

# Mrs Elizabeth Kinnear

The Kinning Park Pipe Band, under the direction of their long-serving, highly-respected leader Pipe Major Willie Kinnear, was as “the craws flew and the ferry sailed” one of the closest competing bands to the home of the 214 BB. Willie, born in 1912, was a contemporary of Alex MacIver. He made his way as a boy through the ranks of the 168 Boys’ Brigade at Elderpark Church in Govan and maintained his interest in the BB for all of his adult life. He was Pipe Major of The Kinning Park Band for fifty years. He recruited many BB boys to the Kinning Park while developing his own home-grown crop. Behind every great man there is, it is said, a great woman and in Bette Kinnear Willie could not have been better supported.

The image shows a handwritten musical score on aged paper. At the top left, it is titled "MRS. ELIZABETH KINNEAR." and at the top right, "MARCH". The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a time signature of 6/8. It consists of ten staves of music. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like "f" (forte). There are three repeat signs with first and second endings indicated: "1st TIME" after the third staff, "2nd TIME" after the fifth staff, and "1st TIME" after the eighth staff. At the bottom of the page, there are two lines of handwritten text: "With Banjo." on the left and "Alex. M. MacIver." on the right. Below these, the date "9th November 1977" is written.

**Mrs Elizabeth Kinnear was known with great fondness and respect as Bette Kinnear. She was for more than sixty years one of the “most weel kent faces” in and around the pipe band scene. Willie and Bette were the heartbeat of the famous Kinning Park Pipe Band. Alex MacIver composed the tune shown above for Bette and it was reproduced in the SPBA magazine in 1980, two years before her Majesty the Queen conferred the title “Royal” on the association. Alex was a close friend of Bette and Willie and was a regular visitor to their home. They had much in common through their tireless work for the Association and with Willie, Alex shared a lifelong support for the Boys’ Brigade and of course, the tuition and training of new band members.**

**Alex and Bette jointly ran the annual ceilidh which proved to be both a popular and welcome fund raiser for the West of Scotland Branch. Bette took responsibility for running the branch annual raffle which was the highest single source of income for the branch. Evidence from SPBA minutes has been provided to show that one year sales of tickets (£15) by the 214 BB had exceeded sales from any other source! Further information regarding how this marketing “coup” was achieved can only be revealed under clandestine arrangement following written application.**

**Florence Allan of the RSPBA historical group provided some entries from past RSPBA magazines where there is mention of Bette:-**

**1969 Jan/Feb page 19: Bette Kinnear honoured by her branch; received a gold brooch and flowers.**

**1969 May/June page 11: Mrs Kinnear hospitalised with a serious illness.**

**1969 Sept/Oct page 12 Bette back to G&W.S branch after illness.**

**1978 March/April page 27: March composed for Mrs Kinnear by Alex M MacIver.**

**1995 Jan /Feb Page 27: B. Kinnear celebrates her 80th birthday.**

**1995 March/April page 13: B Kinnear took ill at the Association AGM.**

**1995 July/Aug page 21: Tribute to a grand old lady with a presentation to her in the nursing home. She was created Hon. Vice President of the N.Ireland Branch.**

**1996 March/April Obituary: Bette died on 30th March aged 81.**

**These notes in the Pipe Band magazine are but a few of the tributes which have been written about a lady who worked tirelessly for the RSPBA and also for The West of Scotland Branch. Evidence indeed how Bette’s contribution to the Pipe Band world was greatly appreciated and just how highly she was regarded and indeed remembered, with such fondness by so many.**





**Bette was awarded Life Membership of both the RSPBA and also the Glasgow Branch and is seen here with the scroll certifying her accreditation.**

**Bette was also presented with a scroll to mark the occasion of her name being entered in the Northern Ireland Branch Book of Eminence for "her friendship, interest and ever open door to members of that branch over the years". The RSPBA article is shown below.**



## TRIBUTE TO A GRAND OLD LADY

A rather unique occasion took place on Wednesday, 17th May, 1995, in the Day Room of Ward 55, Southern General Hospital, Glasgow.

