a man dressed as a woman. Oidhche Challuinn is phonetically pronounced *Oychee Chaleen* with the "ch" pronounced as we would in Loch.

We know that Alex's brother Donnie filmed these productions. Given that shared copies of such recordings then would have been unusual it could be that the collection of recordings will be valuable, particularly in a Gaelic context.

GLASGOW Gaels were deeply shocked to learn of the sudden passing at his home in Glasgow, of Pipe Major Alex M. Maciver, on Saturday, May 27, and join with me in extending our sincere sympathy to his sisters Cathie and Isobel, and his brother Donald.

Alex, Glasgow born of Lewis parents, was truly one of nature's gentlemen, in every sense. Of quiet disposition, with a nice sense of humour, he was much loved and respected in Glasgow and beyond. He made his mark in the community, not so much by what he said, but rather by his actions and his friendly attitude to those he came in contact with.

He was a staunch supporter of the Glasgow Lewis and Harris Association of which he was a former president and honorary president. His service to the Association was recognised by his appointment as honorary president at their annual general meeting on May 23.

Although fiercely proud of his association and island, Alex, in a sense, knew no boundaries, and took much pleasure in his connection with other associations. He and his brother Donald acted as masters of ceremonies at the major gatherings for many years. Here again he stamped his own brand of friendly authority on the proceedings.

Many young pipers learned their trade, as it were, under the tutorship of Alex, who was a pipe major in the army and subsequently with the 214th Company of the Boys' Brigade.

It was perhaps as the producer of the famous Oidhche Challuinn show that he was best known by many, first introduced in 1933 by the Lewis Society of Glasgow the Oidhche Challuinn, following the amalgamation of the Lewis Society of Glasgow and the Glasgow Lewis and Harris Association in 1946, was revived by Alex, who has been the creator and producer of every show since. Although the cast has changed over the years the show has retained its popularity and continues to entertain enthusiastic audiences not only here in Glasgow but in such places as London, Stornoway, Edinburgh, Lochearnhead and Oban. Alex's interest in dramatic work was recently recognised at the annual festival of the Glasgow Gaelic Drama Association when he was the first recipient of a new trophy which will be presented annually to the person or persons considered by the association to have made a real contribution to Gaelic drama.

In his private life he was also a man of outstanding qualities which were of great benefit to his family, his church and his former colleagues in the Stock Exchange where he had been an office manager.

It is always sad when one who still had so much to offer, is taken suddenly from our midst. The passing of Alex M. Maciver leaves a great void and the hurt will in time be eased, when we will then be able to look back and remember with joy and affection his time

The Glasgow letter from the "Oban Times" published 1st of June, 1989.