



President's Column, Winter 2022

At the Sherman games last fall, it occurred to me that there are these competitions at the various games that I have enjoyed over the years, but I really know little about what is judged and how the competitions are scored. Knowing that both the Police and Fire Department Bands of Sherman were competing, and that they had hired extremely experienced judges, I walked down to where the judges were hanging out and talked to them. Many are members of the Eastern United States Pipe Band Association (EUSPBA), and each in his own right, has been a champion of sorts in bands of their own. Each judge has a specific area of expertise like pipes, large drums, or snare drums (see the photo of the Sherman 2021 Games piping and drumming judges).



I learned that there are three primary piping competitions: solo, two pipers, and band. The band, of course, includes drums. I asked our own CDSTI piper, Bill Jones, if he could help explain what the judges are looking for. See his response beginning on page 2.

Next newsletter, I would like to talk about the games or the dancing competition. If anyone would like to help by writing an article to explain what is judged during these competitions, please do so and send it to me at robbiedj48@gmail.com.

Finally, I would like to urge each of you to consider attending one or more of the games and festivals held around the state. I found that last year, with all of the COVID news, I really enjoyed getting out of the house and being around fellow clan members, as well as listening to good music and eating some good food. All of the games we attend as a Clan Society are outdoors, and it is very safe and easy to social distance, all the while having an enjoyable time (see our schedule on page 5). When you come, please stop by the CDSTI tent and say hello.

Dave Robertson, CDSTI President

2021 Sherman Celtic Festival and Highland Games
Piping and Drumming Judges



Left to right:

James (Jimmy) Bell, Batesville, AR: Solo Pipes

Robert (Bob) Richardson, Arlington, TX (formerly of Glasgow, Scotland):
All aspects of the Competition

Carl Lenny, Los Angeles, CA: Drums

Patrick Regan, Pittsburgh, PA: Pipes

Trevor Fry, Houston, TX: Tenor and Bass Drums

Bagpiping Competitions

At the Scottish Games our Clan Society attends, people often ask me about bagpiping in its different forms. The general public can certainly hear and identify those unique sounds, but unless you've been involved in the piping world at a closer level, it may seem confusing and disorganized. You have the pipe bands of course, playing the golden oldies at varying degrees of tolerability, the solo piper playing for the dancers, and the solo competitions with many levels of experience and expertise.

Having been in seven bands, both for show and at the competitive level, from Canada to California to Texas, I have had an opportunity to both participate and observe piping over the last 61 years. The COVID sanctions dealt a hard blow, so to speak, to the piping community today, and many competitions are even held now online, something I avoid. The drama and comradeship of being out in the field, in front of a crowd, playing for world-class judges is a feeling hard to beat, and technology hasn't provided an answer for that yet.

The bands generally run from Grade 5 at the beginner level all the way up to the Grade 1, world-caliber competitions. Here in Texas we have a few Grade 3 bands, and most of the others are 4 or 5. As a kid in the '50s, there was virtually nothing here, but when I returned from California in 1983, we had games in Salado, Houston, and Arlington/Dallas, and we had full bands! The bands are no longer graded on dress and deportment, but are given points on piping uniformity, tuning, and rhythm, along with the drum corps, and how well the two complement each other as one solid band.

Solo pipers go from practice chanter and Grade 5 beginning bagpipe up to Open or Professional. Texas has several Open pipers, including former world champ Mike Cusak of Houston, Ken Liechte in Austin, and Lyric Todkill, Director of St. Thomas Pipe Band in Houston. In solo work, the piper must have a well tuned pipe, with High A and Low A matching perfectly, steady blowing, and near perfect memorization of the music. You are graded on Execution (proper playing of the various movements and absence of the vexing "crossing noises"), Expression, Tone, and Tempo. The very difficult execution of the doublings, grips, and single grace notes is a lifelong pursuit for even the most experienced piper.



*William Jones, Clan Piper (Piper Will),
Clan Donnachaidh Society of Texas*

The solo events are usually broken into 2/4 Marches (4 parts), 6/8 Marches (4 parts), Strathspey/Reels, Jigs, and Hornpipes. For those really into it, you have the ancient music from Scotland—predating the band and military usage of the bagpipe—called Piobaireachd, or classical music of the bagpipe. This early form of the music, generally credited to the MacCrimmons of Skye, ten generations of hereditary pipers to Clan McCleod, is very difficult, as one tune can go over 20 minutes and have many variations. Typically bands do not play Piobaireachd for competition, but some of the better ones will show off with it for performances.

Piping has been a blessed journey and major part of my retired life. With an emphasis on first responder pipe bands, such as Fire Department and Law Enforcement groups, I have taught more than 200 people to play since I formed my business in 1997 and have met many fine people over the years. Helping them learn to properly play the pipes, even starting after their middle years, has been a milestone for me, and I thank God for being able to still do it at 75!

Slainte Mhath,
William (Bill) Jones <piperwill.com>

For Bill's writeup about the drumming aspect of competition, keep reading >>>

Drumming

I am not a drummer, but their contribution to the overall sound of a pipe band is vital. They consist of the bass drum, which maintains the steady tempo of the tunes; the tenor drum(s), which vary from one to several; and the snare drums with a minimum of two and an average of four. The snares are highly technical and have the rapid and complex settings to complement the tunes being played. The tenors are in midrange, and along with the bass, they add the fancy twirling of the drumsticks.