The President, Chairman, Secretary and members and friends of the Glasgow and West of Scotland Branch met to make presentations on behalf of the Northern Ireland Branch to our Honorary Vice-President, Mrs Elizabeth Kinnear.



Bette was presented with a scroll to mark the occasion of her name being entered in the Northern Ireland Branch Book of Eminence for her friendship, interest and ever open door to members of that Branch over the years.

A lovely gesture to a wonderful lady.

The branch ladies team came out of retirement for the occasion to lay on a lovely tea.

Bette, eighty years old now is no longer capable of looking after herself and ill shortly move to Grampian Nursing Home, Stewarton Road, Whitecraigs, Glasgow, where she will be well looked after and be delighted to have visits from her friends in the pipe band world.

*A. L. Cantley.*

Initially in researching the compositions of Alec MacIver we sought a good image of Alex for inclusion with the re-published tunes. There were countless group pictures including Alex, but few of him on his own. Things have changed and now we have many pictures of him. In seeking to include an appropriate photo in this tribute to the Kinnears of Kinning Park we felt that only this one did justice to Bette, Willie and their outstanding legacy. Here Alex is seen in his best “bib and tucker”



ALEX IN THE GLASGOW LEWIS AND HARRIS ASSOCIATION  
PRESIDENT'S CHAIN OF OFFICE  
1958 - 1961

*Anail a' Ghàirdheil am mullach*

The caption shown translates from the Gaelic as an allusion to a Gaelic proverb.

According to Catherine Campbell, secretary of The Lewis and Harris Association  
*“Anail a Ghàirdheil am mullach”* refers to the suggestion that a Highlander reaches the summit before stopping to take a breath, whereas soft Lowlanders have to stop on the way up for a breath.

Nothing therefor to do with piping, we assume?



This note was given to us by the Kinnear family and deals with another gift to Bette Kinnear, all the way from Japan. This letter, from HIROKAZU ICHIKAWA of MAEYAMA, is only short. However, it contains much of interest, particularly to those of us who know those named.

謹呈

This medal was presented to Mrs. Elizabeth Kinnear by Hirokazu Ichikawa, piper of The Tokyo Piping Society, Which was gotten at the competition of piping in Tokyo in 1987.

The 3rd prize, Slow Air section

Tune: Pipe Major William Kinnear waltz

by J.Wark 1983

Judge: Pipe Major J. C. Weatherston M.B.E., B.E.M.

The 5th Tokyo Highland Games 1987

  
Hirokazu Ichikawa of Maeyama



**John Weatherston**



**Jim Wark**

**Jim Wark, renowned composer and Pipe Major, began his early piping career under the direction of P.M. Willie Kinnear in The Kinning Park Pipe Band. Jim like Alex MacIver has held the position of composer to The Scottish Pipers' Association. Among the many fine tunes Jim has written is one of his signature compositions: "Molly Connell". Molly (a drummer in her own right) is the wife of Alex Connell (ex-member of the 214 BB) who was for many years leading tip with the Glasgow Polis. Jim was a piper and indeed Pipe Sergeant in the Polis when the legendary Ian McLellan (a product of the 214 BB) was Pipe Major. Harry McAleer succeeded Ian as Pipe Major followed by Ian Plunkett and then the position was taken over by Jim Wark. Jim has readily given his permission that we may include his composition "Pipe Major Willie Kinnear" in our notes and has provided the original manuscript for inclusion.**

**To read more about Jim see his interview on the Pipers' Persuasion web site and his interview printed in the RSPBA magazine July 2015.**

PIPE MAJOR W<sup>M</sup>. KINNEAR.      WALTZ.      J. WARK 1983

HARMONY FOR 2<sup>ND</sup> PART.

