

The Day We Won the Worlds: 214BB, Ayr, 1964



Whiteinch and Gordon Park Church

Robert Wallace: It is 50 years ago this year that I won the Worlds Juvenile grade as a back rank, 12-year-old piper with the well-known 214 Boys Brigade pipe band from Glasgow.

The date was June 1964, and the venue Ayr on the Clyde coast, Dam Park. I had started on the chanter aged nine and was lucky enough to be in a teaching environment which was among the finest in the country. My first instructor was Alex F Ibell, then Dan Finlay and finally, Alex M MacIver, the band's pipe major. I had been on the pipes about a year and managed to learn most of the parade tunes in the band's repertoire. Loads of 6/8s like *Angus MacKinnon*, *John D Burgess*, *Dovecote Park*, real quality tunes. Then there were the 2/4s, *Duncan MacInnes*, *Miss Delicia Chisholm* etc. We never played 3/4s and seldom 4/4s, though an exception was made for Donald MacLeod's *Wee Highland Laddie*, which, through P/M MacIver's association with his fellow Lewisman Donald MacLeod, we had before anyone else.

Learning these sort of 6/8s and 2/4s steeled you for the band's competition set which, for Juvenile back then, was a March, Strathspey and Reel (no one ever used the acronym MSR). Ours was *Stirlingshire Militia*, *John Roy Stewart* and *Dr. MacPhail*. Quite a handful for anyone, and for under 18s a serious challenge. I was included in all the band practices from about the January that year but never thought for one moment that that summer I would be playing in the competing band.

We would meet on Tuesday and Friday evenings in the big hall at Gordon Park Church in Whiteinch, and after chanter practice it was out with the pipes and repeated run throughs. The work went on all through the spring and all the talk among the older boys was the Worlds, the Worlds and stories about earlier victories and contests at Cowal, Rothesay, Dumfries and Belfast and elsewhere. It fair fired the imagination.

So to end of June 1964, and a Friday evening, the last practice before the big day. I am putting my pipes away into the old wooden box. Next to me is Archie MacLean (now the respected solo piping judge). Pipe Major MacIver approaches us and says: 'Well boys, you've done very well. You're both playing tomorrow!'

After that all I remember is the shock, the sleepless night and the determination not to make any mistake the following day. I don't think I did, and when the result was announced I did what all wee boys do when overcome: burst out greetin'. Four feet something in height and all around me these huge figures leaping up and down, pill box hats in the air.

Back to Glasgow and a short trophy parade among the smoking chimneys and the tenement buildings, then lumps of ice cream in a long glass filled with fizzy lemonade (we called them iced drinks) in the local Italian cafe paid for by the P/M. Later we had a photograph taken in Victoria Park near the band hall and here it is:



Tom Yeoman, Dougie Elmslie, Finlay Drynan, Gordon Medlow, Davy Scott, Donnie Glass, Eddie Thompson, Davy McGaffin, Alasdair Ross, Kenny Cape, Ronnie Elmslie, Junior Callaghan, Robert Wallace

Sitting: Matt Recht, John Buchanan, Archie MacLean, Dan Finlay, Alex MacIver, Alex Ibell, Alistair Osborne, Brian May, Hughie Fulton and Willie Law.

The 214 has a thriving ex-members association and it can be contacted here, www.214bb.com . The website has more photographs and information about the band.