

On Monday night 6th March 2023 I was invited (as a last minute replacement) to Judge the QHPS Light Music competition. I had entered to play but a last minute unexpected change called for me to “park” my pipes and take a seat at the Judge’s table.

I enjoyed the evening as I rarely get to hear all of the competitors. I have been an appointed Queensland Judge since 1994 with a couple of years as Vice Principle of Piping Qld, but usually compete in solos and bands so do not often have the pleasure of sitting through all of the performances. During the evening I did form a suspicion that the large air conditioning outlet in the middle of the competing room had a major impact on all pipers’ fine tuning. I commented afterwards that pipes need to firstly be able to tune themselves and fine tune “on the boards’ plus watch out for aircons or other air streams that interfere with tuning.

D Grade players were asked to play an AIR and a March. C Grade and A/B Grade Players were asked to play March then and Strathspey and Reel. Tuning before the Strathspey and Reel was permitted.

No ‘crit’ sheets were issued on the night so I have endeavoured to make my comments about each performance helpful to pipers seeking written feedback. The D grade players all attended at the Judge’s bench after their tunes and received some verbal feedback but a written note might assist their tutors with areas to work on in the future.

D Grade Slow Air followed by 2/4 March.

First to play was **Cameron McConville**.

SLOW AIR - Cameron’s instrument was well tuned but some uneven blowing affected the overall sound. There was a bit of confusion on the repeat of the first part (I wrote the word ‘lost’ in my notes) and a small skirl (refer to blowing mentioned before). The 2nd part had a much bigger departure from the tune (more memorising is needed) and some small technical issues. I noted that the tune was very musical.

MARCH – Cameron was blowing much harder in this tune which affected the sound/tuning. The March was moving along but had ‘crashed’ in the 2nd part x 2. The 3rd and 4th parts were OK. I noted that Cameron was ‘well taught’ and just needs more practice on memorising the tunes. Keep up the good work Cameron!

2nd to play was **Ostyn Reardon**.

AIR - Ostyn’s pipes were good but I noted that they needed a ‘fine tune’ prior to starting in his Air. In the air I noted a number of technique issues needing more practice eg F grip x 2, Birl, C grip x 2.

MARCH – I made number of noted regarding technique errors with my final note to myself stating ‘GOOD! MORE TECHNIQUE!’. Technique to work on were B doublings, D throw (sound Lo G) Hi A Grip. When Cameron improves these small technical and blowing issues, I believe we will see some very good music coming our way.

3rd player was **Fred Bailey**

AIR - Fred presented with a very nice sounding instrument that was blown well and played a very nice and musically played AIR called ‘Sarah’s Song’. My note have NO errors noted which had a clear impact on the results.

MARCH – Fred’s march was played like a band might play it and was a bit round for my taste. The ‘down’ beats needed a little more time and the ‘up’ beats were not expressed as much as they could have been. There was a bit of confusion in the 3rd part and I wrote ‘lost’ but recovered in the 4th part.

My final note was Sound nice! Work on ‘feel’ and technique! Fred is another strong ‘up and coming’ player who we should keep an ear out for in the future.

4th on was **Matt Stephen**

Matt played a MARCH only. I noted that the instrument was not completely tuned from the start and 1 x technique error on a birl was my only criticism which resulted in Matt's 2nd place. I also noted to MARCH and avoid standing still. Another player to watch for in the future!

5th player was **Angus Seeto**

MARCH- Angus played a march only as well. I noted that the drones were not 'locked in' and I noted only 1 x small technique error resulting in Angus' first place. Even though all players had small issues, Angus' performance was in front.

6th player was **Angus Hurlock**

AIR – Angus played a one parted tune. The rules did not state how many parts were needed so I Judged on merit of what was played. I heard a nice air with no errors noted ie a 'clean run' which resulted in 3rd place.

MARCH – Angus played a 2 part tune and got a bit lost in the 2nd part. More memorising and practice needed!

7th player was **Lachlan Appleton-Seymour**

I have made some notes below bout Cameron Appleton-Seymour – these notes relate to Lachlan as well.

MARCH – Lachlan had some small technical errors but overall had a nice sound and played a good tune with 2/4 'swing' resulting in his 3rd place in the march.

Overall D grade players demonstrated a lot of work in the background with some technique and blowing errors that will clear up with practice and some whip cracking by their good tutors. I mention that all solo pipers should be learning 2 parted Airs and 4 parted marches. There are many VERY simple marches out there and D grade players need to aim towards the next higher grade.

