

Ian Conn

Ian Conn was born in Edinburgh, raised in Galashiels, Scotland, and like many boys of his era, he started piping in the Boys' Brigade. Ian was called up for National Service in 1951, and was a member of the KOSBs, later being transferred to the Lowland Brigade Pipe Band, along with other well-known characters such as Harry McNulty and Tom McAllister, Jr. During his stay in the army, Ian was chosen to be the Lone Piper at the Edinburgh Tattoo. Ian was a well-known part of the Edinburgh piping scene in those years, and spent a lot of time in Sinclairs' shop, where he not only learned a lot about pipes and reeds, but where he made friendships that endured throughout his life. Following his time in the army, Ian was a member of the Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia Pipe Band, and a winner of the World Pipe Band Championship.

Ian and his family moved to Winnipeg in 1966, where he played with local bands, and in 1967 was instrumental in forming The Centennial Pipe Band of Winnipeg, which would travel and compete across Canada. The Centennial Pipe Band had Ian Conn as pipe-major, and several very experienced Scots, including Shotts member Tom Thompson, and Jim Barrie, the former lead-drummer of the Grade 2 World Champion Lady Victoria Colliery Pipe Band. Another notable member of the band at the time was a young Dave McNicol, who would go on to become the first L-D of the City of Victoria Pipe Band.

Following his years with the Centennial Pipe Band, Ian's very successful business life took him away from actively competing for a few years, until he returned as pipe-major of the Grade 2 Selkirk & District Pipe Band, which had several successful years under his leadership. Ian and his wife Betty also ran Clan Scotia Imports, which supplied piping and drumming equipment to local customers. In the last few years, Ian worked with the ANAVets Pipes & Drums in Winnipeg, and he judged occasionally.

Ian's impact on the piping scene in the prairies was intermittent, and still enormous. He had fantastic ears, and was exceptional at setting up pipes, responding to trying conditions, and he was very happy to share his knowledge with others. His ground-breaking work with the Centennial Pipe Band set the stage for many bands to follow, and his skill in working with reeds was passed on to many others.

Ian Conn died on June 14, 2011.

- Submitted by Iain MacDonald, Regina, Saskatchewan