

A Brief History of the Military Drum

Leading to the evolution of Pipe Band Drumming

Drum Major Wilson Young and Drum Major Allan Chatto OAM.

From "One Hundred Years of Pipe Band Drumming"

Reprinted by Holbæk Pipe Band with kind permission of the authors

Foreword

Although many articles have already been written on the subject of the Military Drum, "grey areas" still exist in its evolutionary history from the time of its introduction into the Western World to its acceptance and use within pipe bands. This article is an attempt to bring together disparate information from numerous sources and whilst it cannot be guaranteed that each and every item contained is strictly factual, it is a fair summary of the available wisdom to date. It should serve as broad background information to younger (and perhaps older) drummers.

One could only guess at the first drum sound created. Was it a prehistoric man accidentally striking a hollow log with a stone or a stick? Having heard it once, did he strike it again and again, enjoying its resonant sound? No one really knows. Archeological evidence from excavations and peat bog deposits indicate that drums of one kind or another have existed for around 30,000 years. There are written records of percussion instruments having existed in China circa 3000BC and there are traces to be found in India, from about the same era. There is also a poem from China, written in 1135 BC referring to "Lizard Skin Drums." From the American continent, too, evidence exists of drums being used by the Mayan and other early civilisations. The Greek and Roman armies also had their drums of one sort or another.

But it was quite a bit later than this, introduced via the Middle East or Asia Minor, that the first prototypes or precursors of the marching or military drum as we know them today, were brought to Europe by soldiers returning from The Crusades or 'Holy Wars'. These drums were often just lifted from the battlefield after fighting the Saracens and were looked upon as trophies or keepsakes. We know that the Wars of the Crusades commenced in 1096 and that the last was in 1291, so these drums first appeared in Europe somewhere around 1100 AD.

We can identify three main classes, types or sizes of drums used by the Saracens. There was the Nakareh, a very large kettledrum usually carried on the back of a camel, a smaller kettledrum called a Naqqara (later the word was corrupted to Naker), and from Persia, another even smaller drum, sometimes played with only one stick, called a Tabor (still referred to as a Tabor, Tabour, Taimbour and with versions known as Tambourin or Tambourine)

The military drum, as we know it today developed from a mixture of the Tabor and the Naker. It is debatable whether it is a large Tabor or a smaller version of the Naker, but these were the first military drums with a proper shell fitted with top and bottom animal skins tensioned by ropes or thongs, to be introduced into Europe in the early 12th Century. The next time you hear a drummer referring to his instrument as "nackered", perhaps he is referring to its original name rather than it's state of play.

It would appear that the main purpose of the drum in those early days was to strike fear into the hearts of the enemy whilst strengthening the resolve of fellow soldiers. For as long as the drums continued to sound, the Colours or flags/banners were still safe. At a later stage, various pre-determined drum beatings became a means of loudly confirming the order of the Commanding

Officer whose vocal orders tended to be drowned in the melee and clamour of battle In Europe, the Swiss were among the first to use drums in their armies on a regular, rather than random, basis. In fact, in the chronicles of the city of Basle, established in 1332, there is reference to drums and fifes - not fifes and drums. In England in 1492, drums were sometimes referred to as Sweche drums, recognising the Swiss as leaders in this development. Other words used were "droum" or "droume." It may be that the latter word still lingers with us, because in the British Army today, and in many other areas, the Drum Major is often referred to as the "Drummie".

Some years earlier, in 1457, the King of Hungary had large drums -Nakareh or kettledrums (so called because of their cauldron-like shape) -which were mounted on horses. These drum-horses acted as escorts when his envoys were sent to ask the French King for his daughter's hand in marriage.

In simple chronological order, some dates from military history are highlighted where this important instrument - the drum - is recorded

1527: "Scots March" composed by James V to commemorate the siege of Tantallon Castle.

1539: Parade at Westminster of "Droumes and Fyffes." By the 16th Century, all references to Nakers, Tabors, Sweeche, Droume and such had finally disappeared; the word "Drum" had firmly been established

1542: Henry VIII began to use large kettledrums (like Timpani); they came into general use in the English Army in about 1660. Later on, special carts, like a gun carriage, were used to carry the Kettledrums and the drummers.

1545: Henry VIII's famous ship, the Mary Rose (which sank shortly after launch) carried drums; they were rediscovered when the ship was raised in 1982.

