

When I reported last year as Acting Chairman I said that I intended to conduct a 'light touch' **review of the Society's aims and activities**. Having had structured conversations with all the committee and some other experienced members of the Society, I reported to the committee last January and we have attempted to address some aspect of my report at each subsequent committee meeting. By and large there emerged a high degree of satisfaction with the aims of the Society and the ways in which we attempt to continue to meet them, although some disappointment was expressed by several respondents that there is not a better attendance at some of the events which the Society runs, and there was some concern regarding the Society's age profile. It would not be appropriate to publish my notes, which were intended for the committee, on the website as an attachment to this report, but if any member would like to receive a copy electronically, on a personal basis, then I will be happy to forward one to them.

The annual **teaching weekend** was again held successfully in Melrose with a slightly increased attendance of 17. This year's splendid tutors were Iain MacInnes, Annie Grace and Gary West and a good time was had by all. The theme was 'tunes from around the world' and we are grateful to George Greig for his excellent organisation of the weekend. George has observed that this was the fourth such event that he has run and, while all were enjoyed and appreciated by those attending, on only one occasion has the event come near to breaking even. One problem is that the hotel is no longer providing good value for money (expensive teaching rooms and disappointing bedrooms) and we are currently looking for a possible alternative venue for February 2011.

The annual **summer school** was again held in Dundee under the auspices of Common Ground and was attended by five members of the Society, two coming from a considerable distance. Instruction was expertly provided by Neil Paterson. We are indebted to Tom Robertson who liaises with Common Ground on our behalf and who reports that it was again a successful event, with one of the attractions being the opportunity to mix and play with other musicians. As this is run as a Common Ground event there is no financial exposure for the Society.

Publications: Several of the tunes from Melrose were included amongst others in a new 'international' tune book edited by George Greig and published under the title '**A New Way to Melrose**'. It is selling very well and receipts have already exceeded the costs of publication. LBPS members have been invited to submit further tunes in the public domain and if there is a good response a second volume will be considered. '**A Collection of Pipe Tunes**', perhaps best known as 'The Yellow Book', based on Peacock's collection of tunes for Northumbrian and Scottish smallpipes, was republished jointly with the Northumbrian Pipers' Society as a new edition resulting from considerable editorial work by Julia Say and some invaluable input from Matt Seattle, to both of whom we are very grateful. Also, in February, we launched the publication of '**The Wind in the Bellows**', a handbook for teachers of bellows pipes, which was largely written by Jock Agnew to whom the Society is very much indebted, and which attracted a number of favourable reviews in the piping literature. During the course of the year fruitful interaction with Erik Ask-Upmark, a talented Swedish folk musician and player of Swedish and other bagpipes, has led to work being well advanced on a collection of attractive Swedish tunes which are suitable for Scottish bellows-blown pipes: this is expected to be published quite soon. As part of this project Erik conducted a workshop for us on some of these tunes within the 'Northern Stream' element of Edinburgh's Ceilidh Culture festival in April.

The **Annual Competition**, ably organised by Judy Barker, returned to Edinburgh in April and attracted a somewhat larger entry and audience than was the experience in Glasgow. While most classes were well-subscribed, it was disappointing that there were no entries for the Novice smallpipes and only one for the Intermediate. The venue was Broughton School which was adequate, but we think that the new venue we have chosen for this Collogue may also prove an attractive proposition for the 2011 competition. At anyrate, we are grateful to the Army School of Bagpipe Music both for having us for the Collogue and for being prepared to have us back in April if that is our wish.

An innovation this year was a **Grand Concert** presented in early June at Lennoxlove, the seat of the Duke of Hamilton near Haddington, at which the four main types of bellows pipes currently played in these islands were performed. The musicians were our Secretary Judy Barker (Scottish smallpipes and voice), Andy May (Northumbrian pipes), Fin Moore (Border pipes) with Sarah Hoy (fiddle), Gary West (Scottish smallpipes) and Jarlath Henderson (Uilleann pipes). The Great Hall was full and the audience enjoyed an outstanding evening of scintillating playing. Two clips of the remarkable unrehearsed finale are available on the LBPS website.

