

Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association – North of Scotland Branch
Minutes of Annual General Meeting – Sunday 22nd November 2015
The Locker Room, Trinity Quay, Aberdeen, 12 noon.

In attendance:

G Hamill - RSPBA
G Gauld – Chairman
A Skinner - President
L Niven – Hon Secretary
R Niven – Director
J Gibb – Director
H Mackay – Assistant/Minute Secretary, Music Board
R Cameron – Music Board
F Fotheringham – Treasurer
W Grant – Trophy Officer
C Fraser – Oldmeldrum RBL
D Fraser – Oldmeldrum RBL
S Oliphant- Buchan Peterson
K Cruickshank – Buchan Peterson
B Ashby – RAF Lossiemouth
H Dallas – Granite City Pipes & Drums
F Allan – Hon Life Member
N Selbie – Bucksburn & Dist
K Meehan – Stonehaven
L Buchan – Fraserburgh RBL
D Buchan – Fraserburgh RBL
M Chapman – Towie & Dist
E Chapman – Towie & Dist
F Allan – Hon Life Member
R Watson – Grampian District
G Wilson – Grampian District
J Lawson – Rubislaw
S Monaghan – Portlethen & Dist
S Cumming – Portlethen & Dist
S Taylor – City of Inverness
J Kelman – City of Inverness
R Grant – Deeside Caledonia

1: Welcome

The Chairman welcomed all those present and extended a special welcome to RSPBA Chairman, Mr Gordon Hamill & Mrs Florence Allan, Life Member.

At this point RN proposed Standing Orders. Seconded: Rubislaw

2: Obituaries

Mr John Davidson – Dornoch. Previously associated with BB band in West of Scotland. Regular attender at AGMs and active contributor.
Mr W Maitland – Bucksburn & District. Founder member and tutor to many young solo players playing in Branch bands and solo contests.

3: Apologies

W Barclay – Vice-Chairman
Northern Constabulary
IR Taylor
Wick RBL
Dornoch
Mr & Mrs R Forrest

Ballater & Dist
Mrs R Cruickshank
Elgin & Dist
Mr W Skinner
Dufftown
Ross & Cromarty
Lathallan Schools
Ardross
Badenoch & Strathspey
Ellon RBL
Kirkwall City
Turriff & Dist
Grampian Police Scotland
Culter & Dist
3 Scots

4: Matters arising from previous Minutes

- Noted that Ian Embelton is Chief Executive of RSPBA, not Executive Officer
- Auditors Report required two independent reviews of the books, this was done by D Buchan (Fraserburgh RBL) and G Gauld (Chairman)
- A number of candidates to attend summer school, Branch Education fund covered costs for 8 students from Towie, Huntly, and Badenoch & Strathspey
- Try Before You Buy at Aberdeen Games worked well with a number of youngsters and tourists showing an interest. Thanks to Jenny Murray, Christine Fraser, Raymond Whyte, Neil Selbie, Ranald Cameron and Heather Mackay for their help and assistance.
- Offering mini bands to schools still a consideration before bigger "Try before you buy" activity. G Gauld tried to take this to Banchory, but this was difficult as Banchory Band not a Branch band and local band cautious about not being able to offer regular tuition.

5: Chairman's Report

As presented in the Order Paper. Also congratulations to all branch bands in the prize lists at Major Championships & thanks to all who support the Branch local outdoor and indoor contests.

The canteen ladies at Gordon Schools, Huntly were presented with a £25 M&S voucher as a small thank you for their work at the indoor contests.

Unfortunately this year, there was some damage to the grass area outside the school due to cars being parked on it.

Personal thanks to Linda and Fiona for their diligence and to wish Fiona all the best as she is unfortunately giving up the Treasurers post due to work commitments.

Appeal to get younger people involved and to get more assistance at local outdoor & indoor contests. Each band should have a non-playing member on the day to help if required, with would help alleviate any problems, ideally a pool of helpers to pull from.

Proposed: Oldmeldrum Seconded: Rubislaw

6: Treasurers Report

As presented in the Order Paper

It was a healthier year for the Branch & good to see the Education Fund being used. Thanks to Linda for all her help & to the committee for their support. The books are being passed to The Chairman for further inspection. Chairman made reference to surpluses accumulating from financial agreements with groups i.e. ADC for Branch to promote and administer a contest on their behalf. Unusually ADC had in fact proposed an increase in 2015 as budget restrictions in future years may not allow for an increase if required.

G Hamill, indicated that a maximum of 10% of Education/Training cost will be reimbursed by HQ

Proposed: Deeside Caledonia Seconded: Fraserburgh RBL Gd3B

Auditors Report

As presented in the Order Paper
Incorporated with Treasurer's Report.

7: Music Board Report

As presented in the Order Paper

A sub-group is looking at restructuring of all grades from Grade 1 down. This would be for 2018 season.

World Solo Drumming – it has been agreed that some Branch solo contests now count as a regional qualifier for Adult Semi-finals.