J. Wark 62

**The solo piping adjudicator on that day in Tokyo in 1987 was Pipe Major John Weatherston M.B.E. B.E.M. seen above on duty leading The Red Hackle Pipes and Drums. Wee Jock, as he was known, was Bob Hardie's partner in R.G.Hardie & sons, bagpipe manufacturers. In 1962 Jock as Pipe Major of the 277 (A. & S. H. Regt. R. A. (T. A.)) led that band to first place in the grade one World Championship in Belfast. That same year and venue saw Alex MacIver lead the band of the 214 Glasgow Company of The Boys' Brigade to win first place in the juvenile grade.**

**Dr Charles Hepburn, MC LLD FZS, was a generous donor to The Pipe Band association and It was his influence and connection to the McNish family which led to the advantageous acquisition of the association's premises in Washington St. He held the position of Honorary President of The SPBA and in January of 1969 he made a presentation on their behalf to Bette Kinnear for her outstanding contribution to both the West of Scotland Branch and to the National Association. The presentation which he made is a replica of a Mod Gold Medal in the form of a brooch. In concluding his presentation remarks Dr. Hepburn congratulated Bette on her award saying "no Mod Gold was ever more worthily earned"! The original transcript of the presentation is shown below**

| <u>Presentation to Mrs. Kinnear, 10th January 1969</u>   |   |
|--|---|
| <p>at a recent Meeting of the Glasgow and West of Scotland Branch of the Scottish Pipe Band Association; it was unanimously agreed to recognise in some suitable manner the remarkable record rendered to the Branch during the past 21 years by the Convenor of the Ladies Committee, Mrs. William Kinnear.</p>   | <p>I am particularly pleased to have the honour of making this presentation to Mrs. Kinnear. I have long watched her work with admiration and gratification. Many a welcomed Cup of Tea has she produced for me.</p>                            |
| <p>The wonderful work done by Mrs. Kinnear during these years is so well known to us all that it hardly seems necessary to remind you that Mrs. Kinnear was responsible for organizing the Prize Draw; which is the largest source of income for the Branch. Her efforts in this field, the supply of Catering at Branch Meetings, Contests, Raffles, and other activities; has raised the Branch Funds to more than £3000. <i>A really remarkable achievement</i></p> | <p>The presentation which I am to make Mrs. Kinnear on behalf of the Branch is a replica of a Mod Gold Medal in the form of a Brooch. No Mod medal was ever more worthily earned. <i>Mrs Kinnear let me be on first to congratulate you</i></p> |
| <p>The Social Evening is but another of her activities. We must ever be indebted to Mrs. Kinnear for her Loyalty and Devotion to the work she has undertaken on behalf of the Branch.</p>  |   |
| <p>During all the years she has worked for the Branch, her husband, Willie Kinnear; Pipe Major of the Kinning Park Pipe Band, has always encouraged and helped her activities.</p>   |   |



**When Bette died the following tribute was published in the RSPBA magazine and is copied verbatim with our thanks to the association for allowing us permission to include it.**

### **BETTE KINNEAR**

Mrs Elizabeth (Bette) Kinnear, Honorary Vice President of the Glasgow and West of Scotland Branch, died peacefully in the Victoria Infirmary, Glasgow, on 30 March 1996 aged 81 years.

Bette, as she was fondly known, was greatly respected and admired, her association with The Glasgow and West of Scotland Branch and The RSPBA goes back almost as long as the Association itself, giving her time and efforts wholeheartedly to her Band - Kinning Park, to the Branch and to The Association, in her capacity as Ladies Convener in both.

Pipe Bands were Bette's life blood, she lived and breathed them. Her name was synonymous with the Kinning Park Pipe Band, before and after the death of her beloved husband Willie, who was the Pipe Major. The Band will greatly miss "Their Bette". Bette was a unique lady, loved by the very many people she had befriended with her unselfish hospitality and ever open door. People from all over the World having sampled her sincerity, warmth of character and home baking.

The Pipe Band World is a sadder and poor place today without Bette who will be mourned by remembered as a good soul and a devout Christian who was the epitome of genuine fellowship. The numbers who count themselves privileged to have known here are legion.