1588: Sir Francis Drake, (who earlier had fought the Spanish Armada) when on his deathbed, was supposed to have asked that his drum be carried to Plymouth to be struck in times of danger, where-upon he would return from the dead to help. Drake's drum is probably the most famous of all drums because it was perpetuated in verse by Sir Henry Newbolt.

*'Take my drum to England
Hang it by the shore
Strike it when your powder's running low
If the Dons sight Devon, I'll quit the port o' Heaven
And drum them up the Channel as we drummed them long ago'*

1598: There were Field or Camp Calls, known as "Reveille", played at daybreak to rouse the soldiers.

1610: A special march was first played in Prince Harry's presence. This was revived in 1632 by Charles 1. It is the first written drum march. It was not broken into bars, but had sounds written to indicate each note; pou-tou, Rpoung, etc. (the early version of drummers'mouth music perhaps?) The forerunner of "Plup tup perickity plup, petup perickity plup"?

1634: First Military Discipline Manual was written with reference to "Drums and Drum Majors." The army drummer was comparatively well paid because he had various important duties to perform. In addition to playing the correct beatings for the various commands, he often had to be proficient in different languages in order to act as Interpreter, carrying messages to and from the enemy. He also often dealt out the punishment by flogging, as ordered by senior personnel. He had to do it well too or risk finding himself on the receiving end. He also was on duty at funerals.

1720: The Sultan of Turkey presented an entire military band to the King of Poland, incorporating percussion instruments never before seen or heard in Europe. The ensemble comprised of bass drum, deep (but portable) kettledrum, tambourine, cymbals, triangle, and what was referred to as a

"Jingling Johnnie". This was like a shortened version of a drum major's staff, but with a Turkish Crescent fixed at right angles across it. From the crescent dangled little bells and coloured plumes and ribbons. At the top of the staff was a small conical or umbrella-shaped cap from which other bells were suspended. The type of music played by this group was referred to as "Janissary Music".

The musicians, of course, coming from Turkey were dark-skinned men, and this whole colourful presentation was the envy of all and sundry. It became the "in-thing" to have black men as drummers wearing very colourful costumes. It has been suggested that the wearing of leopard skins by bass drummers relate to the introduction of black men into such bands. However, a separate school of thought claims that British Army officers who went big game hunting while serving in India and Africa encouraged the habit. It was a means of putting the animal skins to good use, and these sometimes carried a silver plate inscribed with the officer's name and regiment.

1746: In the Regiment of the Foot Guards, there is a reference to pipes, oboes, trumpet and side drum or snare drum. No mention of fifes here - they were obviously falling out of favour about this time.

1762: The Royal Artillery Band was formed.

1810: Samuel Potter wrote the first drum manual using staff notation, as we know it. The manual was called "The Art of Beating a Drum" and written on the 'C' space of the 'F' clef.

1812: He also produced "Potters Drum, Flute and Bugle Duty Tutor," which, as a manual of drum instruction was accepted in 1817 as the universal standard to be used by the military.

Samuel Potter was a cousin of Richard Potter, a well-known flute maker. His son, William Henry Potter also made flutes and drums. The various family names concerning the famous Potter musical businesses tend to be a bit confusing. Although Samuel Potter wrote the first manual and started selling drums and other musical instruments, he registered the business in his infant son's name "Henry Potter and Co". This was because he (Samuel) was a regular soldier and could not do business with his employer (the Army). There were two Potter's music businesses when Samuel died. His other son, George, had started out on his own too.

Incidentally, the bass drums at that time (around 1810-1815) were very wide, about twice the diameter of the skin or head. The drum was slung from the waist, not the shoulders. It was 1834 before the first use of a tenor drum is recorded. It was used in the band of The Royal Artillery. It is worth noting that this reference to tenor drum actually means tenor drum, as we know it today, (with a relationship to bass and snare drum sounds). Drums, which looked something like today's tenor drums, were in use long before 1834 but were played in the manner of a solo snare or side drum with hard or soft sticks.

1833: The formation of the first purely civilian brass band. It was a Works Band called "Walkers and Hardmans" and boasted 24 players.

1853: Only 20 years later the number of brass bands had increased to the extent that the first National Brass Band Contest was held at Belle Vue in Manchester, England So much for the drum on its own and for military and brass bands. What about pipers and pipe bands? We have to go back a little way to examine the genealogy of this. Back in fact to 1794.

