

Con O Conaill

Uachtarán

Cumann Buíon Píobaire na hÉireann





Mrs Mary O'Brien, Bridge Place, Tralee presents souvenirs of her father, the explorer Tom Crean, to Mr Con O'Connell, Ivernia, for Dingle Museum in September 1972.

Con chalks up support for Pan Celtic '73



Pictured at the opening of Pan Celtic in the East Avenue Hotel, Killarney, on Tuesday night, were Con O'Connell, Chief Exec, International Comm., Donnacha O'Sullivan (Irish National Comm.), Tegwyn Williams (Sec. Wales Comm.), Pólly Monjarret (International President), Willie Lanigan (Chairman, Pan Celtic), Graham Seacroft (Cornish Reg., International Comm.) and Colr. Sean O'Keefe (Chairman, Killarney JDC).

Upton man leads the pipers

Green Light for Pan Celtic

KILLARNEY is to go ahead with its second Pan Celtic Festival despite fears to the contrary in view of the lack of public support last year.

This was decided at a well attended meeting in the Three Lakes Hotel on Wednesday night when different bodies based in the town undertook responsibility for some of the events, the amateur film competition, the draghunt, the Ras Chiarraí and the chess competition.

A steering committee was elected to organise the week. Members are Peter Irwin, Mrs. E. Scott, Mr. Michael O'Connor, Tim Moriarty, Buddy O'Mara and Michael Cassidy.

Mr. Con O'Connell of Ivernia, who was secretary last year undertook to assist the committee in any way he may. On Thursday he left for a tour of Scotland, Wales and Cornwall during which he will promote Pan Celtic week among interested bodies in those areas.



Irish Examiner Friday 17th December 1976

President of Irish Pipe Bands Association

Recently elected President of the Irish Pipe Bands Association was Con O'Connell, a native of Upton, Anishannon, Co. Cork, who is assistant manager with Cork/Kerry Tourism in Wales.

He received this honour for the major part he has played in fostering piping throughout Ireland, yet he is not affiliated with any pipe band and, in fact, never played the pipes.

It was largely through his connection with the Pan-Celtic Festival that Con was singled out for President.

He was proposed by Jim O'Driscoll, of Cork, Vice-Council, who is a former chairman of the Council and who is also chairman of the Munster Branch.

Mr. O'Driscoll said it was Con O'Connell who had introduced the pipe band competition into the annual Pan-Celtic Festival in Killarney and had also been responsible for sending a number of pipe bands to Brittany.

These led to much valuable publicity and interest in piping generally.

It is interesting to note that a personal friend of Con is Pádraic MacJarrait, who is also President of the Breton Pipe Band Association.

strengthen the band of friendship between the two Celtic nations.

Con will hold office for two years and may also be elected again for a further period.

Mr. M. A. McDonald, Chairman of the I.P.B.A. said there is a growing association and, like all human institutions had problems.

However, these could be overcome with fellowship, goodwill, loyalty and commonsense.

Con O'Connell possesses these in abundance and the Executive Council could, he said, rest assured they had elected an outstanding Pres-

A retrospective of Con O Conaill's contribution to the Irish Pipe Band Association and to Irish and Celtic culture by Brian Mac Mahon, Chairman IPBA.

The forthcoming AGM of the Irish Pipe Band Association will be a watershed moment in the history of the organisation as the association's long-serving and much respected President Con Ó Conaill steps down after 47 years in the to the pipe band community.

Formative Years

Con is a native of County Cork. He was born and reared in Ballymurphy, Innishannon, Co Cork.

As a youth, Con showed himself to be extremely academically talented and won first prize in a Cork County Council scholarship scheme for secondary school. Having successfully completed his secondary education, Con started his working life in the retail and wholesale trade and for a while operated two retail shops which he had rented.



Brian MacMahon, Chairman IPBA

Progression

He quickly progressed from the retail trade into the nascent tourism industry in Ireland of the 1960's where he was to leave a lasting legacy. Con started his tourism career in 1967 in Kerry as a tourism development officer and later tourism manager of 'Ivernia', based in Tralee, initially, and then Killarney, before being appointed CEO for the regional company in 1987 responsible for the Cork & Kerry area.

Con was later based in Cork City until he retired in 2002.

