

Local tradition continues to grow in numbers and popularity

For hundreds of years the distinctive wail of the bagpipes has resounded throughout the hills of Scotland as they were once used to lead armies into battle. The lone lament of a single piper stirs the soul while an entire pipe band playing and marching in full regalia can stir the blood.

As we move into a new century and millennium, traditions seem to be playing a more important role in the lives of people. Traditions that have woven the rich fabric of our society and laid the foundation of our social structure, are now being appreciated by generations of people who, themselves, are aging.

One of the longest enduring traditions in Kincardine, Bruce County and, indeed, Ontario is the Scottish Pipe Band of Kincardine (KSPB). For over 90 years, its members have carried on an entertainment form that harkens back to another time and place.

Locally, the band has always been popular but, with the advent of tourism and global communication, it has become known throughout the world and has attracted interest, on the Internet, from as far away as Japan.

The beginning

As with any new undertaking, there has to be someone who has the spark and dedication needed to start it all. In 1908 a young local barber, William Young, also a piper, took the initiative and began the band with only five pipers, four drummers and a drum major. Although humble in number, they soon became a local attraction and were invited to play in local parades, concerts, at fall fairs, weddings and as an accompaniment for the local fire brigade during field day competitions.

In 1910, drummer Albert Tucker, had the honour of being selected as the lead drum for the funeral of King Edward. He was to be the first of many talented musicians who were to get their start and learn the rudiments of pipes or drums with the Kincardine Scottish Pipe Band and then move on.

The band performed with a membership that fluctuated widely over the years and, with the onslaught of World War II when most young men left for service duty, it almost ceased to be. Then, in 1947, Henry Lamont became Pipe Major and a year later, in 1948, the band began what was to become one of the longest-standing traditions in the province, if not the country, when it comes to Scottish pipe bands.

Each and every Saturday night during the summer months, the band would play in the central park and then march along Queen Street in Kincardine - much to the delight of the residents and the tourists, who at that time

by Sandy Lindsay

The Kincardine Scottish welcomes all ages to join.



were in limited numbers. The sway of the kilts, the rhythmic beat of the drums and the haunting tunes of the pipes seemed to strike a chord with onlookers and, as the band passed, they would fall in behind and march along.

Today, two and three generations of locals and tourists follow the band, some pushing prams, even wheelchairs, and walking the family pet too! This Saturday night event has become a social gathering for the community where friends, neighbours and summer people meet, reminisce and become part of the camaraderie that is the band.

Under Pipe Major Lamont's tutelage, the band began to perform abroad, playing in parades in California and Florida and, the ultimate for any pipe band, Edinburgh Castle in Scotland.

But 'time waits for no man' and, as the years passed and the band grew older, so too did its members.

In 1992, the Pipe Major who had played and marched for 35 years, decided that the time had come to retire and along with him the President Jack Graham, the Pipe Sergeant, John Hall, and Ken MacDonald.

When they retired, they took with them their many years of experience, expertise and dedication and the band saw its enrollment sadly dwindle away to a mere ten members. The new executive realized that major steps would have to be taken to assure the continuation of a band that had gone through ups and downs and survived a world war.

One of Henry Lamont's students, Watson Morris, took the helm as Pipe Major in 1992 but Henry had taught his protegee so well that Watson only stayed for two years before leaving for Toronto to join the Toronto Police Pipe Band.

Basil McCarthy was elected to replace the former Pipe Major in 1994 and in 1995 the band began to wear the Kincardine Tartan, binding itself even closer to the town and its history.

Reasons for joining vary

One would think that playing the bagpipes would be a skill learned early on in childhood, but not so. Many of the band members actually began their 'pipe careers' as adults. Members like Dave Fell, John McManus (today's