

GEORGE SEYMOUR

1939 – 2012



George is shown here, as we remember him, leading the parade and the Pipe Band of The 214 Boys' Brigade Ex-Members Association, with Ian McLellan who was acting Pipe Major on the day. The occasion was the parade in celebration of the Company's 70th anniversary on the 9th of October 1994.

As a boy, resident in Haldane St, it was hardly surprising that George would become a member of the 214 Glasgow Company of the Boys' Brigade. This was not because Gordon Park Church was only a few yards from home but more likely that Alex Ibell lived up the next close at number 9! Factor into the equation that George's brother, Tom, had already served as a member of the 214 where he was a piper under Alex's coaching. See Tom below in The Highland Shield photograph on page six. George, who was a keen cyclist, was to revel in the sporting aspects of 214 BB life, particularly swimming where he was very successful. His swimming prowess was in part because the swimming baths, situated in Medwyn St., were only a few yards from his home at No 10 Haldane St.

Seen below are those who played in the band at the 1994 parade.



L/R Ian McLellan, Gordon Medlow, Douglas McColl, Alasdair McKay, Davie Scott, John Finlay, Alex Connell, Stevie Littlejohn, Alan Davidson, Dougie Law, John McLeod, Finlay MacLennan, Willie Ellis, John MacLennan, Alan McColl, Stephen McQuillan, Hector Russell, Willie MacDonald, Joe Noble, Stirling McMurchie, Dan Finlay, Robert Turner, Iain Glass, George Seymour.

Many ex-members marched behind and among their numbers were more than enough ex-players to form another good sized band. Safe to say that their role was to listen out for “blooters” of which there were a number!

George’s obituary was published in the RSPBA magazine employing the following notes provided by P.M. Ian McLellan B.E.M. This was apposite given George’s long association with Ian not least in the 214 as boys, then in the Renfrew Pipe Band and of course famously in The Glasgow Polis A.K.A. Strathclyde Police where George became the Drum Major.

George Seymour 1939 – 2012

George Seymour, former Drum Major of the City of Glasgow/Strathclyde Police Pipe Band, sadly passed away on 30th December 2012. George originally started his pipe band career learning to play the practice chanter under the watchful eye of 214 BB stalwart Alex Ibell.

Unfortunately George had the misfortune to fall off a washhouse roof and break his arm. After this he gave up the idea of learning to play the bagpipes, and went on to the trumpet. His initiation to Pipe Band Drumming was subsequently with 214 Glasgow Boys Brigade Pipe Band, under the instruction of Mick McEwan of the Clan MacRae Society Pipe Band.

In 1958 George joined the Renfrew Pipe Band, where he played for a couple of years before moving on to become the Bass Drummer in the Red Hackle Pipes & Drums, under Pipe Major Angus Macleod, during which time he won the Best Bass prize at the Cowal Highland Gathering. In 1967 George joined the City of Glasgow Police, and eventually joined the force Pipe Band in 1970, taking over as Drum Major. The highlight of his career was winning the World Championship Drum Major competition at the World Pipe Band Championships in Hawick in 1976, by which time the band had become Strathclyde Police. 1976 was another landmark year for the band as it was the first time Strathclyde Police won the World Pipe Band Championship under the leadership of Pipe Major Ian McLellan BEM. It was to prove to be the platform which led to a remarkable further 11 World Championship titles under Ian McLellan's leadership.

An interesting story relating to the wins for both George and the Band at Hawick in 1976, was that Strathclyde Police played first in the Grade 1 competition as they had to leave early to participate in the International Police Tattoo, being held in Glasgow. George Seymour was left behind for the prize-giving, to learn that both he and the Band had won first places. An unmarked police car was laid on to whisk George back to Glasgow to join the Band for the Tattoo, as it turned out complete with the Grade 1 Worlds Trophy. Ironically the car was stopped by Lothian & Borders Police for speeding. There is no evidence however, that inter-Force rivalry saw any action being taken. George left Strathclyde Police in 1978 to run his own taxi business, but returned to the Force around four years later. He completed his Police service as a member of the Courts Staff in Glasgow.

George Seymour had another claim to fame, when in his capacity as Drum Major of the Strathclyde Police Pipe Band, he formally welcomed the American astronaut Neil Armstrong (below on the left who.) on a visit to Glasgow. His words of welcome reportedly were "Welcome Mr Armstrong to Scotland. We hope you enjoy your visit here as much as you did the moon". See below the image of George with "The Man in The Moon" The man on right is unknown but obviously straight out of Burtons window. Neil Armstrong gained the distinction of being the first man to land a craft on the moon and first to step on its surface.



