Old and New World Highland Bagpiping. By John G. Gibson. First ed. Montréal, QC: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002. xxiv, 424 p. $49.95 ISBN 0-7735-2291-3

John Gibson has provided in this new book an incredible wealth of information, particularly biographical information, but not until one reaches the third and final section of the book does it become clear for whom this work is targeted: bagpiping scholars in Scotland. The book ostensibly builds on the author's earlier work, *Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping, 1745-1945,* but would seem to cover much of the same Old World materials, at least from a factual perspective, with a concentration on the biographical interconnections of the *gàidhealtachd,* the traditional Gaelic community. And this concentration on biographical and geographical data serves his stated goal of "the documentation of traditional Gaelic community and piping just before mass changes in Highland society and the advent of professionalization and codification of piping after Culloden and the beginning of emigration to Canada."

The first two sections, "Piping in the Jacobite Highlands from 1745" and "'Hereditary' or Chiefs' Pipers in Hanoverian Scotland," describe the record of piping in a wide area of Catholic and Protestant Highland and Island Scotland, respectively. These start from 1745 and the Battle of Culloden, but reach back, when possible, to antecedents to posit the oral continuity of certain piping families and affiliations with various chiefly families, locations, and occasionally schools on both sides of the religious divide.

These sections are very dense and, to this reader, poorly organized. The author presupposes a great deal of prior knowledge not only of Scottish history, with a liberal sprinkling of battle names and their specifics, but also of Scottish geography and British history, especially as regards the legal actions following the Jacobite Scots rout at Culloden and the subsequent legal sanctions and clearances of the Highland estates leading to emigrations to Canada – Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island in particular – with some references to the emigrations to North Carolina. These difficulties could have been easily alleviated by a thumbnail glossary akin to the one provided for some of the more common Gaelic terms used in the text. In addition, better maps that clearly outlined (insofar as possible) the towns and clan holdings discussed, only some of which are provided in the prefatory material and which are more complete for Cape Breton, would have been of great help, especially where such boundaries are no longer easy to assemble.

Another shortcoming is the use of multiple names for the same person. I concur that stating all of the names, including aliases and the different usages between English and Scots nomenclature, especially the listings of *sloinneadh* (the traditional Scottish naming convention), is of crucial importance in laying out Gibson's argument. But once established, it would have been easier to follow his narrative without the changing from one to another of the potential names for a given individual. Similarly, more complete genealogical charts, perhaps given in parallel for the chiefly/piping

family pairings, would have been very useful.

The third section, "New World Piping in Cape Breton," is by far the most coherent and rewarding of the three. Perhaps it is the reliance on a different kind of source material, ethnographic transcriptions and summaries from the author's own interviews with subjects, which makes the difference. Or perhaps it was the narrowing in both geographic and temporal span that allowed for a more coherent narrative. Regardless of the reason, this section paints a vivid picture of the breadth and depth of bagpiping in the rural portions of northern Nova Scotia, Cape Breton, and reveals glimpses of a world now mainly lost to living memory.

However, this section raises another, more fundamental, issue for this reviewer. Gibson discusses at great length his assertion that there are two different traditions of piping, one classical and written and another non-classical and aural/oral in nature with the split dating back to the post-Culloden settlements and killings and the sequelae of the Disarming Act. His interest is in probing for details of this unwritten or non-literate tradition, and he locates its main surviving position in the function of pipers piping for *céilidhs* and dancing. He mentions the music played for "step-dancing" and dancing "Scottish Fours," but he never describes in any detail what these dance forms are nor does he articulate what, precisely, makes this oral, non-literate piping tradition different from its classical cousin, either in relation to dancing or in and of itself. As a performer and musicologist, I would be greatly interested in learning what that difference might be. If Gibson is unable to articulate this, then perhaps he might consider including a CD recording of what he believes to be the best representatives of each type. This is a particularly acute frustration when he mentions having himself heard or referencing the existence of tapes that elucidate his point specifically.

Overall, a book rich in biographical information, but uneven in presentation and not as useful as it might have been had his intended audience been broader from the inception of his research and in its execution.[1]

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[1]The following errors in editing were also noted: p. 230, footnote numbering is incorrect (there are two 57's, but no 58); p. 240, paragraph 2, lines 8-9, "... which he picked//the at the Boyds' change house..." (word missing?); p. 240, paragraph 4, line 2, the word should be "on" rather than "or" (?); p. 241, paragraph 3, line 3-4, there is either a missing open parenthesis or one too many closing parentheses in setting off the sentence about Pheadar Iain.