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Hi Friend,

Once again I hope this month's newsletter finds you and your loved ones well and healthy amid this pandemic. As I wrote last month, I am still working from home, making reeds and keeping on top of orders. I am also using the time to improve my website to make it more user-friendly. If you have purchased any of my products, please [register them on the website](#). There is also a new section under '[Articles](#)' where you can submit comments and footage of your playing. Pipers of all abilities are most welcome; let us know what you think of our products and the new site by leaving a comment on it ... or a tune. I'm also trying to collect some images of me playing and teaching through the years. If you have some images you'd be willing to share please email them to me,

including a caption of event and date.

No doubt, you, like me, are having a 'wee blow' each Thursday evening at 20:00 in tribute to our doctors, nurses and care workers. It is a simple way for us to extend our thanks to them for the work they're doing in this pandemic.

Ideas like this catch on and I've noticed a lot of pipers posting their clips of this and a host of other good causes on social media during the lockdown. This brings up issues such as what music is appropriate and who should post as well as the *sound* of the pipes in the video recording. The piping world is full of dilettantes – at all levels – and I have seen that some people have criticised performances either for their playing ability or their instrument. I believe it is unfair to be too harsh on pipers who are trying to support good causes as you don't have to watch/listen; they are not actually playing in public.



As far as the quality of the all the recordings go, most digital recordings devices, phones or tablets systems are full of electronic wizardry and may only give a generalisation of what is real. They take out all the lower and higher frequencies which then removes the bass harmonics and the higher harmonics that give a richer chanter sound. They also use a system called 'looping', which basically means they repeat the drone sound as constant background sound. Plus some pick up certain chanter notes which are then over recorded i.e. distorted. This is why so many recording of bagpipes sound different to what the real sound of those pipes actually are

live. There are however some devices where you can control the microphone's recording levels and do not use this 'looping' set up. If you plug in an external microphone you can normally override these built in systems.

People used to go to competitions to hear the top players and bands but now you can hear and watch them online. Additionally video conferencing software is being used as a medium to teach. The digital age is great, but I do know from being at some competitions in the past that even recordings from the BBC do not actually reproduce the sound accurately compared to the live performance. I worry that the harmonics in the sound of the Great Highland Bagpipe is being forgotten and that a constant, non-harmonic drone sound is being accepted – it's maybe something that judges need to be more critical of.

On that note, it was great to receive some positive feedback to last month's newsletter in particular about the bass drone being the fundamental harmonic of the bagpipe and therefore so important to the overall sound. In last month's newsletter, I included a quote I attributed to Duncan Johnstone whilst on a trip to New Zealand. A few of you have reminded me that Duncan did not actually visit NZ. The quote was: "Hold the long notes; let the drones have a chance." I'm not quite sure if it was Donald Morrison on his visit to NZ or maybe Duncan later on in Scotland who said this. However, no offence was meant and I apologise for the inaccuracy. It is still a great quote.

John Hanning, who won the Gold Medal at the 1987 Argyllshire Gathering with the tune, *Isabel MacKay*, was in touch and passed on a comment made by the late Donald MacPherson [pictured, above, some time during the 1950s] during his visit to NZ. Donald, said John, believed in giving the low A a tiny elongation so as to better enjoy the harmonics. Isn't it amazing that the pipers of Donald's generation had such respect and knowledge of harmonics compared with some pipers today?

Thank you for reading this newsletter and for your support.

Continue to keep the circle tight and stay safe. Enjoy your piping.

Slainte,





Bruce Hitchings MBE BEM.

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• The Rob McLintock School of Piping and Drumming school schedule for June in San Diego has been cancelled but Flagstaff, Arizona's 's Jim Thomson School' in July is still planned to run. The photo, below, shows last year's school:



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