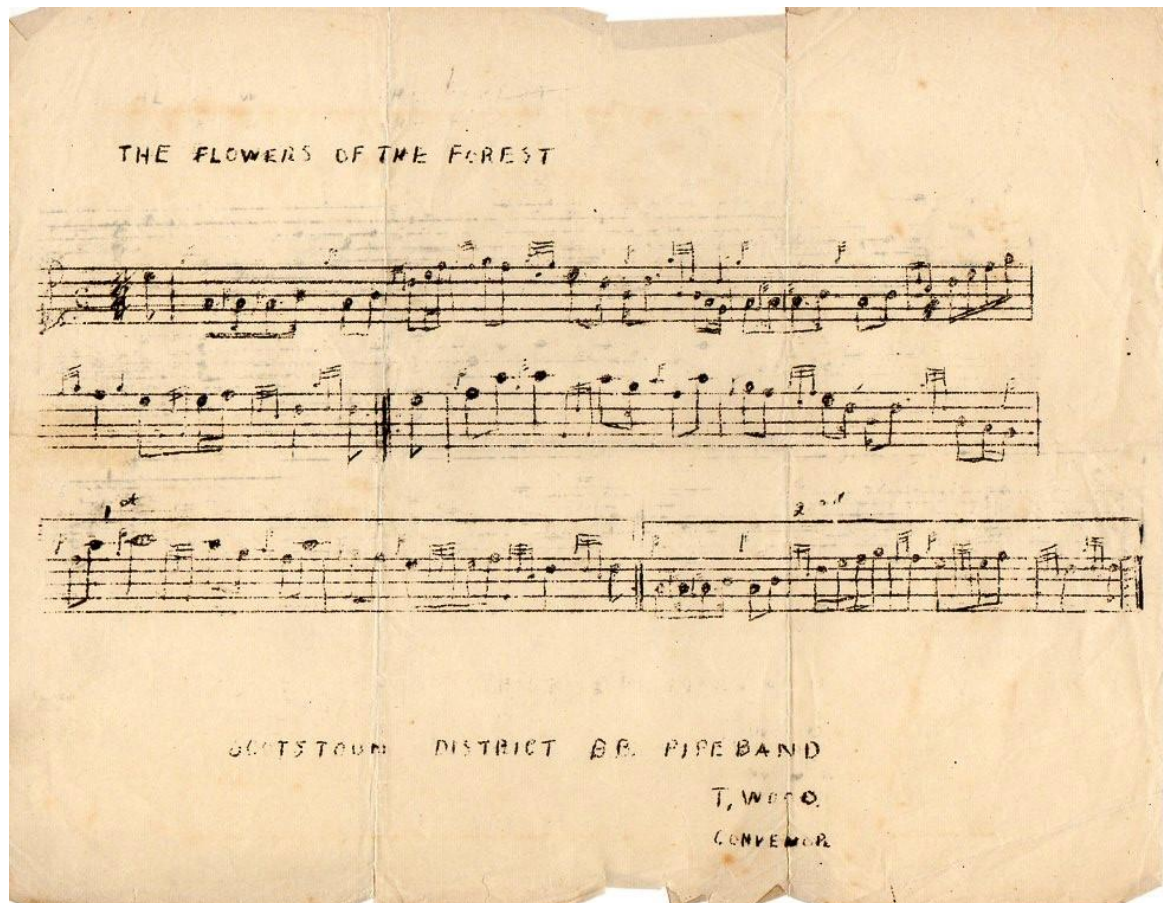


THE FLOWERS OF THE FOREST

The two items shown below were found in the extensive music archive of 250 Danes Drive when the MacIver residence was being cleared in preparation for it to be sold. 250 had been the MacKeever family home for more than 80 years. For those who received it's hospitality it remains in our memory as a part of Lewis in the West of Glasgow. Always a warm "Highland" welcome with the aroma of home baking and an open peat fuelled fire. For the fortunate visitor, there was, perchance, the opportunity of a piece of salmon (ready poached if you get my drift) courtesy of The Laxay Poacher. It seems appropriate at this time when we have passed the 100th anniversary of Passchendaele to make these scans available to all of our membership and others who may care. The first image is typical in its presentation and is in Alex's hand. Like most it is battered and weary through time, wear and usage but all the more of interest to us, shown as scripted in 1950.



