

BATTLEFIELD BAND



TOP from left
Duncan MacGillivray
Karine Polwart
Davy Steele
Alasdair White
Dougie Pincock

MIDDLE
Sean O'Donnell
Brian McNeill
Alan Reid
John Gahagan
and below Mike Katz
Ged Foley
Pat Kilbride and below
Iain MacDonald

BOTTOM
John McCusker
Jen Clark
Ewen Henderson
Jamie McMenemy
Alistair Russell
Sylvia Barnes and
Producer Robin Morton

The Producer's Choice

THE PRODUCER'S CHOICE

Battlefield Band has just been inducted into the **Scottish Traditional Music Hall of Fame**. They join a list of illustrious inductees involved in Scottish Traditional music. If you would like to see the company they keep now, check out <https://projects.handsupfortrad.scot/hall-of-fame/inductees/>

The band have been on the go now for nearly 50 years, and over that 50 years there have been 23 members. Some of them stayed with the band for decades and some for a couple of years, but all of them have been very important to Battlefield Band's music. Those who could, and who were not gigging on the other side of the world, which was around half of them, came to the induction ceremony at Dundee. It was really good to meet old friends, and talk about the good and bad days. You can imagine the craic was good. It was moving to see how connected these members were with the band and the good memories they had of it, even although they may have gone on to do their own thing 30 years ago. All of them are very pleased and proud to be members of the Scottish Traditional Music Hall of Fame.

On the way home the following day, I was thinking it over, and I realised that over all those years, I had produced 26 albums, (plus a number of highly accomplished and well received solo albums by members of the band). Originally three for Topic Records and then the rest for Temple Records. The three albums originally released for Topic were all re-released on Temple Records. As well as that, the band had done a couple of albums for Breton Arfolk before I met them, so that makes approximately an album every two years. Many of these albums won various international awards, and we have listed the ones which we remember. If any of you know any that we haven't listed, please let us know.

- 1981 Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik**
- 1993 Platinum Disc for sales of New Spring by Scottish Music Industry Association**
- 2003 'Best Live Act' – Scots Trad. Music Awards**
- 2011 'Scottish Folk Band of the Year' – Scots Trad. Music Awards**
- 2012 'Best Song' – Vox Populi Winner – Independent Music Awards**
- 2013 'Album of the Year' – Scots Trad. Music Awards**
- 2014 'Best Song' – Vox Populi Winner – Independent Music Awards**

The band have toured and made friends throughout the world – a lot of work in United States; Canada; United Kingdom; India; Sri Lanka; Egypt; Australia; New Zealand; China; Hong Kong; Uzbekistan – a great tour that! Tours opening for Mike Oldfield in Germany; Van Morrison guested on a TV show of theirs in Glasgow and they have even had a race horse named after them, and it even won a couple of races! Top Festivals in USA; UK; Denmark and Holland.

LIVE REVIEW • Washington Post 1981
'Working from the deep well of traditional Scottish bagpipe and fiddle tunes... they guided the musicians brilliant new direction without sacrificing mainstream roots'.

Jim Gilchrist, the man who was brave enough to take on a history of the band for the Hall of Fame biography, put it very well and probably did it more succinctly than I would have done.

"Over almost half a century at time of writing, Battlefield Band have established themselves as internationally acclaimed ambassadors for Scottish folk music. Musical innovators and seasoned troubadours, who were one of the first Scottish bands to embark on the global "Celtic music" circuit in the 1970s, the group have continually evolved over the decades, confirming their position as vital composers and interpreters at the forefront of a living tradition. Trailblazers in bringing keyboards and Highland pipes into their sound, they have never lost the fire of that bagpipe and fiddle front line". 2016

Read Jim's full history of the band at:
<https://projects.handsupfortrad.scot/hall-of-fame/battlefield-band/>

I first met the band in 1975/76. I was on the road at the time with a very busy Boys of the Lough. During those years our feet hardly touched the ground in Scotland, so I had never heard of Battlefield Band, but obviously they were making waves in the Scottish scene and in Brittany as well.