Through his Tourism work he held a number of directorships, chairmanships and secretaryships in a number of tourism related companies. Con served on dozens of boards connected with culture and tourism in Ireland and in particular the South Western counties of Ireland.

Con's C.V. reads like a history of the Irish Tourism industry having been active in dozens of tourism related bodies including Cobh Heritage Centre, Cork Airport Consultative Committee, Kenmare Salmon Angling Company, Skellig Experience Heritage Centre. Con also did enormous work for entities such as the Shannon Development Company and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board.

Outside his professional life in the tourist industry, Con was an accomplished Irish dancer and accordion player and during the 1960's performed and toured with folk groups and traditional set dancing groups both in Ireland and on the continent. Throughout his life, Con has been heavily involved in Irish language and cultural matters, including organisations such as 'Glór na nGael', 'Conradh na Gaeilge', 'Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann' and the Pan Celtic organisation, of which Con was the prime instigator and was more often than not referred to as 'Mr Pan Celtic'.

As a young student, Con was introduced to the existence of the Celtic nations through a teacher he encountered in secondary school. His teacher regularly spent his holidays in Wales and frequently spoke to his students of his interest in Wales and its native language and in the other Celtic nations and their languages and cultures.

Con embarked on a journey of discovery to discover all he could of the ancient Celts and their modern heritage. Con has cited the fact that he was greatly influenced during his younger days by his tuning into a BBC Radio Scotland interview held by Fred Macauley, head of the BBC Gaelic Programmes, with a Ned Maddrell, the last native speaker of Manx Gaelic. Con felt, at the time, that it was a great pity that nothing was being done to help the survival and promotion of all the Celtic languages.

Origins of the Pan Celtic Festival

In the Winter of 1969-1970, Killarney Tourism of which Con was the then Secretary, proposed that the town should establish a festival for the month of May, to extend the tourism season.

The committee sought suggestions and various ideas were proposed. Con took the opportunity to suggest that they hold a Celtic Festival. This idea was rejected, at that time, and instead, a Bach Music Festival was agreed. A committee was set up to organise the Bach festival with Con as Secretary, and it ran for a number of years.

However, Con persisted with his dream of a Celtic Festival and in 1970, Con put together an outline Celtic Festival programme with the Celtic Languages being at the core as a requirement for all singing competitions.

This encouraged the 'weaker' Celtic countries to find people still able to speak their respective native languages, and it further encouraged them to take interest in and learn their native languages in order to compete at the Pan Celtic Festival.

At the time, the committee members in Killarney felt the idea of the festival was too small for the town. As no one was prepared to back it, Con announced that he would go ahead on his own and try to organise a Pan Celtic Week for 1971. This he subsequently did.

In its first year, only three nations participated: Ireland, Wales, and Brittany.

Later that year, Con travelled to all the Celtic nations seeking support and participation. This was most successful and all six Celtic Nations participated in 1972.

The festival has grown steadily throughout the years with committees being established in each Celtic nation, and an International Celtic Council becoming the governing organisation.

The festival is nowadays one of the most important festivals on the Celtic nations calendar.



Pipe Bands - First Official Contact

Con's memory of his first official contact with pipe bands happened at the opening of the first Pan Celtic Festival which was held in May 1971.. This event was held in conjunction with Oireachtas na Mumhan (an Irish language cultural festival in the Munster region).

Con was on the organising committee of the Oireachtas and when he pointed out that he intended to establish a festival in Killarney with the aim of bringing together the Celtic nations and promoting their respective languages, traditions, and cultures, it was suggested that he combine the Oireachtas event with the newly formed Pan Celtic festival and run both over a nine-day period.



St Finbarr's Pipe Band

Pan Celtic Contest , Fitzgerald Stadium, Killarney

Sunday 20th May 1973

Con's next involvement with the pipe band scene was when he was invited in 1972 to visit Lorient with the Irish delegation travelling to the Inter-Celtic Festival of Pipe Bands. The invitation was extended by Polig Monjarret, President of the Breton Pipe Bands Association (Bodadeg Ar Sonerion) who was attending the Pan Celtic Festival in Killarney.

Con was appointed a member of the Lorient Committee representing Ireland at the time. For the following eleven years, Con organised the representation and travel arrangements for the Irish participants in Lorient, including of course Pipe Bands.

