

The Kyles of Scalpay



Kyles Scalpay (*Caolas Scalpaigh*) is a Western crofting township in the far southeast of North Harris in the Outer Hebrides. Kyles Scalpay (Gael: *Caolas Scalpaigh*) is located 4 miles (6.5 km) southeast of Tarbert. Kyles Scalpay was the northern terminus of the ferry which crossed the Sound of Scalpay to the island of Scalpay and now provides the landing point for the grand Scalpay Bridge which was opened in 1997.



The Scalpay Bridge links the small island of Scalpay with Harris in the Western Isles. Although the bridge was in use from December 1997, when Scalpay's oldest resident the 103-year-old Mrs Kirsty Morrison led the first cars across, it was officially opened in 1998 by Tony Blair, the first serving British Prime Minister to visit the Western Isles. The bridge was built with the help of a substantial grant from the European Union and is some 328 yards in length. It was part of a programme of planned bridge and causeway developments intended to improve the social connectivity and economic development of the Western Isles.

Below is Scalpay in the late 1960s as MacIver would have known it.



There are four MacLennan brothers and their cousin John Roderick MacLeod, all Glasgow born of families from Scalpay where their respective fathers were born and bred. They were all tutored in the 214 and as adults played in The Red Hackle Pipes and Drums. Angus the eldest of the MacLennans emigrated to Canada; the second eldest John (Jockie) Gillies, lives in Bearsden, Donald Iain lives in Scalpay and the youngest Finlay Morrison, lives in Bishopbriggs. Both families have links to Staffin in Skye and to Lochaber. Their mothers are sisters born in Glasgow of Skye and Lochaber parents. Their fathers were school friends in Scalpay who came down to Glasgow, serving their apprenticeships in the shipyards. Their families were members of Partick Highland Free Church, as were the MacIvers, and it was there the connection began.



From the left: Angus MacLennan, John (Jockie) G. MacLennan, Finlay M. MacLennan and Donald Iain MacLennan

“The Kyles of Scalpay” is the sole example in the collection of a MacIver-composed strathspey. Alex along with his youngest sister, Ishbell, would often visit Lewis, spending their holidays on the island. During these visits Alex usually went sea fishing in The Kyles when he was a guest at the MacLennan family home, The Harbour View; in Gaelic Sealladh Caladh. He greatly enjoyed these times and spent many hours at the fishing. He also loved the rugged landscape of the area and that was why the tune was composed and named “The Kyles of Scalpay” after the stretch of sea between Kyles Scalpay and Scalpay where most of the fishing took place.

The other strathspey in The MacIver collection is “Mac an Irish”, an arrangement of a traditional Lewis tune (and song), where he added six additional parts to the existing two.



Top is Sealladh Caladh and below is the harbour outlook.



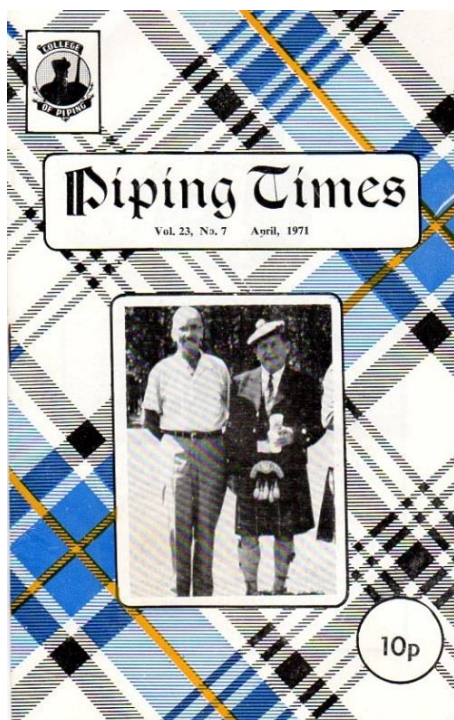


This is “The Fisher Lass”, the boat Alex fished from, owned by Sandy MacLeod the MacLennans’ neighbour in Scalpay. From the left are Jockie MacLennan, Davy Haddow (a piper and ex-Knightswood Juvenile who played with the MacLennans in The Red Hackle), Finlay MacLennan and their uncle, Ronnie MacCuish. The fish most likely to be caught then were haddock, mackerel, the occasional pollok, cod and saithe.



Left to right at the slipway in Scalpay with The Kyles of Scalpay in the background, are Jockie and Donald with Alex.

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GLASGOW.

Knightswood Contest

The annual competition for juveniles, organised by the Knightswood Juvenile pipe band, was held on Saturday, 13th February. The venue was the new Community Centre in Knightswood, and the excellence of the surroundings were certainly appreciated by audience and competitors alike.

A very big turn-out gave the organisers every confidence in their excellent work. The adjudicator was Hector MacFadyen, now on the road to recovery after his illness.

RESULTS :

Chanter playing—1, A. Maitland, Kilbarchan; 2, M. Hamilton, Oxcang School; 3, C. MacDonald, Clan Macrae; 4 (equal), G. Thomson and B. Nicholson; 6, K. Overman.

Piping, under 15 years—1, Alex. Thomson, East Kilbride; 2, J. Drummond, Polkemmet; 3, A. MacLennan, 214 B.B.; 4, C. Cameron, Knightswood; 5, G. Borland, Kilbarchan.

Piping, 15 and 16 years—1, D. Haddow, Knightswood; 2, J. Hardie, 214 B.B.; 3, M. Gilfillan, 214 B.B.; 4, D. Barnes, Polkemmet; 5, E. Gorman, Dumbarton.