Adjudication: Awaiting feedback on the consultative trials done in 2015

Education: A 3 year rolling format has been looked at for PBM1 – Year 1, PBM2 – Year 2, Adjudicators/Training – Year 3

Summer School – 1st – 5th August. Information will be out to Branches soon, and on RPSBA website.

Grampian District – New branch band, graded 4B

Discussion followed regarding every grade being effected by long time gap between qualifying heats and Final at the World Championships especially – Action BoD

Proposed: Deeside Caledonia Seconded: RAF Lossiemouth

8: Board of Directors Report

As presented in the order paper.

Good to see new local Branch contests.

There had been problems with the parking at Bathgate for the British Championships.

All bands to remain on the field at massed bands for Major Championships.

Discussion followed: RAF Lossiemouth suggested that only a set amount of bands take part, other bands to be fed in at back or only use nominated bands. Comment from Buchan PB – that a high percentage of bands have to qualify, why would bands who don't qualify stay for the finale? Also, could each Branch nominate 5 bands per contest? Sponsors like to see all bands take part in the Massed Bands due to promotion costs. Rubislaw – Is there a demand by RSPBA to take part in Massed Bands? This to be taken back to Directors for further discussion.

F Allan asked if disabled access was to be provided at any new premises being looked at for HQ – G Hammill replied, yes, but nothing has been confirmed re new premises yet.

G Gauld asked about Qualifying Heats for World Solo Drumming – What is the current status for this Branch?

G Hammill: There would be a maximum of 4 qualifying areas (regions) for Adults: GWoS, L&B, DP&A possibly incorporating NoS, NI or All Ireland

Branches to be encouraged to host "Open" contest for adults, which could possibly encourage a higher quality of player to enter, thus raising the profile of the solos.

Discussion followed: This might have a detrimental effect on our adult solo drumming at Branch level – one way round this could be to have an "Open" section and a "confined" section, run as one contest.

Andante have renewed their sponsorship with a new 5 year deal.

Proposed: Oldmeldrum RBL Seconded: RAF Lossiemouth

9: Correspondence

- Wester Ross & Gairloch: entries for solos must be registered with Branch Band apart from chanter/sticks & pads.
- Can there be an "Open Section" for Piping and should the contest be run by standard rather than of age? This matter arose from comments for consideration from a parent where the intent was to offer a more challenging level of competition based on level of attainment at past/other events.

All requests must come from a Band, not an individual player. Discussion followed – current Branch rules regarding age sections are in order and should be adhered to. There had also been several emails requesting clarification of sections. Directors were happy that they are clearly defined in the Branch rules.

- Letter received from Forres asking for help with their Scottish Week.

Information to go out to bands to contact Forres directly.

- Letter received from Banchory Contest committee saying that it was a pleasure to deal with the Branch for their inaugural contest and that discussions were well under way for 2016

- Letters of thanks received from attendees at the Summer School for the branch funding their attendance.

- Letter received from Buchan Peterson intimating that they would fully support a "Full Band" Indoor contest. This was also supported by Portlethen & Dist. Chairman gave background to this and said he would have the discussion now rather than later in on the agenda at 13 where he'd intended to cover matters relating to indoor/outdoor events not dealt with elsewhere. At a previous Branch meeting this item had been discussed and referred back to Buchan Peterson PB for further consideration and to offer comment on actual logistics. Reason given for change was that splitting bands meant material had to be changed (i.e. tenor splits) and this could be why number of entries were down at a time when bands were preparing for outdoors. This was a concern mainly for larger bands hence the reason it was put back for comment as it would be difficult to find a venue to suit bands with big numbers. He said that the band was not making a specific proposal but were asking that it be given serious consideration by the Branch committee. An indoor band contest would replace present mini band contest. Extensive discussion followed re bands playing all competition sets, logistical problems due to size of bands, size of venue and limited tuning up facilities – from the floor, this would be the PM's problem, not the Branches. S Oliphant gave the question "what is the point of Mini Bands?" – A to win or B to try new material? A full band contest, with a full judging panel would allow better judging of the bands and better feedback of contest material. RAF Lossiemouth – this would possibly alleviate nerves as players can feel exposed in quartets and mini bands. The question of quartets, the benefits and future was raised. Again there was a mixed reaction. From those expressing a strong opinion was that quartets had limited value. The Chairman said that he had offered quartets as a starting point or a way to remain involved for bands with low numbers or found it difficult to send a full band i.e. Stromness in the recent past. His view was that nobody was proposing that quartets should be done away with but the value of having them as a pipe band association continued as an ongoing debate. Returning to the matter of indoor band contests, Chairman said as there were so many factors he asked if bands wanted this to be considered for 2016. G Hamill said his Branch was also trying this on a trial basis for three years. There had been problems but that was to be expected. He said different grades had different opinions and there was some confusion as they had not set a firm contest format. President Allie Skinner questioned that as this proposal had not been lodged with the Secy within agreed timescale then it should not be considered at this time. Chairman said from the healthy discussion there was clearly a mood for change. He stated that as the letter had been received before the last Branch meeting he would consider it and if this was to be pursued then 2016 would be a trial year and no more. Having discussed and reiterated of concerns from across the floor re suitable venue, floor space,

format etc the Chairman drew the debate to a close and asked if that was what the body of the meeting wanted? Buchan/Bucksburn were in favour of taking forward. Chairman said the matter would be discussed by the Mgmt Committee and that the school at Huntly may be suitable but with constraints. (Because this had been a prolonged discussion the Mgmt. Committee would stay behind a recap on the outcome of the discussions. He said that the future of the quartets in the trial year could also be looked at.)