At each event organised by the Society we aim to make available the full range of **merchandise** on sale by the Society. We are grateful to Tom Dingwall, our merchandising expert, who nobly conveys this material around the country on the back of his motorbike and who has helped to ensure that our sales continue at a healthy level.

In August we were once again responsible for an evening of mainly bellows piping at the Festival Club at **Piping Live!** the international piping festival run in Glasgow by the National Piping Centre. It was a privilege to arrange a talented line-up of young and more experienced pipers again this year and the evening, which was well-subscribed and enthusiastically received, continued until well into the next day. For various reasons the bellows workshop run last year at the College of Piping was not repeated this time, but will be kept under review for the future.

The Society's **membership** remains bouyant, with 279 paying and 38 non-paying members. Indeed, membership is growing although that is net of significant losses each year so it is also a changing membership. The Committee is however mindful of the advancing age profile mentioned above and is attempting to address this through the attraction of younger members.

In order to continue to encourage people to take up bellows piping the Committee has this year invested in two new sets of '**student pipes**' kindly made for us by Richard Evans, which represent an advance on our sets of practice pipes and are available for hire (both sets are already out on hire). A further set is on order. Some of the better sets of practice pipes, which have already paid their way to the Society through hire charges, will be offered for sale to members at the Collogue (no reasonable offer refused).

Since the last AGM there have been two issues of **Common Stock**, now edited by Pete Stewart, and Helen Ross has compiled two **Newsletters**. There would have been a third Newsletter had the planned date not coincided with the second issue of Common Stock which effectively covered all that there was to be said. Nevertheless, if members feel that between these two publications and the website we are still not providing sufficient information, then do please tell us how we might make amends.

Recently the Committee has reviewed the **Society's Constitution** under the guidance of Helen Ross. Setting aside a number of minor typographical and presentational matters which can be regarded as purely editorial, we found that generally it remained 'fit for purpose' apart from the items addressed in the Committee's Motion before the AGM.

The **Society's financial position** will be reported on by our Treasurer, Iain Wells, who continues to take good care of our resources. Suffice to say that we are in good financial health with accumulated reserves that are fully sufficient to support any reasonable initiatives that can be shown to be within the purposes of the Society. The committee is always ready to consider any proposals that the wider membership may wish to bring forward, and indeed encourages members to engage with the committee in this way.

During the year we have been giving attention to the **Society's archives** which are at present kindly held by our President, Julian Goodacre. It is important that key documents, recordings and photographs are kept in safekeeping professionally, and we will be transferring material to the National Library of Scotland in due course. Meantime Julian has been hard at work sorting out the considerable amount of material that he holds, and Pete Stewart has started work on a review of recordings held by Julian and by the School of Celtic and Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh. We are also very grateful to Bill Sutherland for

presenting the Society with a large collection of his photographs taken during the Society's early years: his generosity will be publicly acknowledged at the Collogue.

The **Society's website** has been managed for several years by Anita Evans, and we are enormously grateful to her for her services. She is retiring from that position at the end of October and being replaced by Pete Stewart who has already made an energetic start in reviewing the scope of the website and the prospects for upgrading it into a more interactive instrument which in due course might allow for active engagement with members and the delivery of some of the 'back office' functions on which the Society relies. It is hoped that this will increase its usefulness to the membership and the general public at large, and may be particularly attractive to potential younger members. Pete will be making a presentation on this on the morning of the Collogue.

In conclusion I must again thank all the committee for their unfailing hard work and support throughout the year, and particularly Judy Barker our Secretary who does so much behind the scenes to keep the Society moving along in an orderly manner. My predecessor as Chairman, Jim Buchanan, leaves the committee at the AGM and I am most grateful to him for having been prepared to continue as a committee member for well over a year since his operation. I also pay tribute to our President, Julian Goodacre, who stands down at the AGM, for his support and creative input over the four years in which he has held office, and I am sure that the membership will wish to congratulate him most warmly on his marriage earlier this year.

That concludes my report for 2009/10.

Martin Lowe
25 October, 2010