

Alexander Muir Cupples



Alex Cupples Sr. was born in Broxburn, West Lothian, Scotland on August 26, 1923. He learned to play the pipes as a boy in Scotland from Tom Kettles. When he enrolled as a Boy Soldier in the Gordon Highlanders at the age of 14, he was tutored by many well-respected pipers, including Bob Nicol.

Alex served with the Gordons during the war as a piper, and saw active service in France and North-West Europe. In 1946 he graduated with distinction from the Army School of Piping, Pipe Major's course at Edinburgh Castle. At the age of 23 he was then appointed Pipe Major of the 2nd Battalion of the Gordon Highlanders, and later was Pipe Major of the 1st Battalion. Alex is the only person to have been pipe major of both. It also made him the youngest pipe major in the British Army.

Alex and his wife Janet were married in 1946. He left the army in 1953 and then worked as a foreman at J&P Coates threadmill for more than 20 years. After the army, Alex became the Pipe Major of the Pumpherston Pipe Band and lead them to many contest successes.

In 1974 the family moved to Brandon, Manitoba. Alex worked at DND Shilo as a storeman until his retirement in 1988. He was appointed Pipe Major of

Brandon's 26th Field Regiment RCA Pipe Band. During his retirement he also enjoyed his association with the Brandon Shrine Club Pipe Band. Alex played a key role in developing piping and pipe bands in the prairie region. He judged at many events. Alex was known for his no-nonsense adjudications and offering kindly advice on piping, piobaireachd and life matters! During his involvement with PPBAM, he helped establish solo and band grading systems in place of "age groups", games rules and other innovations of the time.

Alex taught many pipers in the Brandon area. He loved piobaireachd and was a great proponent of the "Balmoral" school. He also taught his Brandon students settings from Donald MacDonald and older collections. He also organized and ran the Brandon Highland Festival for many years. It pleased him to invite visiting judges and players to his house for a wee dram and a tune on the weekend of the games! Alex was a delightful and colorful character.

Janet passed away in 1996. Alex died at age 90 in March of 2014. They have 4 children, 7 grandchildren and several great-grandchildren.

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