

**The Northumbrian Pipers' Society ('Society')
(Company Number: 07471625)**

Notice of Annual General Meeting

IMPORTANT NOTICE

As a member of the Northumbrian Pipers' Society, you are entitled to attend, ask questions and vote on various matters at the AGM.

Following the recent success of holding our AGMs virtually, your committee has decided to hold the AGM this year in the same way, giving all members an equal opportunity to attend.

The Society's AGM for 2023 will, therefore, be held by video conference on ZOOM.

The Notice of Meeting is set out on the pages that follow.

If you wish to vote on any resolution to be discussed at the meeting, please return your proxy form in accordance with the instructions provided.

If you are able to do so, please also join the meeting itself by video conference. To do this, you will need to contact the Society at agm-voting@northumbrianpipers.org.uk to request the access details.

Given that it is now possible for all our members to attend the AGM, wherever you are in the world, I would urge you to do so. It would be wonderful to have the whole piping community represented again, not just those who have been able to get to the physical meeting in the past.

Andrew Davison, OBE
Chairman
The Northumbrian Pipers' Society
Tel: 07802 558693

<https://www.northumbrianpipers.org.uk>

The Northumbrian Pipers' Society is a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales with number 7471625.

Charity registration number 1142471. Registered office: c/o Muckle LLP, Time Central, 32 Gallowgate, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 4BF.

The Northumbrian Pipers' Society ('Society')
(Company Number: 07471625)

Notice of Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Society ('Meeting') will be held by video conference call, commencing at 6.00pm on Saturday 18 November 2023 (UK time) to transact the following business:

Ordinary Business

- 1 To receive and approve the reports of the Chairman and the Chairman of the Cleveland and Co. Durham Branch (see page 5 and page 10).
- 2 To receive the Society's annual accounts for the financial year to 31 March 2023 (see page 11).
- 3 To re-appoint each member of the Committee subject to re-election and offering themselves to be re-elected for a further term, until the AGM of the Society in the year referred to against their name below:
 - 3.1 Andrew Davison 2025
 - 3.2 Andy Lawrenson 2025
 - 3.3 Carolyn Soakell 2025
 - 3.4 Vincent Syson 2025
- 4 To appoint an Honorary Treasurer.
- 5 To elect and appoint additional members of the Committee, up to a maximum of 13 (unless a different number is set by the meeting). Nominations may be made at the AGM. If there are more candidates than vacancies, a ballot will be held. Please see the notes on the resolutions for further details (see page 13).

By order of the Committee
18 October 2023

Notes: Appointment of proxies

1. As a member of the Society, you are entitled to appoint a proxy to exercise all or any of your rights to attend, speak and vote at the Meeting and a proxy form is included on page 12 of this Notice of Meeting. You can only appoint a proxy using the procedures set out in these notes and the notes to the proxy form.
2. A proxy does not need to be a member of the Society but must attend the Meeting to represent you. Details of how to appoint your proxy are set out in the notes on the proxy form. If you wish your proxy to speak on your behalf at the Meeting you will need to appoint your own choice of proxy (not the Chairman) and give your instructions directly to them.

Changing proxy instructions

1. To change your proxy instructions simply submit a new proxy appointment using the method set out in the proxy form. Note that the cut-off time for receipt of proxy appointments as stated in the proxy form also applies in relation to amended instructions; any amended proxy appointment received after the relevant cut-off time will be disregarded.
2. Where you have appointed a proxy using the hard copy proxy form and would like to change the instructions using another hard copy proxy form, please contact the Secretary.

Termination of proxy appointments

1. In order to revoke a proxy instruction, you will need to inform the Society by sending a signed hard copy notice clearly stating your intention to revoke your proxy appointment to the address stated in the proxy form. Any power of attorney or any other authority under which the revocation notice is signed (or a duly certified copy of such power or authority) must be included with the notice.
2. The revocation notice must be received by the Society no later than forty-eight hours before the time of the meeting (not taking account of any part of a day which is not a working day). If you attempt to revoke your proxy appointment but the revocation is received after the time specified then, subject to the paragraph directly below, your proxy appointment will remain valid.
3. Appointment of a proxy does not preclude you from attending the Meeting and voting in person. If you have appointed a proxy and attend the Meeting in person, your proxy appointment will automatically be terminated.