Battlefield Band opened for Boys of the Lough at the Durham Folk Festival in 75/76 and I was intrigued when I heard their sound check and was impressed when I heard the noise they made on the concert stage. I had produced a number of albums for Mercier Press (Ireland) and Topic Records (England). I enjoyed that, and when I heard this band, I thought, let's see if they would be interested in doing something for Topic. To cut a long story short, Topic put out their first album, produced by me in 1977 (Battlefield Band), and then another in 1978 (At The Front) and another in



1979 (Stand Easy). By 1980, I had formed my own record label, with studio attached, and from there on in, I recorded all their future albums to the present day, (including the solo albums). So driving home from the induction event, I decided as they had now been honoured as a band, that I would put together an album of my personal choice of tracks featuring all the musicians that had played with the band over the years. So here it is my choice since I started to work with them.

**CD REVIEW • *Battlefield Band*
Q Magazine 1977**

“... the band have always been at the forefront of presenting Scottish music in a fresh and modern context and it’s to their credit that these early recordings haven’t dated like their South-of-the-border contemporaries”.

The musicians came and went and each new individual brought something new to the sound, and also I think, left having learned a great deal about performance, composing, and arranging, as they went off to do their own thing, after honing their considerable skills, as many did. If pushed I might even admit that I had learned a few things myself! Mostly it was all very organic and sometimes a bit stressful and sometimes not, but it all added new colours to an increasingly iconic Scottish band.

The tracks I have picked are ones which stick in my mind from back in the day. Tracks which from my point of view seemed to be a high point for each of the individuals. On these sleeve notes, I have highlighted the person who I think it shows at their best; or perhaps they composed a tune or a song for it, something which stuck in my mind. That means that because there were 19 people in the bands which I produced, and 26 albums, obviously a number of albums have been missed out, just simply because the sums don’t work. It

doesn’t mean the albums which have been missed out were any less important, it just means that by the time I got to 19, there were still some albums left. Also from my point of view, I thought I was going to have to put the songs and music in chronological order - the early albums at the beginning and so on. But in fact I did not need to do that. There is always something new added in each album, but to my ear there was a continuity that myself, and many other people, always heard in a Battlefield Band’s music had. So you could put a track from any period beside a track from any other period and it still worked.

Let me finish by saying it was always interesting; always satisfying and always surprising to produce a Battlefield Band album. From my point of view, and also from the musician’s point of view, it was always a pleasure to listen to the end result. I hope this album will give you pleasure to listen to a great band playing great music.

**CD REVIEW • *Beg & Borrow*
Huffington Post 2015**

‘... a great success in every category... the Battlefield Band is as relevant as ever after all these years’. Huffington Post

Before I leave you, let me say a word in thanks on behalf of the band and myself to all the radio shows; magazines; soundmen (Jos; Fred; Moray; Rob) who worked for us; people in the back office – Joyce; Sarah; Denise & Ewan; the engineers who worked on some of the albums; the agents who have worked for us throughout the world; concert presenters and graphic designers. Too many to mention, but they know who they are. You never met them, you don’t know who they are but they were very important to Battlefield Band and helped to spread the word. Thanks to them all. And of course you our audience our best critics. Thanks to you all. **Robin Morton**

**1.TENDING THE STEER
SANDY THOMPSON
THE CALROSSIE CATTLE WIFE**

More pipe tunes starting with a 9/8 jig to which **Duncan MacGillivray** added the 3rd and 4th parts. Duncan also wrote the last jig in honour of an Antipodean lady who has played a very important part in his life.

From There’s A Buzz – COMD2007 (Temple Records 1982)

2.THE SHIPYARD APPRENTICE

Jamie McMenemy sings this fine song which was written by Archie Fisher, Norman Buchan and Bobby Campbell, originally for a radio programme for school-leavers. It expresses the thoughts and feelings of a Clydeside shipyard worker who has grown up through the Forties and Fifties.

From Battlefield Band – COMD2055 (Topic 1977; Re-released Temple Records 1994)

3.LEAVING FRIDAY HARBOR

This tune, written by **John McCusker**, takes its name from the small port on San Juan Island which lies in the straits between the State of Washington coast and Vancouver Island. We have had some great concerts there and it is a lovely place, with a lovely name and it deserves this lovely tune. Again Donald Hay joins us on percussion.