- F Allan advised that she would not be continuing as Magazine Reporter for the Branch, and thanked all for their input and articles over the years.

11: Election of Office Bearers

At this point, The Chairman invited Mr Gordon Hamill to take the 'Chair' for the Election of office Bearers and to give a brief summary of HQ news. Points noted as follows:

- Like everywhere, there are difficulties in securing finance for Major Championships
- Entry Fees for 2016 to remain as they are
- Adjudicators Fees to remain as they are
- Prize money being increased
- Instructors Fees - £120.00
- Office staff at HQ – 2 x full-time, 2 x part-time
- CCTV at HQ has been updated
- New tents have been purchased for contests
- APMB – a development group has been set up with Jennifer Hutcheon (piping) Gordon Craig (drumming) Gordon Lawrie (Ensemble) and John Noble (DM)
- Several candidates put through training – these to be ratified at next Directors meeting.
- Consultative adjudication trialled at Belfast/Forres. This was seen as good/positive. To be taken further by APMB liaison group.
- F Allan asked if sporrans are being purchased for Directors etc. GH: Costs are being looked at, nothing has been decided yet.
- G Gauld asked about bids for Majors, as there was a rumour that there had been an extra bid from NI. GH said that bands would not be asked to attend two majors in NI in same year. Will any Majors be overseas? GH..No
- Drum Major adjudicators: The apparent lack of adjudicators may be the cause of low entry due to the same faces judging all the time. DM adjudicators to address this.
- Meeting dates for MB/Director meetings should be provided to avoid clashes with competition dates. Chairman exemplified Director having to attend meeting in Glasgow leaving Branch stretched to run local event due to high level of entries. Both Directors invaluable/essential at "locals".
- Important to have a Major in NE Scotland, good to see that the thoughts and requirements were taken into consideration. GH: Forres is the best run contest outside The Worlds, with HQ sending prospective hosts to see the venue and see how Forres do it.

12 Break for tea/coffee

13: Matters to be discussed

- No Turriff contest in 2016 Bands had been canvassed as date fell after Saturday Major. Attendance was to be low – no contest in fairness to Turriff Pipe Band and their negotiations with promoter.
- Mintlaw date set for 7th August 2016

- Mintlaw to canvas local bands for future contest dates – may consider hosting Mintlaw post Worlds. Discussion followed as to why Branch bands were not supporting local Branch contests – one reason could be that they are always on a Sunday. Some would support Saturday contests while others felt they would lose out on possible funds from fetes, Galas etc. F Allan suggested possibly looking to the Inverness area once again for a contest. S Oliphant suggested that contests need to be more appealing to the general public and bands, with contests being “piggybacked” with Highland Games, or community engagements as per Forres. Promoter costs, including judges, prize money, and accommodation, all have an effect on when/where contests are held.
- If the Major Championship comes away from Forres, they might re-look at hosting a local contest.
- Could full indoor contest be included in Branch Champions of Champions?
- Branch Website – Subject of site not being kept up to date regularly raised. G Gauld spoke to S Niven re this regarding a revamp. If more than an update then a professional redesign required as due to time constraints. What do the bands want on the website? Chairman said bands relied on calendar – this was OK as regularly updated. He said that bands needed to take responsibility to provide info on the various pages as this was not a webmaster function. On future site responsibility for updating pages should be shared around relevant post holders to provide most up to date info i.e. changes to rules, education updates from various committees. Info from bands re events required from them. Portlethen stated J Brinklow had intimated she’d be prepared to update website. Chairman said he would contact her.
- Take to next meeting:
 1. Link with website/Magazine Reporter
 2. Should we have a Branch Facebook page
 3. Education – letter out to bands: very little response to date.
 4. Branch meetings- dates to be advised.

14: Honoraria

To be kept same

15: Branch Levy

To be kept same

16 : Branch Meetings MB/Directors diary dates for meeting and TBC. First meeting would be late January. Meetings to continue Sat lunchtime at Noon in city centre.

17: Branch AGM 2016

Date set for 27th November 2016

18: AOCB

Branch Solos – junior players can stop between March and Strathspey/Reel if they wish, Adults to play straight through.

Chanters/Sticks & Pads: Competitors can be a bit apprehensive as they are all the one room, look into putting them into individual band rooms.

B Ashby proposed a vote of thanks to F Allan for all work done with the Pipe band magazine.

R Niven proposed a vote of thanks to the Chair.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 3.40pm