

A WEE BIT O PIPE AND DRUM HISTORY

Though popular belief sets varying dates for the introduction of bagpipes to Scotland, concrete evidence is limited until approximately the 15th century. The Clan Menzies still owns a remnant of a set of bagpipes said to have been carried at the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314, though the veracity of this claim is debated. There are many ancient legends and stories about bagpipes which were passed down through minstrels and oral tradition, whose origins are now lost. However, textual evidence for Scottish bagpipes is more definite in 1396, when records of the Battle of the North Inch of Perth reference "warpipes" being carried into battle. These references may be considered evidence as to the existence of particularly Scottish bagpipes, but evidence of a form peculiar to the Highlands appears in a poem written in 1598 (and later published in *The Complaynt of Scotland* which refers to several types of pipe, including the Highland: "On hieland pipes, Scotte and Hybernicke / Let heir be shraichs of deadlie clarions."

In 1746, after the forces loyal to the Hanoverian government had defeated the Jacobites in the Battle of Culloden, King George II attempted to assimilate the Highlands into Great Britain by weakening Gaelic culture and the Scottish clan system, though claims that the Act of Proscription 1746 banned the Highland bagpipes are not substantiated by the text itself nor is there any record of any prosecutions under this act for playing or owning bagpipes but it is an oft repeated myth. However the loss of the Clan Chief's power and patronage and widespread emigration did contribute to its decline. It was soon realised that Highlanders made excellent troops and a number of regiments were raised from the Highlands over the second half of the eighteenth century. Although the early history of pipers within these regiments is not well documented, there is evidence that these regiments had pipers at an early stage and there are numerous accounts of pipers playing into battle during the 19th century, a practice which continued into World War I when it was abandoned after the early battles, due to the high casualty rate.

The custom was revived by the 51st Highland Division for their assault on the enemy lines at the start of the Second Battle of El Alamein on 23 October 1943. Each attacking company was led by a piper, playing tunes that would allow other units to recognise which Highland regiment they belonged to. Although the attack was successful, losses among the pipers were high, and they were not used in combat again during the war. A final use of the pipes in combat was in 1967 during the Aden Emergency, when 1st Battalion, The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders were led into the rebel-held Crater district by their Pipe Major playing the regimental marches.

Today pipe bands no longer compete in battle, but in competition with one another. Competition bands are usually comprised of multiple pipers joined by snare, tenor (know for their spinning battons), and base drummers. Most bands also use a drum major for marching events such as massed bands and parades.