From Leaving Friday Harbor – COMD2080 (Temple Records 1999)

4.THE LADS O’ THE FAIR

The Falkirk Tryst began in the 18th century as a cattle fair but gradually changed into the purely social event it is today. A Falkirk man himself, **Brian McNeill** has used his local history for his first venture into songwriting. Many happy returns, Brian!

From Home Is Where The Van Is – COMD2006 (Temple Records 1980)

5. RETURN TO KASHMAGIRO

THE CUDDY WITH THE WOODEN LEG

The first tune was written by **Dougie Pincock** while 'resting between engagements' at an oasis near the Neilston employment exchange, the second by Brian McNeill after swelling the coffers of a bookmaker near the burning sands of Kempton Park.

From Celtic Hotel – COMD2002 (Temple Records 1987)

6. THE ROAD OF TEARS

Alan Reid's song, The Road of Tears, sets the theme. A song which crosses the centuries and the continents. The Highland Clearances, the Irish famine, the forced removal of the Native American from tribal lands and contemporary issues are entwined to illustrate that human behaviour does indeed repeat itself time and again.

From The Road of Tears – COMD2098 (Temple Records 2006)

7. BLACKHALL ROCKS

Ged Foley based this beautiful slow air on a Northumbrian rant tune, and renamed it after part of the coastline of S.E. Durham.

From Home Is Where The Van Is – COMD2006 (Temple Records 1980)

8. RANTIN' ROVIN' ROBIN

A well-known autobiographical song by Robert Burns in which he admits that he was 'a bit of a lad'. Tony Cuffe of Ossian first had the idea of using the melody of another Burns' song 'Dainty Davie', and this is the one we use here, featuring the voice of **Sylvia Barnes**.

From Stand Easy + Preview – COMD2052 (Stand Easy Topic 1979; Preview EP Temple Records 1980. Both Stand Easy and Preview were combined and re-released by Temple Records in 1994).

9. BALLARAT JIG

EADAR Ì 'S LEODHAS

Ballarat in Victoria, Australia was central to the gold rush of the 1850's. So much gold was found in Ballarat, Bendigo, Castlemaine and environs that within a year of the first find in 1851, 370,000 immigrants came to the goldfields. These fortune seekers came from Europe, America, and China and their numbers outstripped the convicts, thus marking the beginning of the end of transportation of convicts to Australia.

Alasdair White wrote the tune Eadar Ì 's Leodhas for his mother (originally from Iona) who recently had a significant birthday and is about to embark upon her retirement. A PE teacher in Lewis for many years, she has long been well loved and respected by colleagues and pupils alike. Mike's 'amazing dancing shoes' are featured on this track to good effect.

From Zama Zama – COMD2102 (Temple Records 2007)

10. LOVERS & FRIENDS

This great song was written by Sean Mone, an equally great singer and songwriter from Keady, Co. Armagh. It's sung here by our very own **Sean O'Donnell**. He has given us a subtle song which points the finger in the right direction, but doesn't hit you over the head with a political stick. We are happy to point the finger in the same direction.

From Line-up – COMD2104 (Temple Records 2011)

11. THE ST. LOUIS STAGGER THE ASS IN THE GRAVEYARD SANDY'S NEW CHANTER

We had hoped to finish recording the pipe tracks for this album in September 1992 but the fickle finger of fate took over. To cut a long story short, **Iain MacDonald's** house in Glenuig went on fire.

Luckily he was at home and he threw the offending gas bottle out of the door (more details below). He was very fortunate that he only burned his fingers but it meant that, in order to finish the album, we had to record some tracks in the U.S.A. This is one of those tracks. The lucky city chosen was St. Louis, the lucky venue Clayton Studios and the lucky engineer Gene Carroll. Thanks are due to him and all our friends in St. Louis for helping us through – a good town St. Louis. So that's the background.