The sympathies of the Pipe Band world go to George's family and friends for their sad loss.



Pipe Major Ian McLellan B.E.M.

George was not a drummer with the police. He was recruited to the band by P.M. Ian McLellan as their Drum Major and was subsequently schooled in the arts of Drum Majoring at the Scots Guards Depot at Pirbright. Added to that grounding George was mentored by Drum Major Eric Allan, a National Council member and Honorary Life Member of the RSPBA. Eric was renowned as a teacher and was a senior judge in the discipline. He was also central to the publication of the RSPBA Drum Majors manual which built on the inaugural work on the subject drafted by Alistair Aitken.

To see and hear George in action click here:- <http://ssa.nls.uk/film.cfm?fid=4296>

You may have to copy the link and paste it into your browser.

The Seymour family were originally residents of Haldane St. where George's older brother Tom had been a 214 piper taught by Alex Ibell. Tom has the significant claim to fame in that he was a member of the 214 band who won the Highland Shield on Thursday the 22nd of May 1947 which was only the second time the 214 secured this prestigious trophy.

See Tom below on the right of the back row.



Standing L/R Bob Ferguson, Robin Tedford, John Finlay, big drummer Malcolm Irvine, Jack (Biff) Young and Tom Seymour front are Alex Connell on the left and Stirling McMurchie on the right. The band photo shows only five pipers. Some confusion surrounds the missing piper so who might he have been?

Thanks to Robin Tedford who provided the photo.

The Seymour family moved home from Haldane St. to Dumbarton Road where George was to find himself resident in the next close to none other than Joe Noble a fellow member of the 214. Joe reports that Big George was appointed by Mrs. Noble, Joe's mother, to supervise Joe in and around the school and keep him out of trouble. This seemed appropriate, given that George was some three years older than Joe and was a big lad, which Joe wasn't. However Joe has corrected this story to say that he was actually the one given the role of keeping George out of trouble.

Neither was proven to have succeeded in this mission.

DRUM MAJOR JOE NOBLE

RENFREW PIPE BAND

Joe Noble. - 214 BB.

Born in Fraserburgh, Aberdeenshire. Joe started playing at age 12 with the 214th Glasgow Company of the Boys Brigade. This was a very successful Juvenile pipe band and all major Juvenile Titles were won, on many occasions. His drum tutors at this time were Alex Helie and George Hunter. The Pipe Major of the 214 was Alex McIver whom Joe states probably had the greatest influence on his playing style.



He joined Renfrew Pipe Band in 1960 and took over as Leading Drummer in 1965. This Band changed its name as a result of sponsorship deals firstly to British Caledonian Airways (Renfrew) Band and then to Babcock Renfrew Pipe Band.

Shortly after taking over the leading drum position at Renfrew he was fortunate to meet Alex D. Hamilton, a top percussionist, who also influenced his drumming career greatly.

Joe moved to Toyota Pipes & Drums in 1983 and to The City of Glasgow in 1989. He retired from playing in 1991 having played for 35 years. (28 of these as Leading Drummer within various bands and 30 years in Grade 1.)

Drum corps' under his direction have won several prizes including all Major Grade 1 titles, i.e. Scottish, British, European, Cowal and World Championships.

Overall, he has accepted trophies on behalf of various drum corps over a period of 35yrs spread within each of the 5 decades, 1950's-90's.

In the Solo field he has enjoyed many successes, including two first places in the World Solo Drumming Competition. He was the first winner of the official 'World Solo Drumming Championship' (previously known as the SPBA-later RSPBA, Solo Drumming Championship.)

Since retiring from playing, Joe has been an active member of the RSPBA Panel of Adjudicators.

THE YOUNG MAC GREGOR

Joe Noble Renfrew 1965





Joe kindly made this original photo of the image on page seven available to us, with the following observations for our information.

“The relevancy of the two trophies is that one of them is the World Solo Drumming Championship (the first official world title for solo drumming, as prior to that there was the ‘SPBA Challenge Trophy for Drumming’. This was won by me in 1974.

The other trophy and the sash were for leading my British Caledonian Airways drum corps to the World Grade One Championship in 1975.

So, I suppose you could say that - by virtue of holding both titles, at the same time, within a 12 month period - it becomes another 'first' for the 214BB.”

George is seen here with The 214 drum corps about 1955. Note that Ronnie Kinloch was a drummer and bugler. Bugle tuition was provided by Angelo Lombardi.



Ronnie Kinloch, Bugler, Robin Hunter, tenor, Andy Hosie, Geo Seymour, Geo Robertson, Stewart Gorle.



214 Band 1955 -

Back row L/R:-George Robertson (D), Andy Hosie (D), Robin Hunter (TD) Jimmy Paterson(P).