Con

'The Oireachtas members having seen my notice that I intended to hold a festival in Killarney, bringing together the Celtic Nations, and promote their languages and traditional culture, suggested we run the 2 events over 9 days, the first weekend would feature the Oireachtas, and a joint official opening held following a parade led by St. Finbarr's Pipe Band Cork. On the second weekend a parade of Pipe Bands was held through the town to Fitzgerald Stadium for events there'.....

The involvement of pipe bands seemed a natural development at the time as three of the Celtic nations had strong pipe band traditions (Ireland, Scotland and Brittany).



Polig Monjarret,

President Bodadeg Ar Sonerion

For the following eleven years, Con organised the representation and travel arrangements for the Irish participants in Lorient, including of course Pipe Bands.

Amongst those travelling in 1972 were the St. Lawrence of Howth Pipe Band whose Pipe Major was the late Paddy Kelly.

It was Con who persuaded the Lorient festival to include all six Celtic Nations in the festival to make it a full Celtic event (Brittany, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Galicia and Asturias). The Galicians were interested in attending the Pan Celtic festival in Ireland but they did not meet the requirements for the Pan Celtic at that point in time.

He further arranged the first participation of Galicians in the Lorient festival. Con persuaded the Lorient committee to invite the Galicians to Brittany and Galicians have been participating ever since.



PM Paddy Kelly & Noel O Donohue



Irish Independent, Wednesday, January 03, 1973

Pipes may play at Killarney Festival

Pan Celtic organisers in Killarney are hoping that recent discussions with the Pipe Band Association of Ireland will result in a national pipe band competition being held in conjunction with the Pan Celtic '73 Festival from May 12-20.

Mr. Con O'Connell of Ivernia met members of the Pipe Band Association in Dublin and he is hopeful a competition can be held on the final Sunday of the Festival, with 20 or more bands competing.

The first Pipe Band Competition at the Pan Celtic Festival was held in 1973 with 15 bands participating and strong support for the festival by the IPBA has continued to this day. The Pan Celtic pipe band competitions continued until 1983 when it was decided to reinvent the competition as a solo piping and drumming event. The Pan Celtic Solos have since become an important event in the IPBA calendar and it attracts a strong entry from

North and South of the border and indeed from Scotland which is represented every year at the event.

Evening Echo, Saturday, May 19, 1973

Pan-Celtic Pipe Band Contest At Killarney

Pipe bands from all parts of the Republic are travelling to Killarney tomorrow for the Pan-Celtic Pipe Band Competition. Special trains are organised by the Leinster and Munster branches of the Irish Pipe Band Association to take their member bands there. The Munster bands are travelling by train from Cork, leaving at 10.40, stopping at Mallow (11.10) and arriving at Killarney 12.15. After the competition which starts at 3 p.m. the train leaves Killarney at 10 o'clock arriving back in Cork at 11.30. A big number of people are travelling from Scotland and Wales for this Pan-Celtic Week and no doubt Irish bandsmen and women are very conscious of this fact and will do everything in their power to make it an enjoyable and

Irish Examiner Tuesday, May 22, 1973

17 PIPE BANDS IN KILLARNEY CONTEST

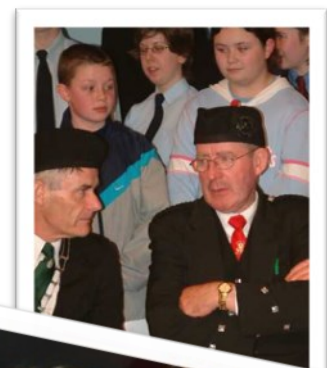
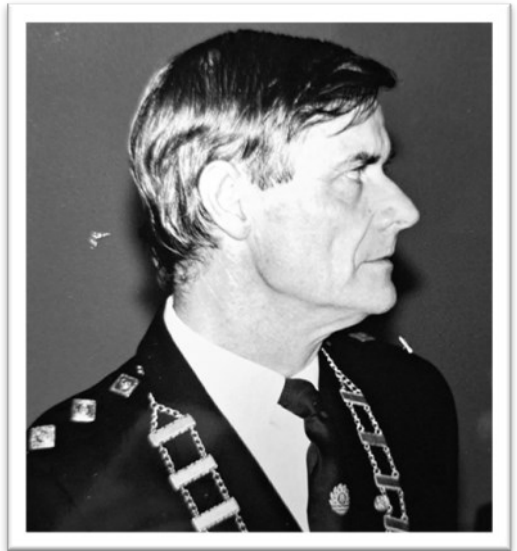
Seventeen pipe bands from all over Ireland were in Killarney yesterday, to compete in a National Pipe Band contest, organised for Pan Celtic Week. The most successful of the bands was Black Raven of Lusk, who won both the open and Grade 3 competitions.....

