



Hi Friend,

My trip to New Zealand before the festive period was most enjoyable. The trip included a stop-over at Singapore where I had made contact with some local pipers. To my astonishment, there was a Boys' Brigade competition on the very weekend we were there. It is very encouraging to see so much good teaching in piping around the world. Earlier this year, for example, I taught in Hong Kong which has a huge Scout movement, one which includes a large piping and drumming element.

Whilst in Brisbane I visited Rory Gunn and Malcolm MacRae and had a very pleasant afternoon beside the beach on the Gold Coast ... which naturally involved some piping! We then headed to New Zealand itself and it was great to be back in my old stomping ground and meeting up with family and friends. The main meaningful aspect of the trip was judging at the Jenny Mair Square Day competition in Palmerston North, which my mother was involved with at the beginning. I later presented the trophy she donated some years previously.

I started the day by judging some solo competitions and was encouraged to hear so many good youngsters. At 11:00 we started the band contests. It featured 16 bands over four grades and, once again, the standard of playing was very encouraging. It was particularly pleasing to see the sheer amount of youngsters playing and the high standards being achieved. Some of these bands will have no difficulties in securing prizes in Scotland. It was especially nice to see my old band of Manawatu Scottish full of youngsters and producing an incredible performance. Later in the day. I presented the Hitchings Trophy for the best overall Grade 2 Band.

So, it's now the new year and I am back at the workshop and catching up with orders and testing all the reeds prior to despatch. Following on from the statement in this newsletter's subject field, any physics professor will tell you that the bagpipe is a closed circuit instrument – which means the sound only travels outwards from the reeds. Therefore, ***there is no sound in a pipe bag*** .

I am looking forward to attending a regimental dinner at Inchdrewer House, Edinburgh at the end of this month. Inchdrewer House is, for those that don't know, where the Army School of Bagpipe Music and Highland Drumming is located and the dinner is to mark the 20 years since the School moved there from Edinburgh Castle. It will be good to catch up with my former Army colleagues.

On February 2, I will be heading to the south of England for a fund-raising recital at Whittlebury Hall in Northamptonshire. Robert Watt, a champion piper and someone who plays my reeds, is the recitalist. The event is in memory of Iain Westgate, who died last year and the funds raised will go to Milton Keynes Cancer Hospital. If you are in the area please come along for a great night of piping for a very good cause.

A fortnight later, I will be judging at the Queen Mary Scottish Festival at Long Beach, California. This takes place over February 14-16.

As ever, feel free to contact me with any aspects of my products. Email me at bruce@highlandreeds.com

If you own any of my products I would encourage you to register them via my [website](#). If you would like to buy any of my products, click on the blue button below which will take you to your local stockist.

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Enjoy your piping,

Bruce Hitchings MBE BEM.

• ***In February (22nd) I will be instructing at the [Wes Weber workshop in San Francisco](#).***

• In June, I travel to California – San Diego – on June 19-26 where I am a long-term instructor at the Rob McIntock California School of Piping and Drumming, the highly respected piping and drumming school run formerly by the College of Piping (2019 group photo, below).

• The following week, I head to Arizona where I teach at the Jim Thompson Piping and Drumming School in Flagstaff (from July 10-17).

Correction: Apologies but last month's newsletter inadvertently stated the wrong dates for the San Diego and Flagstaff schools. I have corrected them in this newsletter. A 'thank you' to Gordon Brown of Boghall & Bathgate Pipe Band for pointing this out to me. I would like to congratulate his father on his overdue award – an MBE – in the recent Queen's New Year Honours list.