The Glasgow and West of Scotland Branch thoughts and condolences go out to Bette's family here in the UK and in Zimbabwe on their sad loss.

*W. Moylan*



**Bette is seen above with her trade mark smile carrying the shield won that day by The Kinning Park. By her side is Cathy Samson a long serving band supporter.**



**This image was taken in The Trades House on the occasion of the "Tartan Ball". The Ball was the annual celebration and fund raiser of the Rutherglen Pipe Band which was hugely popular and well supported by many of the pipe band fraternity. Willie Kinnear is flanked by his sons in law; to his right are Ken Blackie and left Tom Coid. Bette poses proudly with her daughters; Jan is in front of her husband Ken and Elizabeth in front of Tom. Ken Blackie served for more than forty years as an officer and captain of The 34th BB. At Hillington Park Church in Glasgow.**



## profile

**A profile of one leader who changed the piping world simply by passing along his knowledge to others**

# Pipe Major Willie Kinnear

by Iain MacDonald

In the pipe band world we most often hear about the Grade One bands and the people who lead them. Readers of this magazine will be familiar with names such as J.K. McAllister, Tom McAllister, Iain

MacLellan, Iain McLeod, Bob Hardie, and Alex Duthart. There are, however, other people whose names we should know better. These are the Grade Three and Four pipe majors and instructors who dedicate their lives to our art. They surrender their spare time, their homes, their cash, and give every bit of their energy to develop players and bands in the lower grades. One such man was Pipe Major Willie Kinnear of Glasgow.

Willie Kinnear was Pipe Major of an old Glasgow band, the Kinning Park Pipe Band. He was born in 1912, and as a boy went through the ranks of the Boys Brigade. Willie maintained his interest in the B.B.—up to the time of his death. He apprenticed as a carpenter, and practised that trade throughout his working life. Willie was well versed in the history and lore of working Glasgow, and he was able to paint a picture of life when the Glasgow dockyards were among the busiest in the world.

In the late 1920s Willie won the Scottish Amateur Piping Championship for march, strathspey, and reel. He was very proud of that prize, and kept a photo of himself with the trophy. One of Willie's students, James Wark—now a piper with the Strathclyde Police—remembers him as "a good player" who "always had a fine sounding instrument." Willie was in his sixties when I

met him, and he still played a good pipe. He was also eager to learn anything he could, and he quizzed me relentlessly about the techniques used by Iain McLeod, then Pipe Major of the Renfrew Pipe Band.

Willie Kinnear will be most remembered as pipe major of the Kinning Park Pipe Band, and for the work he did teaching young pipers. Before he died, Willie celebrated his 50th anniversary as Pipe Major of the Kinning Park. Throughout most of its history, the Kinning Park Pipe Band was a Grade Three band. Willie would teach a group of young pipers, make them into good bandmen, and then pass them on to better bands. Of Willie's teaching James Wark says, "He taught me a great deal about being a bandman. He made me realize the responsibilities of being part of a team. I learned self discipline in being punctual for practices; keeping my uniform clean and smart; and good maintenance practices in keeping my bagpipe ready for action."

Willie's life of teaching young pipers sometimes paid off for the Kinning Park Pipe Band. During the 1965 season the band was Champion of Champions for Grade Three, and Kinning Park was World Champion in Grade Three. Over the years Willie had bands of varying abilities, but his commitment was always the same. He taught his players the necessary band skills, made sure that they performed to their ability, and fostered in them the personal and family values that he held.

Willie Kinnear was a demanding pipe major; he had high expectations for his pipe section, and would occasionally stamp his foot or raise his voice to get through to his pipers. These outbursts were few and short-lived, however, and for the most part Willie's practices reflected his sense of hu-



Pipe Major Willie Kinnear in the 1970s, towards the end of his long and rewarding career as a teacher of hundreds of young pipers.



mour and his dedication to good music. The Kinning Park practised for many years in the dockside sheds near the King George V Bridge in Glasgow, and former members remember Willie's ability to know when a break was in order. Some nights the band would cluster around the gas fire in the warehouse office, exchanging stories and having a good laugh.