Ian McLellan B.E.M. points out that Alex's version is very much as he remembers it. However he did have to re-learn it in part when he joined the Argylls. He confirms a difference where Alex, at the end of the first bar shows, after the throw, semi quavers E to F whereas in other parts of the music it is shown as an E F G triplet. Ian also observes that the tune with three parts as Alex presents it is the usual accepted style.



This second scan is of much earlier origin and is of interesting provenance. The fabric is very frail and thin. The way the notation is shown is old fashioned, particularly the birl, and all in all is indicative of a time before World War II. This music shows only two parts and is missing a second part which in the view of many is an important musical dynamic of the melody.

Perhaps some of our senior surfers may be able to tell us which BB Company may have been the source of this script or if, as seems likely, it was prepared for a massed B.B. band representing several companies probably of the Scotstoun District.

There are many annual Cenotaph parades where bands, particularly of the military would play this tune. However it is usually seen as appropriate that it is played by a lone piper so enhancing the poignancy of the melodic line.

Dan Finlay recalls that in his generation of the BB band they played this tune on Remembrance Sunday positioned on the mound in Victoria Park. However as the impact of the construction of The Clyde Tunnel, including the roads network, took effect things had to change. The first completed tunnel tube, for northbound traffic, was eventually opened by Queen Elizabeth the Second on 3 July 1963. By then these access roads saw Remembrance Day parades re-directed to Gordon Park Church and it was there that Pipe Major Alex MacIver would play the Flowers of the Forest in the church foyer honouring the event as the wreath was laid within the church. Alex always advocated that the tune should be played slowly and solemnly. It was after all a Lament in memory of the fallen.



Alex in his office with some band trophies on show.



ALEX MCKENZIE MacIVER

Alex is shown in his army uniform when he first joined up. At the time this image was taken he would be about twenty.

To hear and see examples of related clips of “The Flowers of the Forest” please click on the links below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bB0e5B0DYeY>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rfsasAIIc08>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LdgQOWyTpJg>

Flowers of the Forest is an ancient Scottish folk tune commemorating the defeat of the Scottish army of James IV at the Battle of Flodden in September 1513. Although the original words are unknown, the melody was recorded c. 1615-25 in the John Skene of Halyards Manuscript as "Flowres of the Forrest", although it might have been composed earlier. Several versions of words have been added to the tune, notably Jean Elliot's in 1756 or 1758. However, many renditions are played on the Great Highland Bagpipe.

Due to the sentiment of the lyrics and the reverence for the tune, it is one of the few tunes that many pipers will perform in public only at funerals or memorial services. It's playing is otherwise restricted to private practice or to instruct other pipers.

The earliest print of the words for The Flowers O' The Forest was found in 1746. The Battle of Flodden Field took place in 1513. Because of the alliance between Scotland and France, James IV attacked England when Henry VIII invaded France. The Battle of Flodden was a disaster for the Scots, with estimates of Scottish losses numbering as high as ten thousand. Numerous nobles were killed in the battle, including King James.

Jane (Jean) Elliot (1727-1805) wrote the poem "The Flowers of the Forest A Lament for Flodden". She published it anonymously circa 1755. It was, at the time, thought to be an ancient surviving ballad. However Robert Burns suspected it was an imitation, and Burns, Ramsay and Sir Walter Scott eventually discovered who wrote the song.