D Grade results:

	AIR		MARCH
1	Fred Bailey	1	Angus Seeto
2	Ostyn Reardon	2	Matt Stephen
3	Angus Hurlock	3	Lachlan Appleton-Seymour

C GRADE Only 2 x players competed in C grade: **Zali Rogers and Nick Shelburn.**

MARCH - First on was **Zali** who played 'Inveran' a very famous tune written by GS MacLennan around 100 years ago. The tune was played with a nice feel and I only noted some B tarlouaths were very fast and placed a question mark ??? next to my notes . Zali also had a slightly flat Hi G and drones sharper than her chanter which I am sure, with more experience, will be sorted prior to playing in the future.

STRATHSPEY/REEL

Zali's had a 'clean run' her strathspey but still had a flat Hi G and was looking good. Unfortunately a choke in the 2nd part threw her out of the running for first place. When Zali improves her blowing and instrument control I believe we will see some good piping in the future.

2nd on was **Nick Shelburn.**

MARCH - During Nick's march I noted a few technique errors with a note for Nick to work on B strikes the most.

STRATHSPEY - In the strathspey I noted that had a good run with only a comment on timing for the D strike in the 3rd part. REEL – Nick's reel was clean except for a GDE played in the wrong order in the 2nd part ending.

Zali placed first in the march with Nick second. Nick was first in the strathspey and reel

C GRADE RESULTS

	MARCH		STRATH/REEL
1	Zali Rogers	1	Nick Shelburn
2	Nick SHelburn	2	Zali Rogers

A/B GRADE

First player was **Rebecca Capon**

MARCH – Rebecca played PM Donald MacLeod's tune Knightswood Ceilidh and had a fairly good run with a missed birl in the 1st, 3rd and 4th parts and an unfortunate large choke in the 3rd part which put her out of the prize list.

STRATHSPEY – Rebecca's strathspey was called "spitfire, a tune I have never heard of prior to Monday night. It is a very musical tune but it sounded like it was recently learnt with a fumble in the 1st part, another birl and another choke in the 4th part.

REEL – Broadford Bay – Rebecca was much more confident in this tune but had an unfortunate choke in the 2nd part.

2nd player was **Michael Roger**

MARCH – Michael started tuning up with a nice sounding instrument but had trouble fine tuning in the comp room and had drones that were not all together at the start of his tunes. The march was Mrs John MacColl a very highly respected and successful solo tune (a tune heard often at the former winners MSR in Oban and Inverness).

I felt that Michael played Mrs John very cautiously and much like a band with not enough difference between down and up beats and rushed off Lo A and G a few times. It was a fairly clean run but did not make the prize list due a lack of 'solo' style to the tune and playing very cautiously which undermines the 'music' of the tune.

STRATHSPEY Caledonian Society of London - I noted a good change but a 'tad cautious' with an unfortunate fumble or 2 and a choke in the 3rd part which put Michel out of contention for the prize list.

REEL Major Manson– I noted that I was confused around the change from strathspey to reel. To me it sounded like Michael had gotten lost or alternatively had a few beats too many in the change. From memory I counted around 3

beats minimum before starting the reel. By now the drones were very far out of tune with a small skirl to Lo A in the 3rd part and missed E strike in the 4th. With more work we will see Michael play very well.

3rd on was **Abbas Manchadi** – I note the entry list said Austin but I have only known Abbas by that name so it remains an unsolved mystery.

MARCH Glengarry Gathering – Abbas started out well but is still working on some movements to certain notes. I enjoyed the tune and when Abbas works out the wrinkles I know he is currently working very hard on fixing, I am certain we will see some top performances.

STRATHSPEY Tulloch Castle – I noted a clean performance with only a choke in the 2nd part and a slight fumble in the 3rd and 4th parts.

REEL The Grey Bob- I noted a good run with 1 x only fumble on a birl in the 3rd part

Tom McGirr was 4th on Tom is a highly successful solo piper and well respected piping Judge.

Tom is currently practicing very hard to compete with top Grade 1 Band Fife Police in Scotland for 2023. Departing in June 2023 and staying for at least 3 months. As an item of trivia, Tom's partner Mandy Pateman has been selected to perform in the Edinburgh Military Tattoo this year and they will join together in Scotland after all commitments have been fulfilled. It is a great honour for both of them to 'make the grade' and I know we all look forward to learning from them upon their return.

MARCH David Ross – Tom played a nicely expressed march on a very nice sounding instrument with a couple of small technique errors that knocked him out of first place.

STRATHSPEY Tulloch Castle – a good tune with strathspey 'feel' only marred by a tiny choke in the 4th part – again knocking Tom out of the top spot.