Former band member Ian Kennedy (Red Hackle, Babcock Renfrew) remembers that "the band generated a family atmosphere with Mr. and Mrs. Kinnear at the head. We even had a 'tuck' shop where we could buy sweets and Coke at the end of pipe band practice. Many a night I spent my bus fare on sweets and had to walk it home." Of the band contests in those years (1958-'60) Ian says, "All contests were reached by public transport except Dunblane, the last contest of the season, where we had the luxury of a hired coach. After the contest we returned to the Kinnears with our girlfriends for a party (Irn Bru, ice cream, etc.) where Willie would entertain with his mandolin. He was quite an accomplished player.

Ian's first experience with Kinning Park was when he was outfitted in his uniform: buckle shoes, jabots, belted plaids, and Tam O'Shanter with feather! The band's main source of revenue in those days was playing at football matches in small stadiums all over Glasgow. The band would march around the track before the game and at the half, followed by Mrs. Kinnear and her daughters holding a bed sheet into which spectators threw coins. While the

band eventually got a military style uniform, it still wears the Ancient McIntyre tartan it took over from the defunct Glasgow Dockers Pipe Band.

During the winter of 1978 I had the chance to see Willie in action with his band. I attended a few band practices with him, and was amazed at his enthusiasm and serious attention to detail given the few pipers he had, and their probable outcome at the summer games. He warned me before practice that his pipe section was quite weak, and yet he was optimistic and enthusiastic about the practice. Willie loved pipe bands. He also conducted a chanter practice each week at his house, where he would drill the pipers on rudiments and new tunes. The practice ended when Mrs. Kinnear arrived with tea and snacks. No one went home hungry from a Kinning Park chanter practice.

Mrs. Kinnear, or Bette to the Scottish pipe band world, is the current president of the Kinning Park, and has been the band's most loyal supporter for over sixty years. Bette has also forged a pipe band career of her own, and is an Honorary Life Member of both the RSPBA and the Glasgow Branch of the RSPBA. Bette has been a



Pipe Major Willie Kinnear heads up a small but successful Kinning Park Pipe Band during the 1960s.

tireless fund-raiser for the Association, and was well known for her raffles at all RSPBA functions.

Many people in the Scottish pipe band community remember Willie Kinnear for his commitment to the goals of the RSPBA. Willie was a great supporter of the Association, and served as Chairman of the Glasgow Branch. He contributed his time and carpentry skills during the renovations of the now famous RSPBA Headquarters on Washington Street, and attended many instructional courses run by the Association. James Wark remembers Willie's enthusiasm to pass on the theory he learned at John McAllister's Monday night sessions. Willie saw these courses as an opportunity for himself and his band members, and he always did his best to get the most from them.

Willie Kinnear was a gentleman, a patient yet demanding teacher, a devoted pipe major, and a good friend to all who knew him. He died in 1982, and for a while it seemed as though the Kinning Park Pipe Band wouldn't last much longer. The band had few members, and struggled to survive. In true Kinnear fashion, however, the band went looking for help, and before long had former member James Wark lending a hand. The band now has a new pipe major, new members, and in 1992 won the Champion of Champions for Grade Three bands. It seems as though Willie's teaching is still at work in the band. pd



Mrs. Bette Kinnear leads the Kinning Park, trophy in hand, after another competition success, in the 1960s.

Iain MacDonald was a long time member of the Simon Fraser University Pipe Band, and he is currently Pipe Major of the recently-formed Grade Two City of Regina Pipe Band. He works as a freelance writer in Regina, Saskatchewan.

**We are pleased to be able to include for your delectation this article titled "Pipe Major Willie Kinnear" written by Iain MacDonald. Ian is from Saskatchewan and among many other things "piping" he was a long-time member of The Simon Fraser University Pipe Band. The publication is from "Piper and Drummer" magazine and we are grateful to Andrew Bertoff proprietor of "P & D" in granting us his permission to include this informative and relevant contribution.**