There are also solo competitions for drummers. The drums are judged on how well they time and set tempo with what the band plays. The snares have the very hard job not only of complementing the notes and even grace notes on the pipes along with often very complex settings, but also of memorizing the tunes and maintaining the ornamentation of the tunes.

The famous jazz drummer, Buddy Rich, once told Johnny Carson on his late-night show, that the finest drummer in the world was Alex Duthart, the lead stroke for the world champion Shotts and Dykehead Caledonia Pipe Band from 1958 to 1960. Carson had no clue what he was talking about, expecting Rich to say *he* was the best!

William (Bill) Jones

Welcome CDSTI New Members!

We are pleased and honored to welcome the following new members to our society branch for 2022:

Amanda Blackwell • Diane Robertson Cook

Kathy Robertson Gossett

Mike and Alison Hartzell • Jordan Jaska

Traci Alan Nordheim • John David Robertson

William Robertson

2021 Games Report

Dave Robertson, CDSTI President

September—Sherman

The 2021 Sherman Games (normally held in March) were finally held in late September at a new venue in Sherman. Compared to previous years, the turnout was rather disappointing, but those who did attend had a good time.

We used our new Clan Crest banner for the first time. The embroidered crest was donated by Sarah Harriman.



Jack Robertson donated the Robertson Hunting tartan, and Janis Roberson had it all sewn together, including the rickrack edging. Richard Roberson made the wooden pole and cross bar. It looks really good being carried at the front of the Clan in a festival parade.

October—Kerr County

Frank Woodall and wife Raylene set up the tent for the one-day Kerr County Festival and Scottish Highland Games in Ingram, Texas. Jack Robertson also helped in the tent. There was no piping or dancing competition, but many



folks came out to watch the athletic games. The festival management announced that they will continue to have the games on the second Saturday in October.

Alamo City Band at Kerr County Games

November—Salado

Richard and Janis Roberson again set up the tent for the Central Texas Scottish Gathering and Highland Games in Salado held November 13 and 14. The weather was very nice, which helped bring out a good crowd. We were able to sell a lot of merchandise and sign up several new members and several renewing members for 2022.

We held the Texas AGM in the Clan tent on Saturday afternoon. Frank Woodall was elected Vice President, and the current Vice President, Jack Robertson, took Frank's spot on the Board of Directors. We also elected new member Mike Hartzell to the Board to fill a vacant spot, bringing us up to full strength.



Jack Robertson carries Clan Crest banner in Salado parade with Richard Roberson, Dave Robertson, and Bill Jones

We had some drama at these games! The highland cow from the Leslie Clan tent somehow made its way to our tent. After a while, a couple of ladies from the Leslie Clan came to our tent, claiming that their cow had been reeved and demanding its return.

We explained that the cow had wandered into our tent, and we were merely looking after it so that no harm came to it, and that we had no desire to renew ancient rivalries! The ladies accepted our explanation, along with a glass of Donna Jones' famous Atholl Brose, and all ended peacefully.



Mistress from Clan Leslie

CDSTI 2022 Board of Directors

The Annual General Meeting of the Clan Donnachaidh Society of Texas was held on November 13, 2021 at the games in Salado, Texas. Plans were made for the upcoming year, and the following slate of officers and directors were voted in to serve the Society for 2022.

<i>Officers</i>	<i>Directors</i>	
Dave Robertson, <i>President</i>	Bill Jones, <i>Clan Piper</i>	Mike Hartzell
Frank Woodall, <i>Vice President</i>	James Jones, <i>Membership</i>	Kathy Johnson
Valerie Wymore, <i>Secretary</i>	Richard Roberson, <i>Genealogy</i>	Micah Robertson
Janis Roberson, <i>Treasurer</i>	Paula Robertson, <i>Newsletter</i>	

Limited Edition Clan Donnachaidh Coasters

For sale at the Sherman Celtic Festival and Highland Games March 20–21. These one-of-a-kind Clan Donnachaidh keepsakes will not be around long. The set of four coasters has rubberized backs and display a high-quality reproduction of the clan crest on a Robertson Red tartan background.



2022 Festivals/Games in Texas

For venue information and directions, go to the respective website.

Next Weekend!

March 19–20	Sherman Celtic Festival and Highland Games	Pecan Grove West Park, Sherman	shermancelticfest.com
April 2–3	San Antonio Highland Games	Helotes Fair Grounds, Helotes	sahga.org
April 9	Grapevine Lake Celtic Festival	3000 Meadowmere Lane, Grapevine	grapevineceltic.com
April 9	Houston Highland Games and Festival	Humble Civic Center Arena	houstonhighlandgames.com
May 6–8	Texas Scottish Festival and Highland Games	Wise County Fairgrounds, Decatur	texasscottishfestival.com
October 8	Kerr County Celtic Festival and Scottish Highland Games	Ingram	kerrcountyceltic.com
November 12–13	Central Texas Scottish Gathering and Highland Games	Salado	saladomuseum.org

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