REEL – Traditional by PM Donald MacLeod – a nice reel with a clean run.

5th to play was **Cameron Appleton-Seymour** who I suspect is related to young Lachlan who played earlier and might also be connected with Byron Appleton-Seymour a top piper and Highland Dancer with brother Grayson (another great piper) originally from New Zealand. It appears that Byron has been cracking the whip under young Cameron as he put on some very good performances. Readers might also note the name is the same as the Julie Appleton-Seymour QHPS Hornpipe and Jig competition held later in the year. This contest is in memory of Byron's mother Julie, a top Highland Dancing competitor, teacher and Judge in New Zealand.

MARCH Mrs John MacColl – Cameron had no trouble with tuning his pipes and presented a very nice instrument with a good rendition of 'Mrs John'. I could give small tips and pointers about how I think the tune could be improved but for the evening Cameron's march was the best with no errors noted and good musical 'swing' resulting in a well deserved first place. Cameron is also heading over to Scotland this year to play with top Grade 1 band Glasgow Police. I am sure we will hear some good stuff from Cameron when he gets back which I know he will pass on the Queensland Police Juvenile pipers who I hear he has been allocated to teach.

STRATHSPEY Dora MacLeod – I noted a less than perfect Eidre in the 3rd part but I was being very picky.

REEL – Brown Haired Maid by PM Donald MacLeod – my notes contain no errors or critique until the very last F strike of the tune.....it was ALMOST flawless. Hopefully Cameron will be to take in a few solo comps when across

and will notice that there needs to ZERO ERRORS do well over there. Overall, Cameron had a good sound with an almost clean run and well deserving of first place in both events.

6th to play was **Nick Tomkins** Pipe Major of City of Ipswich Pipe Bands (Grade 3 and 4)

Readers might like to hear that Nick's grade 4 band competed successfully only 2 days earlier at the Twilight Pipe Band competition and placed first. Nick's Grade 3 band also placed first in combined Grade 2/3 with a very clean run in the medley.

MARCH Inveran – Nick also play INVERAN but had a slightly band-ish approach. I noted no errors and deserved the 2nd place.

STRATHSPEY The Ewe Wi' the Crookit Horn – I noted a tiny crossing sound in the 4th part.

REEL Alec C MacGregor – I noted that the change 'stopped' like a band; some small technical errors and that the drones were quite 'out' being sharp in this tune. I suspect the aircon struck again. A well deserved 3rd place.

RE Strathspey/Reel separate to the March: - It was very refreshing to see the March and Strathspey/Reel separate as that is how it is done around the games in Scotland at every competition I have attended. The exceptions to this procedure are when the top players n A or P Grade (competing piper's association grades) are competing for example the former winners at the Northern Meetings in Inverness or the Argyllshire Gathering in Oban.

Last July and August 2022 I was in Scotland competed at 19 separate competitions over a 7 week period. I carpoled with top Scottish piper Brian Lamond who is currently making and supplying very high quality reeds all over the world as well as competing very successfully around the games. I also met up with (and cadged a few free rides from) QHPS member and well known young Brisbane piper Chris McLeish. Chris is doing VERY well around the games and is winning places right in the middle of top pipers for example at the Isle of Mull Games 2022, Chris placed 2nd (from memory) in between Pipe Major Ben Duncan (1st) and Brian Lamond (3rd). For reader's information Brian Lamond placed 1st in front of Angus McColl (the same Angus that has won Gold medals, Clasps and numerous other top professional comps) at the Arisaig Games 2022 so Chris is working his way up the ranks and I look forward to seeing him go all the way to the top.

Re **TUNING** - A note for young players is that chanters and notes can change without notice at any time usually by simply walking into a different room with a new temperature or a different method of air conditioning.

A/B GRADE RESULTS

	MARCH		STRATH/REEL
1	Cameron Appleton-Seymour	1	Cameron Appleton-Seymour
2	Nick Tomkins	2	Tom McGirr
3	Tom McGirr	3	Nick Tomkins

C GRADE RESULTS

	MARCH		STRATH/REEL
1	Zali Rogers	1	Nick Shelburn
2	Nick SHelburn	2	Zali Rogers

D Grade results:

Comments and Results from the evening of Monday 6/3/23 QHPS solo comp from Piping Judge for the evening
Mark McKENZIE

	AIR		MARCH
1	Fred Bailey	1	Angus Seeto
2	Ostyn Reardon	2	Matt Stephen
3	Angus Hurlock	3	Lachlan Appleton-Seymour