Appointment of Committee Members and other Officers

The maximum number of Committee members is 13 (unless increased by Ordinary Resolution). As the constitution permits Committee members to be nominated at any time up to the consideration of the resolution(s) to appoint the Committee, there may be nominations that are not listed in this Notice of Meeting. If there are more nominations than positions available, the election will take place by ballot and the successful candidates will be those who have secured most votes (whether from members present in person or by proxy).

Item 1a

Chairman's Report 2023

Dear Member,

I write with a great sense of loss.

Since I last reported to you on the activities of the Society, there has been a huge generational shift. Not only at a National level, with the transition from our Queen of over 70 years to a new King, but also within the piping community. Amongst others, we have lost Richard Butler (the Duke's Piper for some 40 years and a great ambassador for the pipes), my father, John Davison, a Life Member of the Society and my piping companion since we learned to play together some 45 years ago, and just weeks after my father, the wonderful gentleman who taught my father and I (and so many others) to play, Roland Lofthouse (Honorary Life Member of the Society and a member of the Society for nearly 70 years), who has sadly just passed away at the age of 96, still playing, inspiring others, and with the most amazing memory for tunes right up to his death.

Such loss, combined with being afforded the incredible honour of being invited by The Duke of Northumberland to succeed Richard Butler, Tom Matthews and Jack Armstrong (who, together with Patricia Jennings, were the first pipers I ever heard and who inspired me to take up the pipes) to become the 13th recorded "Duke's Piper" in an unbroken line going back at least as far as the 1750s (and probably earlier), makes me reflect not only on the past, the wonderful times shared with such friends and giants in the piping world and what they have taught us, but also on the passing of the baton, of the sense of duty that it is now the turn of the next generation to take the tradition forward. To honour and respect all those who have gone before and to do our bit to try to ensure that future generations have the same opportunity that we have had to enjoy the beauty of our traditions, our instrument and its music.

So, despite such a sense of loss (or maybe because of it), it gives me great pleasure to write to you about some of the achievements of your Society since my last report.

With no apology, I again reflect on my own experience as to how I came to take up the pipes. As mentioned above, I remember being fascinated by seeing two sets of pipes in a glass case in the Clock Tower café at Wallington and then transfixed when these were taken out of the case and played by Patricia and Jack. That sound – the iconic sound of Northumbria – inspired me to ask my father whether I could learn to play. A question that led to us meeting David Burleigh, Roland Loffhouse and so many other pipers who have become wonderful friends over the years. The relevance of this is not just to indulge my reminiscences but because it reflects so well on the outcome of the brilliant work done by Ednie Wilson for the Society. The concept she developed of encouraging all pipers to “Play Out”, no matter how proficient we are, so that the general public can hear the sound of the pipes, is so simple but so perfect as a way to inspire others to have a go. It just takes a nice tune (no need for anything fancy) to capture and inspire the next generation of pipers. So a huge thank you to those of you who have given it a go. To people like Vincent Syson, who organised the Society’s outing on the Tanfield Railway, the piping in Newcastle Cathedral just before Christmas and who experimented so successfully at being the wandering minstrel at the Wooler Show; to Tom Fairfax, who organised a group of pipers to play at the Glendale Children’s Day, enabling over a thousand young people to hear the pipes for the first time, to Nick Leeming, Louise Woodman (and others) who played at the entrance to the Northumberland Show and who volunteer to play inside the house at Wallington, to those who organise the “try it” sessions at the Cambridge Folk Festival. I could go on (and my apologies to the many others who I have not mentioned) but I hope you get the message. Please give it a try where you live. It is not only a brilliant way to promote the pipes but can also be great fun! And please do send pictures for publishing in the Newsletter. We love to see what you have been up to AND it encourages others to do the same.

In focusing attention on this initiative, I in no way intend to diminish the importance of the other initiatives pursued by the Society. These are essential to capture and nurture any interest shown by someone wanting to hear more about the instrument or to have a go at playing it themselves. These encompass the work done in providing tutors and tune books, the fantastic pipes hire system that has so successfully transitioned from Nick Leeming to Ednie Wilson, Hilary Richardson, and the dedicated volunteers around the country who keep over 50 sets of pipes in the hands of people who want to try to play before buying their own instrument; the wonderful playing groups around the world who are the heart of the Society, welcoming new players and providing social and playing opportunities, encouragement and challenge to those who manage to get started; to the amazing concerts and competitions that the Society has organised over the last year to showcase the very best of what can be achieved, inspiring others to try harder and providing top level entertainment to all who come along to listen.