1794: This was the year in which the British army regiment, The Gordon Highlanders, was raised. It should be noted that, on the 'official roll' or registration of all ranks, no pipers are mentioned, but drummers with a rank and a relevant pay structure were included.

1796: Pipers are mentioned in "Routine Orders". Even this first reference sounds a bit demeaning. The instruction was that pipers had to attend all fatigue duties, presumably to try to lighten the burden of the soldiers doing the chores. One angry piper, when told that he could not be officially

included on the records of the regiment as a piper, is said to have voiced his opinion about the huge injustice of drummers being registered. "They who only battered on dried sheep skins, requiring little skill, while he a piper - was a musician". Some things never change.

1805: On the 11th day of May, a piper, Alexander Cameron, was taken onto the official strength of the regiment; however, he was recorded as a drummer. There was still no official category for a piper. It is interesting to note that the correct and accurate description of the Gordon Highlanders Pipe Band is "Drums and Pipes of the Gordon Highlanders", not Pipes or Pipers and Drummers of the Gordon Highlanders.

1848: The 1st Pipe Band? There is an unsubstantiated story relating to The 79th Highlanders on board a fog-bound ship en route to Quebec. Pipers and drummers were apparently ordered to play on deck in order to warn other shipping of their presence.

1854: A few chosen Scottish regiments were given permission to have "5 pipers and a Pipe Major." Although these were the first official groups of bagpipers, we know from records that unofficial ones had already existed from long before this date. With the formal establishment of regimental pipers, the formation of pipe bands probably commenced - the first claimed by some to be The Gordon Highlanders. There is of course, some uncertainty as to the actual first band - official or unofficial. It was 1881 before all Highland Regiments received permission to formally include pipers on their roll calls but the general consensus is that one of the Scottish Regiments had the first formally recognised pipe band, probably around 1854/55.

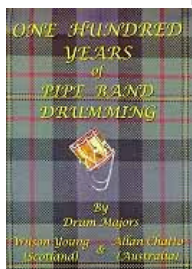
It is difficult to establish when purely civilian bands were actually formed although records of Militia/Civilian bands exist. For instance, The City of Edinburgh Rifle Volunteers was formed in 1859, maintaining a pipe band and a brass band from the outset. Generally speaking, when pipers and drummers had completed their service in the army, it would have been around this time that civilian pipe bands would have begun to form. Many enthusiastic groups existed and inevitably began competing with each other. Individuals emigrated to other countries within the British Empire, as it was then, and continued to cultivate their music in their new surroundings. Piping and Pipe Band Associations were formed as early as the 1920's in Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

The skills of pipe band drummers have increased dramatically since these early days and this publication illustrates the gradual technical progress developed by some of the individuals involved in the evolution of Pipe Band Drumming over the past 100 years or so.

Bibliography References:

Percussion Instruments and their History by James Blades; Military Music by Henry George Farmer; Handel's Kettledrums and other papers on military music by Henry George Farmer, Ph.D., D.Litt., Hon Mus.Doe.; The Drum by Hugh Barty-King; The Mitchell Library, Glasgow.

One Hundred Years of Pipe Band Drumming contains computer written scores by all the great names of the past and can be found or ordered from most Scottish shops. You may e.g. contact



Joe Nobles The Band Room in Glasgow, Scotland:

"THE BAND ROOM"
172-174 West Regent Street
Glasgow Scotland G2 4RL
Tel. 0141 248 5885
Fax 0141 348 2989
E-mail: info@thebandroom.fsnet.co.uk

Read a full review of the book at the Piper & Drummer:
<http://www.piperanddrummer.com/reviews/default.asp?aID=1025>