The introduction to this set has a couple of rhythm changes and so does an evening at the Missouri Bar & Grill in St. Louis! We spent a late night there on Thanksgiving Day – just a quiet drink, you understand, but one thing led to another and the evening came to an end with our normally staid producer waltzing with a chair (he insists that the chair made the first approach!). We have an idea that they spike the cordials at the Missouri Bar & Grill but suffice to say that we look forward to our next visit – just to check – and we recommend you make a visit if you have the opportunity. **The Ass In The Graveyard** was composed by Terry Tully, Pipe Major of the Laurence O'Toole Pipe Band, a great pipe band from Dublin. Tom MacAllister, composer of **Sandy's New Chanter** is one of a famous family from Shotts, for years prime movers in the Shotts & Dykehead Caledonia Pipe Band,

from whom we learned the last two tunes.

From Quiet Days – COMD2050 (Temple Records 1992)

12. SHEPHERD LAD

This is the only song we know about skinny dipping in Scotland, a chilly and ill-advised pursuit in the best of weather! It features a twist on the common ballad tale of a nasty young man who take advantage of a girl. In fact, the shepherd lad is far

too modest for this lassie. **Karine Polwart** fitted the traditional words to the tune of John's.

From Happy Daze – COMD2085 (Temple Records 2001)

13.THE CANONGATE TWITCH STEAMBOAT TO DETROIT TWENTY POUNDS OF GIN BREAK YER BASS DRONE

A traditional fiddle tune introduces three modern compositions written by **Mike Katz**. Steamboat to Detroit commemorates our first trip to America in this lineup. We did arrive in Detroit though not actually by sea! Twenty Pounds of Gin was written for a prolonged night out in Edinburgh. The set concludes with Break Your Bass Drone – the handwork of that great piper and composer from Pitlochry, Gordon Duncan.

From Rain, Hail or Shine – COMD2074 (Temple Records 1998)

14.THE LAST TRIP HOME THE LUCKENBOOTH

John McCusker had this great tune going through his head for a while, and always thought it would make a good song. **Davy Steele** had an idea for a song, which lacked a tune, the rest, as they say, is obvious. We would like to thank Gary West of the School of Scottish Studies for giving access to his interview notes with his Uncle Bill.

Davy's neighbour used to have a couple of Clydesdale horses in the field next to his house, and apart from leaning over the fence and eating the rowan tree, they were the loveliest, and most gentle of animals.

The tune played in the middle is another from John. The Luckenbooths were locked trading stalls that surrounded the walls of the old Scottish Parliament building and the Tolbooth on the High Street in Edinburgh. They disappeared with

the parliament about 300 years ago. Perhaps the tradition can be revived now that we have got a new parliament in Scotland, but the planners will probably say no!

From Leaving Friday Harbor – COMD2080 (Temple Records 1999)

15.THE BACHELOR

Pat Kilbride learned this song from Jimmy Crowley of Cork. He sang it for Pat the first time we met him, in the folk club in Bolger's Hotel, Tullamore, where he was playing.

From At the Front – COMD2056 (Topic 1978; Re-released Temple Records 1994)

16.TYNES IN OVERTIME

Mike Katz and **Ewen Henderson** composed this as a 'quickstep', defined as a tune similar to, and interchangeable with, a 2/4 march, suitable for a quickstep dance. They named it for Lawrence Tynes, the Scots-born place kicker for the New York Giants. Tynes made history as the only player ever to kick the winning overtime field goal in two separate playoffs; first against the Green Bay Packers in 2007-2008, and again dashing the hopes of the San Francisco 49ers in 2011-2012. On both occasions The Giants won the Lombardi Trophy, beating New England Patriots in both Super Bowls. He is the only Scots-born player to win a Super Bowl ring.

Lawrence Tynes' Scottish mother met and married her US Navy Seal husband in the 70s, when he was serving in Scotland. The family lived in Greenock and Machrihannish, Argyll, moving to the US when Lawrence was 10 years old. We understand he is still an ardent supporter of Glasgow Celtic soccer team.