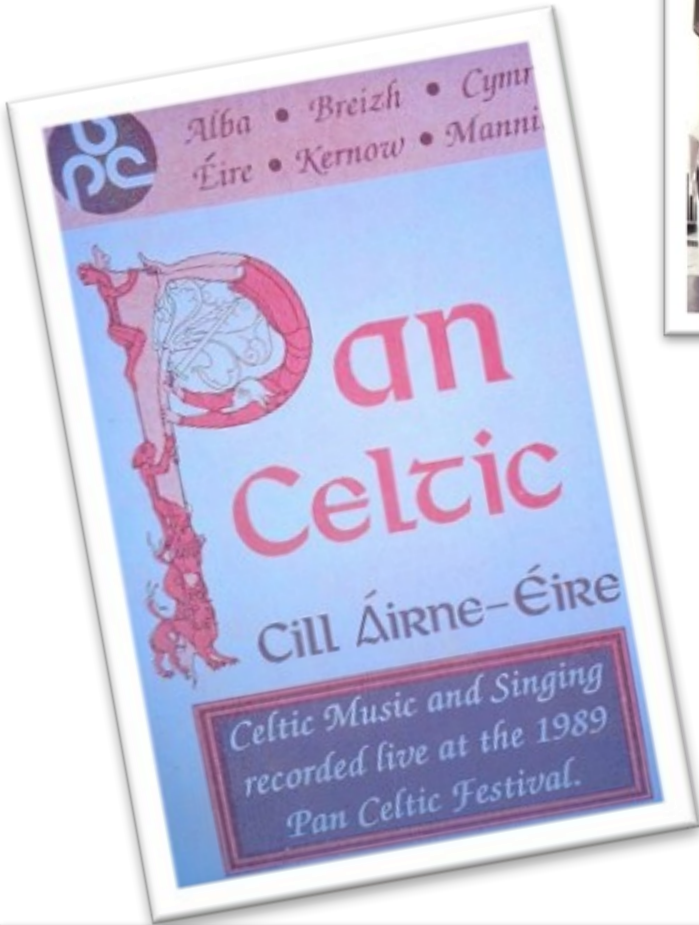
Results — Open: 1. Black Raven. Lusk; 2. St. Lawrence, Howth, 3. Clondalkin. Clondalkin also won the Drum Corps.

Grade 3: 1. Black Raven, Lusk. 2. St. Lawrence O'Toole, Dublin, 3. Clondalkin. Clondalkin also won the Drum Corps.

Grade 4: 1. C.B.S., Blarney Street, 2. Rathcoole, Dublin. 3. St. Clare's Carlow, Rathcoole won the Drum Corps.

Grade 5: 1. C.B.S. Limerick, 2. St. Johns, Tralee, 3. St. Louise Girls. St. Johns won the Drum Corps.







IPBA Solo Piping & Drumming League 2023

The IPBA Solo League encompassed three 'stand alone' contests, the results of which determined the league winners.

The three contests in question were the Leinster Solos, held in Rush, Co Dublin on Saturday 11th February, the Munster Solos, staged in Newcastle West, Co Limerick on 1st April and finally the Pan Celtic Solos, held in Carlow on 15th April.

This is the first time since 'lockdown' that we were able to stage an integrated solo league.

Congratulations to all who participated in and facilitated the events.

Issue 7

April 2023

Charitable Tax Exemption
CHY22402



Pan Celtic Solos, Carlow College

Saturday 15th April 2023

all photos courtesy of

Aida Kennedy Long



What it said in the 'Papers'

President of Irish Pipe Bands Association

Recently elected President of the Irish Pipe Bands Association was Con O Conaill, a native of Upton, Innishannon, Co Cork, who is Assistant Manager with Cork/Kerry Tourism in Tralee.