**The World Pipe Band Championships
1947- 2001**

Year	Band	Venue	Pipe Major
1947	Bowhill Colliery	Edinburgh	C. Sutherland
1948	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia	Glasgow	T. McAllister, Snr.B.E.M
1949	Glasgow Police	Edinburgh	J. MacDonald
1950	Edinburgh Police	Dundee	D.S. Ramsay
1951	Glasgow Police	Edinburgh	J. MacDonald
1952	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia	Ayr	T. McAllister, Snr.B.E.M.
1953	Clan McRae	Edinburgh	A. MacLeod
1954	Edinburgh Police	Aberdeen	D. S. Ramsay
1955	Muirhead & Sons	Stirling	J. Smith
1956	Muirhead & Sons	Belfast	J. Smith
1957	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia	Paisley	J. K. MacAllister
1958	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia	Aberdeen	J. K. MacAllister
1959	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia	Kirkcaldy	J. K. MacAllister
1960	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia	Inverness	J. K. MacAllister
1961	Muirhead & Sons	Edinburgh	J. Smith
1962	227 A &SH Regt.R.A. (T.A.)	Belfast	J. Weatherston, M.B.E., B.E.M.
1963	Edinburgh Police	Dumfries	I. McLeod
1964	Edinburgh Police	Ayr	I. McLeod
1965	Muirhead & Sons	Forfar	R. Hardie
1966	Muirhead & Sons	Inverness	R. Hardie
1967	Muirhead & Sons	Oban	R. Hardie
1968	Muirhead & Sons	Grangemouth	R. Hardie
1969	Muirhead & Sons	Perth	R. Hardie
1970	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia	Aberdeen	T. McAllister, Jnr.
1971	Edinburgh Police	Lanark	I. McLeod
1972	Edinburgh Police	Hawick	I. McLeod
1973	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia	Ayr	T. McAllister, Jnr.
1974	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia	Stirling	T. McAllister, Jnr.
1975	Edinburgh Police	Corby	I. McLeod
1976	Strathclyde Police	Hawick	I. MacLellan, B.E.M.
1977	Dysart & Dundonald	Aberdeen	R. Shepherd
1978	Dysart & Dundonald	Lanark	R. Shepherd
1979	Strathclyde Police	Nottingham	I. MacLellan, B.E.M.
1980	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia	Glasgow	T. McAllister, Jnr.
1981	Strathclyde Police	Aberdeen	I. MacLellan, B.E.M.
1982	Strathclyde Police	Glenrothes	I. MacLellan, B.E.M.
1983	Strathclyde Police	Glasgow	I. MacLellan, B.E.M.
1984	Strathclyde Police	Glasgow	I. MacLellan, B.E.M.
1985	Strathclyde Police	Hamilton	I. MacLellan, B.E.M.
1986	Strathclyde Police	Glasgow	I. MacLellan, B.E.M.
1987	78th Fraser Highlanders (Canada)	Glasgow	W. Livingstone
1988	Strathclyde Police	Glasgow	I. MacLellan, B.E.M.
1989	Strathclyde Police	Glasgow	I. MacLellan, B.E.M.
1990	Strathclyde Police	Glasgow	I. MacLellan, B.E.M.
1991	Strathclyde Police	Glasgow	I. MacLellan, B.E.M.
1992	Field Marshall Montgomery	Glasgow	R. Parkes
1993	Field Marshall Montgomery	Glasgow	R. Parkes
1994	Shotts and Dykehead Caledonia	Glasgow	R. Mathieson
1995	Simon Fraser University (Canada)	Glasgow	T. Lee
1996	Simon Fraser University (Canada)	Glasgow	T. Lee
1997	Shotts and Dykehead Caledonia	Glasgow	R. Mathieson
1998	Victoria Police (Australia)	Glasgow	N. Russell
1999	Simon Fraser University (Canada)	Glasgow	T. Lee
2000	Shotts and Dykehead Caledonia	Glasgow	R. Mathieson
2001	Simon Fraser University (Canada)	Glasgow	T. Lee