From Room Enough for All – COMD2106 (Temple Records 2013)

17.SEVEN BRAW GOWNS

This song is a version of 'Slighted Nancie', which appears in Alan Ramsay's 'Tea Table Miscellany', and is sung by **Jenny Clark**. The tune was written by Duncan.

From Stand Easy + Preview – COMD2052 (Stand Easy Topic 1979; Preview EP Temple Records 1980. Both Stand Easy and Preview were combined and re-released by Temple Records in 1994).

18.SILVER SPEAR HUMOURS OF TULLA

Two popular Irish reels, featuring **John Gahagan**. The first we heard from Northumbrian piper Angus MacGregor, a friend who set it on the recording.

From Battlefield Band – COMD2055 (Topic 1977; Re-released Temple Records 1994)

19.AFTER HOURS WHISKEY IN THE JAR THE GREEN GATES THE SHIP IN FULL SAIL (LIVE)

Charlie McGettigan, an Irish friend of **Alistair Russell's** wrote his homily to the 'after hours' pint, in good company. The band have thrown a few well loved 'session' tunes to add to the atmosphere and Alan fondly makes use of the Ronnie Drew-aphone, in his rendition of a few bars of 'Whisky in the jar'.

From Home Ground – COMD2034 (Temple Records 1989)

These notes are taken from the original albums.

The Producer's Choice

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|---|------|---|------|
| 1. TENDING THE STEER
Trad. Arr. Battlefield Band 3 rd & 4 th Parts D. MacGillivray*
SANDY THOMPSON - J. Wilson
THE CALROSSIE CATTLE WIFE - D. MacGillivray* | 3.15 | 11. THE ST. LOUIS STAGGER – Iain MacDonald*
THE ASS IN THE GRAVEYARD – Terry Tully*
SANDY'S NEW CHANTER – Tom MacAllister* | 4.20 |
| 2. THE SHIPYARD APPRENTICE
Archibald MacDonald Fisher, PRS/MCPS | 3.50 | 12. SHEPHERD LAD
Words: Trad/Karine Polwart & Music: John McCusker* | 3.48 |
| 3. LEAVING FRIDAY HARBOR – John McCusker* | 5.15 | 13. THE CANONGATE TWITCH – Trad. Arr. Battlefield Band*
STEAMBOAT TO DETROIT – Mike Katz*
TWENTY POUNDS OF GIN – Mike Katz*
BREAK YER BASS DRONE – Gordon Duncan Grian Music | 4.24 |
| 4. LADS O' THE FAIR – Brian McNeill* | 4.03 | 14. THE LAST TRIP HOME
Words Davy Steele/Music John McCusker*
THE LUCKENBOOTH – John McCusker* | 4.59 |
| 5. RETURN TO KASHMAGIRO – Dougie Pincock*
THE CUDDY WITH THE WOODEN LEG – Brian McNeill* | 3.17 | 15. THE BACHELOR | 3.01 |
| 6. THE ROAD OF TEARS – Alan Reid* | 4.22 | 16. TYNES IN OVERTIME! – Mike Katz & Ewen Henderson* | 3.18 |
| 7. BLACKHALL ROCKS – Ged Foley* | 2.50 | 17. SEVEN BRAW GOWNS
Trad. Arr. Battlefield Band – Melody Duncan MacGillivray* | 2.40 |
| 8. RANTIN' ROVIN' ROBIN – Trad. Arr. Battlefield Band* | 3.39 | 18. SILVER SPEAR
THE HUMOURS OF TULLA – Trad. Arr. Battlefield Band* | 2.31 |
| 9. BALLARAT JIG – Alasdair White*
EADAR Ì 'S LEODHAS
(Between Iona and Lewis) – Alasdair White* | 3.27 | 19. AFTER HOURS – C McGettigan Swing Music
WHISKEY IN THE JAR/THE GREEN GATES/THE SHIP IN FULL SAIL
Trad. Arr. Battlefield Band* | 4.40 |
| 10. LOVERS AND FRIENDS
Sean Mone, SM Music – All Rights John J Mone | 4.56 | | |



THE PRODUCER'S CHOICE
TEMPLE RECORDS • DD2108

*Published Kinmor Music
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