He received his honour for the major part he has played in fostering piping throughout Ireland, yet he is not affiliated with any pipe band and, in fact, never played the pipes.

It was largely through his connection with the Pan Celtic Festival that Con was singled out for President. He was proposed by Jim O'Driscoll of Cork, Vice Chairman of the Executive Council, who is a former Chairman of the Council and Chairman of the Munster Branch.

Mr O'Driscoll said it was Con O Conaill who had introduced the pipe band competition to the annual Pan Celtic Festival in Killarney and has also been responsible for sending a number of pipe bands to Brittany. These led to much valuable publicity and interest in piping generally.

It is interesting to note that a personal friend of Con is Pollig Monjarret, who is also President of the Breton Pipe Band Association.

This should help to strengthen the bond of friendship between the two Celtic nations.

Con will hold office for two years and may be elected again for a further period.

Mr M.A. McDonald, Chairman of the IPBA said theirs was a growing association and like all human institutions had problems. However, these could be overcome with fellowship, goodwill, loyalty and common-sense.

Con O Conaill possesses these in abundance and the Executive Council could, he said, rest assured they

Upton man leads the Pipers

The new President of the Irish Pipe Bands association is Con O Conaill, a native of Upton and present Kerry manager of Cork-Kerry Tourism. He was elected at the Association AGM held recently in Durrow, Co Laois and will head the organisation for the next twelve months. Although not affiliated to any pipe band, Con has contributed greatly to the Association through his work as sole organiser of the pipe band competition held during Killarney's Pan Celtic Week. He is also responsible for sending Irish pipe bands to Brittany every year. This year the trip was made by two Leinster bands, Howth and Black Raven, while St Finbarr's of Cork had to decline the invitation due to prior commitments.

Jim O'Driscoll who proposed Con for President at the AGM paid tribute to his abilities and said he would make a wonderful President. The AGM this year was unique in that the four provinces were represented at it for the first time. Previously Connacht had never been represented but the formation of a new branch in the West earlier this year made the event a truly All Ireland gathering. San McDonnell of New Ross was returned once again as Chairman, Jim O'Driscoll was elected Vice Chairman, Seamus Hunt, Newcastle West, Secretary and Tom Bolger, New Ross, Treasurer.

The meeting decided upon Newcastle, Co Down as the location for next year's All Ireland competitions and New Ross was mentioned as a location for the following year. An interesting item discussed was a Bord failte suggestion of a tattoo gathering of pipe bands from 32 counties. 'It will be a spectacular sight when it does come off' Jim O'Driscoll assured us, 'but no date has been fixed yet'



Mr. Con O'Connell, Innishannon, who was recently elected President of the Irish Pipe Band Association. Mr. O'Connell is assistant manager, Cork-Kerry Tourism.

Con - Man of Action

'The first task I took on was, to re-draft a Constitution for the IPBA and get approval for its adoption, as it had not been adopted due to the smaller branches complaining of lack of representation on the NEC.

I proposed that each branch would elect two members from to serve on the National Executive Council, making up eight representing the branches, and the balance of four to be elected from the floor at the AGM. This was accepted and the constitution was adopted.'



**Above: Sam MacDonald,
Chairman IPBA when Con
became President**



**Other 'early' associates of Con within the IPBA
Clockwise from top left: Con with Tom Bolger,
Seamus Hunt, PJ Berrill, Harry McGlone, &
Noel O'Donohue**

**It was Jim O'Driscoll (above),
Chairman of the Munster
Branch and V/Chairman of the
IPBA who proposed Co O
Conaill for the position of
President**

Note: The method which Con devised of determining the membership of the National Executive Council is still used today.

Con was once again central in the re-formulation of a new IPBA Constitution in 1994, a thorough redraft of the former document.

More recently he led a work-group, during 'lockdown', tasked with redrafting the Constitution, Administrative Rules, Contest Rules and formulating a five year Strategic Development Plan for the association. While for some the pandemic was a period of inactivity, the opposite was true for Con and his group who worked diligently at the task in hand.

All documents were adopted at the 2002 Annual General Meeting of the organisation .

Con's first attendance at an All-Ireland Pipe Band championship was in Tralee in 1974 and that was followed two years later by the championships in Rathcoole, County Dublin where Con was on the lookout for Irish pipe bands to travel to the Lorient festival.