Piping, 17 and 18 years—1, Ann Stewart, MacLean Ladies; 2, Philip Taylor, Red Hackle; 3, John MacKay, Kinning Park.

GLASGOW.

Boys' Brigade Championships

The annual B.B. contests were held in Washington Street School, Glasgow, on Wednesday, 10th February. Considering the number of B.B. pipers in Glasgow, the entry was small, but a very good standard was maintained.

The adjudicator was Andrew Bell, pipe-major of the Clan Macrae band.

RESULTS :

Ages 12 to 14 years—1, John MacLennan, 214 B.B.; 2, Robert Park, 139 B.B.; 3, Eoin Ashford, 214 B.B.
There were 9 entries.

15 to 17 years—1, Martin Gilfillan, 214 B.B.; 2, Iain MacDonald, 214 B.B.; 3 (equal), James Hardie and Angus MacLennan, 214 B.B.
There were 16 entries.

18 and 19 years—1, Philip Taylor, 93 B.B.
Three entries.

The success of the 214th Company reflects great credit on their pipe-major, Alex. MacIver.


John Roderick Macleod, cousin of the MacLennans is pictured below to the right of P.M. Ian McLellan B.E.M. in this image of The Strathclyde Police Pipe Band. John holds the distinction of being the last piper to be recruited into the “Polis” prior to Ian McLellan’s retiral from his role as leader of “Glasgow’s Finest”.



John’s sister is married to Roddy McLeod M.B.E., principal of The National Piping Centre in Glasgow. Roddy is one of the world’s most accomplished competing solo pipers and he was tutored by piper and composer Duncan Johnstone. He has won all of solo piping’s most coveted awards, many of them several times over. He is in keen international demand as a recitalist, judge and instructor. He was Pipe Major of the World renowned Grade 1 Scottish Power Pipe Band from 1995 – 2005, during which time he led them to over 45 Grade 1 Championship prizes in major competition.

Roddy has told us that together with the MacLennan brothers, Colin Murray (long time piper in The Red Hackle) and Dr. John MacAskill, they were all pipers to the Lewis and Harris Association. It was there that he first met Alex MacIver.

In 1988 when Roddy recorded his contribution to the "World's Greatest Pipers" series it was Alex MacIver who wrote the sleeve notes:



Roderick John MacLeod, known to his associates as "Roddy", was born in Johnstone, near Glasgow in 1962. His father had his roots in the Hebridean Isle of Lewis, while his mother hailed from the Isle of Benbecula.

It is little wonder that Roddy, being proud of his heritage showed an early interest in piping. Encouraged by his father he was tutored by Duncan Johnstone from Barra, himself an eminent piper and composer. He found in Roddy a painstaking, intelligent pupil and full of music.

In recent years Roddy has competed at most of the professional competitions successfully — the principal awards being:

1986 — Gold Medal, Northern Meeting, Inverness.
Dunvegan Medal — Portree.

1987 — The Clasp — Portree.
An Comunn Gaidhealach National Mod
(Overall Winner)
Scotway Competition
(Winner — March, Strathspey & Reel)
Bratach Gorm Banner — London

1988 — The Clasp — Portree.
Scotway Competition
(Winner — March, Strathspey & Reel)
Scotway Garden Festival
(Winner — 20th Century Pibroch Competition)
Gold Medal, Argyllshire Gathering — Oban
Glenfiddich Piping Championship — Blair Castle
(Winner — March, Strathspey & Reel and runner-up overall)


The most significant award to date has been the winning of the Northern Meeting Clasp and Bi-Centennial Gold Medal in 1988.

Outside of piping Roddy is a graduate of Strathclyde University and now teaches mathematics in Glasgow.

Also available in this Classic Piping Series on album and cassette:

P/M Angus MacDonald M.B.E.	(Cat. No. 5143)
P/M G.N.M. Stoddart B.E.M.	(Cat. No. 5151)
Hugh A. MacCallum	(Cat. No. 5147)
Murray Henderson	(Cat. No. 5159)
John Wilson	(Cat. No. 5170)

Produced by Bob McDowall Engineer: Bill Garden at Scotty's Sound Studio
Cover Photograph: Stewart Winning Graphics/Sleeve: Donald George



Since this early recording Roddy has made countless recordings of both Ceol Mor and Ceol Beag which have sold successfully to a worldwide audience.

Alex MacIver gave Roddy some sound advice: "always brush up your technique, practice the basics and ensure that exercises are regularly and properly played". This remains a founding principle of his own ethos as principal of The National Piping Centre not only with his own pupils but for those who tutor under his direction. Roddy's mother was from Benbecula and his father was from Balallan in Lewis (shown below), which is the next village to Laxay where MacIver's father was born and bred.



Roddy at Blair Castle for the Glenfiddich Championships captured by Derek Maxwell and shown here with his kind permission.





This photograph taken in 1977/78 was provided by John Roderick MacLeod and was titled The Fossil Grove by him. It is for us a reminder of the many 214 band photographs taken in Victoria Park and also of the importance of The Fossil Grove not only to Glasgow but also to the geophysical history of Scotland. Seen here, back row from the left: Davie Scott, Duncan Masson, Donald Ian MacLennan, Ronnie Peacock, Stevie Littlejohn, Alistair Morrison and Davie Kyle. Front row Alex M. MacIver, Murdo Macdonald, Finlay MacLennan, Dougie Orr, John Roderick MacLeod, Iain MacLeod, Brian Fitzsimmons and Dan Finlay. To read more of The Fossil Grove see the Chapter on WHITEINCH.



SUNSET ON SCALPAY