Middle row :- Ian McLellan (P), Rab Little (P), Jimmy Wright (P), George Seymour (B/D), Rab Wallace (P “the first”), Hughie Davidson (P), Ronnie Kinloch (L/D).

Seated L/R Alex MacIver, Alex Ibell.



RED HACKLE PIPES & DRUMS

Standing L/R:- PM Donald Murray, ??, Colin Murray, Robert Stewart, Rab Wallace (214BB), Peter Shaw, George Seymour (214 BB), ??, Malky McKenzie (Chairman of the 108 BB ex-members association) , Wilson Shaw, Hamish McLachlan, Jimmy Laird, Douglas Ferguson.

Kneeling L/R :- Jim McGinn, Eddie Huntly, Jim Stewart, Jackie Millar (214 BB), George Hunter (214 BB), Aitken Allan.

As big drummer with the Hackle George won “best Grade 1 Bass” at Cowal. In the Pipe Band fraternity the winner of this award is universally accorded the accolade of “World Champion” as there is no equivalent recognition given at The Worlds.

GLASGOW POLICE 1971

Ex-members of the 214 BB are centre front Drum Major George Seymour Pipe Major Ian McLellan is front left with Drum Sergeant Alex Connell back left. Second in from the left in the back row is Stirling McMurchie. Front second in from the right is Murdo McDonald who was an officer with the 214 and highland dancing instructor. His son Hans became a 214 recruit.



This picture was taken at the opening of the RSPBA new premises in Washington St.

When George died we asked Angus Lawrie to write a tune in George's name. Angus was his colleague in The Strathclyde Police Pipe Band. He was delighted to be given this opportunity and within the week had provided a 9/8 March for our approval. When submitting the composition Angus said that he wanted to give us a "good going, marching up the road tune" for George with an appropriate flourish at the end of the fourth part.

Angus is shown below and to hear his tune played by PM Donald Mackenzie (son of Malky Mackenzie) double click this icon.



GEORGE SEYMOUR.mp3

If you have any problem in accessing the recording it is available on www.214bb.com adjacent to where this article is found.



Angus Lawrie

DRUM MAJOR GEORGE SEYMOUR MARCH P/H ANGUS LAWRIE

2ND TIME 2ND PART

1ST TIME

1ST TIME

2ND TIME

When the tune was written and recorded it was sent to Alex Connell who was leading tip with the “Polis” and contemporary of both Angus and George. Alex dug out his sticks and drumming pad and put together the following score to accompany the music and we have included it for your amusement

9
8-

DRUM MASTER GEORGE SYMOUR.

P/M ANGUS LAURIE.

Drum Score Alex Connell

1st Part
2nd Part
3rd Part
4th Part
5th Part
6th Part
7th Part
8th Part
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100th Part

DRUM MAJOR ALEX CONNELL

RENFREW PIPE BAND

STRATHCLYDE POLICE PIPE BAND

Alex M. Connell

In 1947 Alex Connell started his drumming career with the 214 Company of the Glasgow Boys Brigade.

At the age of 18 years he was appointed to the position of Leading Drummer in the Renfrew Pipe Band where his corps was successful in winning the European Drumming Championship at Belfast.



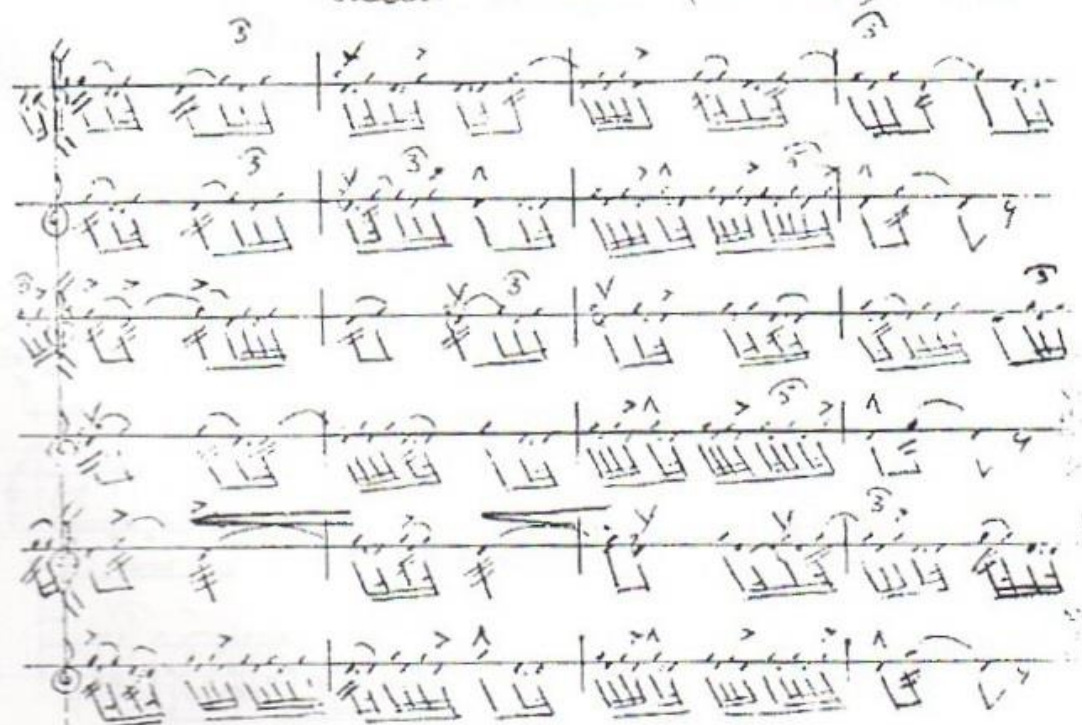
In 1958 Alex joined the Glasgow Police and in January 1961, became Drum Sergeant of their band. During his time with the Police, they were renamed "The Strathclyde Police Pipe Band".