Since 1976, Con has attended all of the All-Ireland Pipe Band Championships except for 2003 when he was recovering from a medical operation, and again in 2023, due to ill health.





In Con's first year as President in 1977, the RSPBA NI president was W J S Shilliday (RSPBA NI President from 1976 to 1978).



Con has very fond memories of the great Eddie McVeigh who served as RSPBA NI President from 1979 to 1995, except 1992



Con worked closely with Ronnie Crawford in 2004 and 2005 and then the much loved Fred Walker from 2006 to 2014, and Winston Pinkerton from 2015 to present.





Australia to be their guest of honour for the St. Patrick's Day celebrations in Brisbane, and to be the principal guest speaker at their St. Patrick's Dinner.

The association organised a reception for Con by representatives of the Pipe Bands of Queensland, and he was given a live interview on Australia's national radio.

The following weekend, Con was invited by the Melbourne Pipe Band to lead their St. Patrick's Day parade alongside the Irish Ambassador to Australia.

In the 1980's Con arranged with Liam Ó Murchú of RTE (the Irish national broadcaster) to have piping on his folk music programme 'Trom agus Éadrom'.

RTE were of the opinion that Pipe Bands were not suitable to play in the broadcasting studio so Liam agreed to have a mini band on his programme and Con arranged with the Black Raven Pipe from Lusk, County Dublin, to provide a mini band for a broadcast which was subsequently recorded with great success.



Previous IPBA Presidents



Ceallacháin Mac Carthaigh

Ceallacháin Mac Carthaigh 1879 - 1968

.....D'eagraíodh sé léachtaí do pháistí sna leabharlanna poiblí. Bhí baint mhór aige le cúrsaí siamsaíochta an Chonartha: bhí sé páirteach san obair a bhain leis an Mórshiamsa bliantúil i bPáirc an Fhionnuisce; **ba é faoi deara gur bunaíodh Cumann Bhuíonta Píobairí na hÉireann agus an mórthaispeántas ceoil agus rince a d'eagraíodh san Amharclann Ríoga gach bliain ó 1941 amach.**

Ben Brennan 1975

Benedict Brennan was born in Kenmare, owned and ran the Eblana Bookstore with his wife on Grafton Street, Dublin, he was formerly a publishing company sales representative with a yen for hunting and horse breeding.

He had married Iris Kellet (the Show-jumper) in 1952 and they both also operated a Horse Riding stable in Co Kildare.

He was said to be an eloquent man, a poet and player of the Irish harp.

He was obviously ill in 1974 and died the year after. I don't know what his connection to piping was.

Kilkenny People 1895-current, Friday, November 09, 1973

PIPERS from North and South attended the Annual Meeting of the Irish Pipe Band Association in the Castle Arm's Hotel, Durrow on Sunday.....Chairman, Mr N. Donohue, Dublin apologised for the non attendance of the President Mr Ben Brennan who, had just entered hospital. He was wished a speedy recovery.....

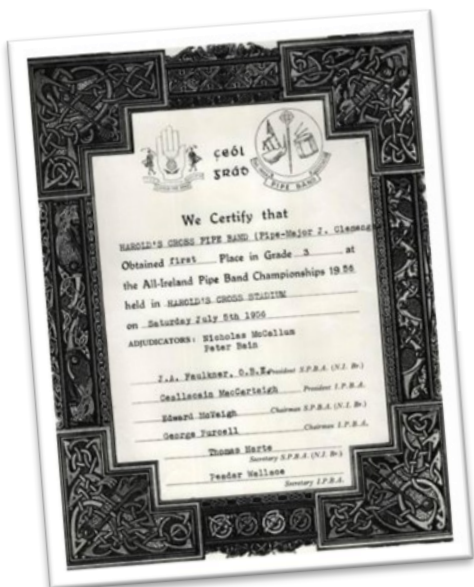
Officers elected— **President, B Brennan, Dublin**, Chairman, Noel Donohue, Dublin, Vice Chairman, J. O'Driscoll, Cork, Secretary, P. J. Berrill, Dublin, Treasurer A MacDonalld , of New Ross; Registrar , T. Fitzsimons, Dublin.

