

Marmora pipe and drum needs new blood

by John McPhee

If you're Scottish, it's likely that the sound of bagpipes stirs a certain feeling of pride and warmth in your heart, unlike any other music.

Even those without clan blood enjoy the pipes (excepting, of course, the steadfast few who run for the earplugs at the first notes of their high-pitched drone), whether it's a rousing Highland fling or a brooding Scottish dirge. And it's a rare parade anywhere in Canada that does not feature at least one pipe and drum band.

Here in Marmora, our pipe and drum band is in its fourth year, and going strong. The Marmora Legion Pipe and Drum Band now has 15 members, much larger than the original group, says one of the founding members, Bud Deering.

"There was four of us then, and it took off from there," said Deering, the band's bass drummer, after the band's practice on Wednesday night.

Deering said the Marmora Legion had been without a pipe band to represent them and it was finally decided in 1987 to get one together.

The band was formed under the direction of Bret Cousins, the band's current Pipe Major, who is a veteran of many pipe bands, including the Queens' Pipe Band and the North Bay band.

The other members of the group are Nancy Nelson (drummer), Bob McKellar (Pipe Sgt.), Bonnie Deering (Tenor drummer), Brian

Landry (Snare drum), Byron Moorcroft (Drum Sgt.), John Bradley (Tenor Drummer), Jack Bennion (Drum Major, band co-founder), Kim Fluke (Piper), Erin Kane (Piper), Sheila Day (Piper), Peter Deshane (Drummer), Debbie Tims (Drummer) and Jimmy Larson (Piper).

Although this seems like a full roster, the band is constantly seeking new members and encourages anyone who is interested in any of the above instruments to come to their meetings.

"We have lots of trainees and invite more to come," says John Bradley. "We're looking for anybody who's willing to learn. Once you learn to play, we will supply the instruments and the dress." (Call Bonnie Deering at 472-3918 if you're interested. The band meets every Wednesday at 7 p.m. at the Legion. They teach younger folks on Sundays from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.)

Although the band has been quite busy of late, they say they would like to have more engagements.

"There's not that many parades in this area," says Pipe Major Cousins, "and we are limited by the weather."

Cousins says if the temperature goes below minus four degrees Celsius, the band cannot play because the instruments will be damaged.

"The reed for the bagpipes freezes up in the cold, it simply won't work," he says. "This is

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\$20,000 to outfit a pipe band

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a big factor in playing parades."

The band's schedule usually includes the Marmorata Santa Claus parade, the Stirling Ground Hog Fest Weekend, the Robbie Burns Day celebrations, the Ivanhoe Canada Day celebration and of course, the Remembrance Day ceremonies.

The band gets its funding mainly through parades, fundraisers and community support.

"We've held yard sales, bake sales, raffles, a lot of things," says Bradley.

The band's current fundraiser is another raffle, with the first prize, a 14-foot canoe with paddles, supplied by Ted Bonter's Marine in Marmorata, and the second prize, a complete fishing tackle and pole outfit, supplied by the Centre Hastings Sports Centre

in Madoc.

The raffle draw will be held March 9 at the Madoc IGA. The prizes will be displayed and, weather permitting, the band will be providing some entertainment, starting at 10 a.m., and going into the afternoon. Raffle tickets can be purchased from band members.

The band is also financed through their public appearances, and they ask \$250 per parade. The group has also received a great deal of outside funding, and they are very grateful to the businesses, community groups and the Legions in Marmorata and Madoc whose donations have kept the band afloat.

Although it might seem the band would not have many expenses, Deering explained that instruments and uniforms are not cheap.

"It would cost at least \$2000

to fully equip and dress a piper in the band," he explained. Bagpipes of any quality cannot be bought for under \$1000.

Deering estimated it costs about \$20,000 to put a fully-dressed band on the street.

Community support has gotten the band over the big initial investment, says Cousins, and although they still welcome donations, funding is not as crucial now as in the beginning.

"We've come a long way," says drummer and band secretary Bonnie Deering.

"When we first played, we were dressed in black pants and skirts. Now we all have full dress, and we're almost fully outfitted with new equipment. And without the organizations who make regular donations, we wouldn't have this."



Pipe and Drum leaders - The Marmorata Legion Pipe and Drum Band is looking for new blood for 1991, and anyone interested in learning how to play the bagpipes or band drums is invited to their regular meetings on Wednesday, 7 p.m. at the Marmorata Legion. Phone 472-3918 for more

info, ask for Bonnie. Pictured above are: John Bradley, Band Quartermaster; Bob McKellar, Chairman; Bud Deering, Band Co-Founder; Bonnie Deering, Secretary; and Bret Cousins, Pipe Major. Not pictured is executive member Kim Fluke, Treasurer.