The successes of this famous pipe band are world known. They were Worlds champions many times, also RSPBA Champion of Champions on many occasions. In 1972 they also won the Worlds Drumming championship, but probably the Drum Corps finest year was 1981 when they won the Scottish, European and Cowal Championships.

In Solo drumming competitions, Alex won both the Junior and Senior Boys Brigade Championships. As an adult, he won the Glasgow and West of Scotland Solo Championships many times. During his successful career in the 1960 - 70's Alex was rarely out of the top six placing's in the RSPBA Worlds Solo Drumming Championships.

We feature part of Alex's original score for the competition 2/4 March "The Highland Wedding"

HIGHLAND WEDDING (ALEX CONNELL) MARCH



Alex is seen below left however; do not be misled by the grips he is demonstrating! His normal stance is his left hand as his right. He has adopted this pose simply to accommodate the unseen drummer on his left. In the duo shown below Alex, with to his right Bobby Laverty, another 214 trained drummer of note who played with Muirheads. Both are in the garb of the Renfrew Pipe Band.

Joe Noble speaking publicly about Alex said that in his opinion “Alex Connell was the best Pipe Band leading drummer he had ever heard”. In similar vein Pipe Major Ian McLellan, no less, spoke eloquently about Alex’s musical talent as a leading tip and how his drumming contributed greatly to the “lift” and the “ensemble” brand for which The Polis were so famous.



If you would like to find out more about Angus Lawrie, Ian McLellan and Joe Noble please check out their video interviews on The Pipers Persuasion web site.



Above PM Ian McLellan, sporting the G.1 World Championship Banner, and leading drummer Alex Connell are shown either side of Inspector Dugald Gillespie who is holding The Worlds Grade One Trophy. This was an image captured in 1979 shortly after the Worlds which that year was held in Nottingham. Dougie who was a Gael born and bred in Islay was at that time the officer in charge of the Strathclyde Police Pipe Band. In 1981 he won the Mod Gold Medal for Gaelic singing. The 12/8 march written in his name by Angus Lawrie is one of Angus's most popular tunes and a great favourite of many discerning pipers and drummers.

**The Polis recorded Dugald's tune in 1983 on the Lismore LP:-
Champion of Champions-----Champions of the World.**

LISMOR
MADE IN SCOTLAND

The Strathclyde Police Pipe Band



Champion of Champions Champions of the World

Angus Lawrie is far right in the back row with piper Alasdair Ross of the 214 BB second in from the left. Other 214 BB representatives shown are far left second row drummer Stirling McMurphy with Pipe Major Ian McLellan front row far left with Leading Drummer Alex Connell next to him.

ARGYLL AND SUTHERLAND HIGHLANDERS COLLECTION



Featuring tunes written by some of the finest Argylls, including Pipe Major John McLellan, Angus Lawrie, George M McIntyre, the current Sovereign's Piper, Scott Methven and the current Director of Army Bagpipe Music, Major Gordon Rowan.



OFFICIAL LAUNCH @ PIPING LIVE 2017

For More Information

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A new Argylls book containing some 300 tunes is to be launched at “Piping Live” in the week before The Worlds in 2017 and will include the tune for D/M George Seymour. George’s tune has excellent merit in its own right however it qualifies for inclusion in this new publication as it was composed by former 8th Argyll piper, Angus Lawrie.