Irish Examiner 1841-current, Tuesday, November 05, 1974

Irish Pipe Band Association's New Officers

At the Annual General Meeting of the Irish Pipe Band Association held at Durrow, Co. Laois, the following officers were elected:

President, Mr. B. Brennan, Dublin, Chairman, Mr Jim O'Driscoll, St. Finbarr's, Cork, Vice Chairman, Noel Donohue, Dublin, Secretary, Tom Anderson, Dublin, Assistant Secretary and Registrar, Martin Dempsey, Durrow, Treasurer, Seamus Hunt, St. David's, Newcastle West, P.R.O., Vera McLoughlin, St. Michael's, Gorey, Chief Steward, Tommy Rathcliffe, Dublin.



Terry Tully

**L/Uachtarán, Cumann Buíon Píobaire na hÉireann
V/President, Irish Pipe Band Association**

Renown the world over in piping circles, Terry Tully takes on the position of Vice President of the Irish Pipe Band Association. Terry is synonymous with all that is good in Irish piping, having brought and maintained St Laurence O'Toole Pipe Band to the upper echelon and very pinnacle of pipe bands in the World. Apart from being a great piper, he is an excellent composer and has published six volumes of Irish music for the bagpipes. More importantly Terry is one of the nicest people you could meet. We all wish him well in his new ambassadorial role.







Associated with Craobh na Mumhan



The committee and bands of the Munster Branch of the Irish Pipe Band Association would like to offer their congratulations and thanks to Con O Conaill on his forty-seven years' service to the association.

Being domiciled within the region, Con is, and always was, a valued member of the Munster Branch, from his becoming President of the association on the proposition of the then Branch Chairman, Jim O'Driscoll, in November 1976, through to the present time.

Con, is the de facto 'head' and leader of the Munster Branch, and has graced events and functions with his presence, rolling up his sleeves and acting as steward, compiler, MC or in whatever capacity was required.

Con always has words of encouragement and true direction, when the need arises.

He has spurred us on, by example, to use the *cúpla focal Gaeilge* that we all possess and furthermore he has given us a sense of pride in the use of our native tongue when he represents us at functions, both within the IPBA and dealing with other official bodies and entities.

Our fervent hope is that Con will continue his involvement with the Munster Branch long into the future.

Comhghairdeas as do sheirbhís, Con, agus táimid ag tnúth le do chairdeas leanúnach, go raibh míle maith agat.



Brian MacMahon, Chairman IPBA

..... *'Our main reason for holding the 2024 AGM as a face-to-face event is because today is the day that our long serving President, Con O'Conaill, steps down from his post after 47 years.*

Con has been a wonderful servant to the pipe band scene in Ireland. I'm sure I speak for everyone who has ever served with Con on the National Executive of the IPBA when I say that it has been a great privilege to serve with him over the years.

His vast knowledge of procedures, pitfalls, protocols, etc. has been invaluable to the IPBA during his tenure. No matter what the problem was, Con always provided the calm voice and the wise voice at the table.

Con's view always carried tremendous weight in discussions. We have been so fortunate to have a man of Con's calibre as our President for so many years. We can never thank him enough.



**Brian MacMahon
Chairman IPBA**



**Winston Pinkerton
President RSPBA
NI Branch**

"It is disappointing to learn of the retirement of Con O'Conaill as President of the Irish Pipe Band Association. Con has held this prestigious position for 47 years which is a truly remarkable feat.

He has always been a very much respected individual by everyone involved in piping and drumming throughout the island of Ireland providing a steadying influence, a presence, and sound source of advice throughout those years.

I got the chance to know him well during my time as President of RSPBA-NI when I spent time with him at our All Ireland competitions. I enjoyed every minute of our conversations.

Con will be missed by all of us in the pipe band family and behalf of RSPBANI I thank him for those 47 years of dedicated service.

Winston Pinkerton President RSPBANI

..... *'I was honoured to be elected President at the AGM held in November 1976 and to be repeatedly elected until my retirement at the end of this year. It is hard for me to describe the many friendships and the support I have had from all those associated with piping, and particularly the support and respect from all the National Executive Committee members throughout the years'.....Con*



**Con O Conaill
Uachtarán
Cumann Buíon Píobaire na hÉireann**



Go Raibh Míle Maith Agat