World Championships Grade One Best Drum Corps		
Year	Band	Leading Drummer
1947	Clan MacRae	J. Cairns
1948	Renfrew PB	Alex MacGregor
1949	Clan MacRae	Willie Paterson
1950	Clan MacRae	Willie Paterson
1951	Glasgow PB	Alex McCormick
1952	Glasgow PB	Alex McCormick
1953	Dalzeil Highland PB	Alex Duthart
1954	Red Hackle PB	Alex Ross
1955	Red Hackle PB	Alex Ross
1956	Fintan Lalor PB	Christy Merrigan
1957	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia PB	Alex Duthart
1958	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia PB	Alex Duthart
1959	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia PB	Alex Duthart
1960	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia PB	Alex Duthart
1961	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia PB	Alex Duthart/J. Hutton
1962	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia PB	Alex Duthart
1963	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia PB	Alex Duthart
1964	Edinburgh Police PB	Robert Montgomery
1965	Renfrew PB	Alex Hosie
1966	Invergordon Distillery PB	Alex Duthart
1967	Invergordon Distillery PB	Alex Duthart
1968	Edinburgh Police PB	Alex Duthart
1969	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia PB	Bill Stevenson
1970	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia PB	Alex Duthart
1971	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia PB	Alex Duthart
1972	Strathclyde Police PB	Alex Connell
1973	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia PB	Alex Duthart
1974	British Caledonian Airways PB	Joe Noble
1975	Dysart & Dundonald PB	James King
1976	Dysart & Dundonald PB	James King
1977	Dysart & Dundonald PB	James King
1978	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia PB	Alex Duthart
1979	Triumph Street PB	W. McErlean
1980	Dysart & Dundonald PB	James King
1981	Boghall & Bathgate Caledonia PB	Tom Brown
1982	Boghall & Bathgate Caledonia PB	Tom Brown
1983	Boghall & Bathgate Caledonia PB	Tom Brown
1984	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia PB	John Scullion
1985	Polkemmet Grorud PB	Jim Kilpatrick
1986	Boghall & Bathgate Caledonia PB	Tom Brown
1987	78th Fraser Highlanders PB	John Reid Maxwell
1988	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia PB	Jim Kilpatrick
1989	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia PB	Jim Kilpatrick
1990	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia PB	Jim Kilpatrick
1991	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia PB	Jim Kilpatrick
1992	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia PB	Jim Kilpatrick
1993	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia PB	Jim Kilpatrick
1994	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia PB	Jim Kilpatrick
1995	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia PB	Jim Kilpatrick
1996	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia PB	Jim Kilpatrick
1997	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia PB	Jim Kilpatrick
1998	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia PB	Jim Kilpatrick
1999	Simon Fraser University PB	J. Reid Maxwell
2000	RUC	Gary Corkin
2001	Boghall & Bathgate	Gordon Brown

Champion of Champions Drum Corps		
Year	Band	Leading Drummer
1987	Boghall & Bathgate Caledonia PB	Tom Brown
1988	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia PB	Jim Kilpatrick
1989	Power of Scotland PB	Eric Ward
1990	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia PB	Jim Kilpatrick
1991	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia PB	Jim Kilpatrick
1992	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia PB	Jim Kilpatrick
1993	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia PB	Jim Kilpatrick
1994	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia PB	Jim Kilpatrick
1995	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia PB	Jim Kilpatrick
1996	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia PB	Jim Kilpatrick
1997	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia PB	Jim Kilpatrick
1998	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia PB	Jim Kilpatrick
1999	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia PB	Jim Kilpatrick
2000	Field Marshall Montgomery PB	Andrew Scullion
2001	Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia PB	Jim Kilpatrick

World Solo Drumming Champions	
Year	Winner
1963	Dave Armit
1964	J. Hutton
1965	R. Barr
1966	R. Rea
1967	W. Young
1968	A. Duthart
1969	R. Montgomery
1970	Jim Hutton
1971	Jim Hutton
1972	J. Noble
1973	Jim Hutton
1974	R. Barr
1975	Joe Noble
1976	Bert Barr
1977	Jim Kilpatrick
1978	John Scullion
1979	John Scullion
1980	Jim Kilpatrick
1981	John Scullion
1982	John Scullion

World Solo Drumming Champions	
Year	Winner
1983	Jim Kilpatrick
1984	R. Rea
1985	Jim Kilpatrick
1986	Jim Kilpatrick
1987	Andrew Scullion
1988	Arthur Cook
1989	Paul Turner
1990	Jim Kilpatrick
1991	Jim Kilpatrick
1992	Jim Kilpatrick
1993	Andrew Scullion
1994	Gordon Brown
1995	Jim Kilpatrick
1996	Jim Kilpatrick
1997	Andrew Scullion
1998	Jim Kilpatrick
1999	Andrew Scullion
2000	Jim Kilpatrick
2001	Jim Kilpatrick

*Copyright by Drum Major Wilson Young and Drum Major Allan Chatto OAM.
From "One Hundred Years of Pipe Band Drumming"*

Reprinted by Holbæk Pipe Band in October 2002 with kind permission of the authors