The Flowers o' the Forest

**I've heard them liltin' at the ewe milking
Lassies are liltin' before dawn o' day
Now there's a moanin' on ilka green loanin'
The Flow'rs o' the Forest are a' wede awa'.**

**At baughts in the morning, nae blythe lads are scornin'
Lassies are lanely and dowie and wae;
Nae daffin', nae gabbin', but sighin' and sabbin'
Ilk ane lifts her leglin, and hies her awa'.**

**At e'en in the gloamin', nae swankies are roamin'
'Bout stacks wi' the lasses at bogle to play;
But ilk maid sits drearie, lamentin' her dearie,
The Flow'rs o' the Forest are a' wede awa'.**

**In har'st at the shearin', nae youths now are jeerin',
Bandsters are runkled, an' lyart, or grey;
At fair or at preachin', nae woin', nae fleechin',
The Flow'rs o' the Forest are a' wede awa'.**

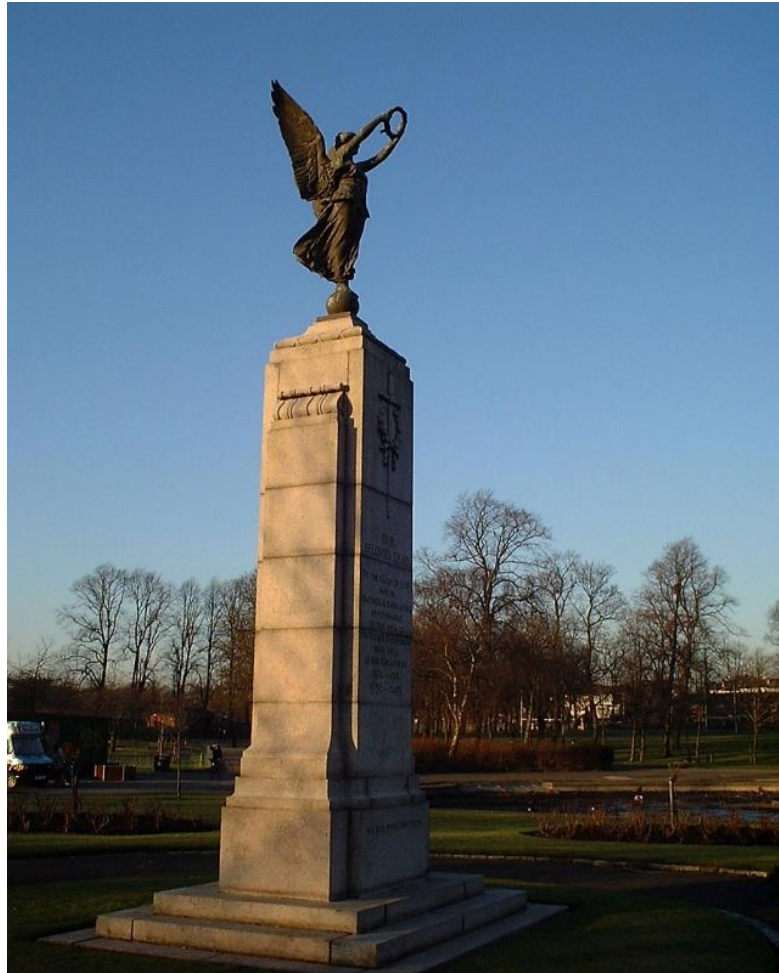
**Dool for the order sent our lads to the Border,
The English, for ance, by guile, won the day;
The Flow'rs o' the Forest that fought aye the foremost,
The prime o' our land lie cauld i' the clay.**

**We'll hae nae mair liltin' at the ewe-milkin',
Women an' bairns are heartless an' wae;
Sighin' an' moanin' on ilka green loanin',
The Flow'rs o' the Forest are a' wede awa'.**

We may have rehearsed this tune in band forum perhaps around the practice chanter table but I have no memory of that. My recall is of a time before I became a member of the 214 BB being taught this tune at one of my regular Sunday morning lessons with Alex Ibell at no. 9 Haldane St. Old Alex made it very clear that this tune should only be played when the occasion was appropriate. He said words to the effect that “otherwise when you wake up in the morning the COO in the field adjacent may well have expired. Where you had neither a COO, nor an adjacent field, then something equally horrendous may befall you!”



ALEX IBELL as most of us would remember him and right aged around 20 in what may be the uniform of the Whiteinch Pipe Band.



THE CENOTAPH in VICTORIA PARK



THE REFURBISHED GATES at VICTORIA PARK 2013

THE END