With these big events in mind, I really want to thank and congratulate the teams who put on the Society's Annual Concert and the 4th Newcastle Piping Festival during the last year. Both take a huge amount of work but are such a joy to attend and I am delighted that we continue to learn our way into how to make these available across the world, through live streaming over the internet. I know we do not always get it perfect all the time but please remember that we are a group of volunteer amateurs, learning as we go and trying our very best. We could (and sometimes do) pay professionals to do it for us but the price of the tickets needs to be higher, to cover the additional costs. If you have experience of running livestreamed events and could get involved to help us improve them, we would be delighted to hear from you.

As your Committee, we regularly beat ourselves up for not achieving enough and worrying that we cannot find people to do the key things. However, as Andy May so clearly observed recently, "we" really are pretty good at doing the things that matter most and in supporting people to do what they enjoy. There is a growing body of volunteers who are not on the Committee but who are doing invaluable work to promote the Society's objectives (the pipe-hire system, the self-help pipemaking group led by Stan May, the many self-organising groups around the country to mention just a few). Where the Committee struggles is in finding volunteers to help with the essential administrative tasks that an organisation must do in order to continue. Things like preparing the accounts, managing the insurances, membership renewals, website maintenance. Increasingly, we are having to pay people to carry out these roles in the absence of volunteers, which puts pressure on us to increase the membership subscription. If at all possible, I would prefer to increase the number of members and the efficiency of the systems (eg with all members paying by standing order instead of having to be chased to pay subscriptions and being able to send AGM notices by email instead of the excessively costly printing and posting we otherwise have to do) instead of raising subscriptions. Please do what you can to help with this.

I have been delighted to see our newsletter evolve so positively following the appointment of Hannah Wiggins as our new (paid) newsletter editor. She has brought new life and enthusiasm to it. I have the impression that it is being very well received and is creating a real sense of community across the Society. Certainly, the number and variety of contributions Hannah is receiving is really encouraging. It is a brilliant way for you all to tell each other what you have been doing, to share news and best practice in a more vibrant and instant way than the equally important but very different Journal that is produced by John Gibbons, providing a forum for the more thoughtful research articles and a formal record of key events.

I was also delighted that Nicola and I were able to attend the Society's Annual Dinner at the Northern Counties Club earlier this summer – another event so ably organised by Vincent Syson. It was a really wonderful evening, not only for the excellent food but also because of the opportunity to hear Kathryn Tickell answer random questions from the floor about her experiences as a professional piper and to share the wonderful company of so many members. A special thank you to Kathryn for agreeing to speak and to those members who travelled very long distances to take part. I hope the event will build and that more of you will join us in future years.

A major decision facing the Society in coming years is in relation to our “office” and online shop. As most of you will know, Julia Say has managed both for many years on a voluntary basis and has done a truly staggering amount to support the Society in this way (as well as in many other ways). Julia has indicated that she would like to step back at some point in the next couple of years. So, what do we do next? The Office not only stores the materials for the shop (books, recordings, pipemaking materials etc) but also all the Society's archive material (both paper records and instruments, such as the Colin Ross materials). If we move this to a more central location, would more people visit it? Should we do more to promote the shop? We would very much welcome thoughts from members on how we might evolve this element of the Society's offering.

One of the roles of the Society is to lobby for things that are important and that nobody else would step up to do. An example of this arises from a chance conversation I had with Richard Johnstone, who assists in running the Music Service for schools in Northumberland and who has been teaching the pipes in schools for many years. He alerted me to the fact that the Northumberland Music Service is to be merged into a much larger service covering the whole of the North East and also that the teaching of traditional music is not currently a focus on any agenda for this new service. As a result, I am delighted that the cause has been taken up by our President, Baroness Joyce Quin, who has mentioned the issue to the Education Minister and written a formal letter to the relevant Ministers in both the Lords and the Commons. We are so lucky to have someone as our President who is able to make representations on our behalf at such a high level.

By way of an update also on the impact of the Ivory Act, which you will remember we were consulted on and again Joyce so ably represented our concerns to Ministers about as it was going through its parliamentary stages. I reported last year that I had successfully “self-declared” one set of pipes under the “made before 1975 and including less than 20% ivory” exemption. At the time of writing my last report, I had applied also for exemption for my 17 key ivory and silver Reid set under the “made before 1918 and being of outstandingly high artistic, cultural or historic value” exemption. This requires having to make the case for the item and this being considered by an “expert”. I can now report that this application was successful. It may help members looking to sell or hire their own sets to know that, following research I have undertaken by asking people who knew him at the time, any set of pipes made by Jack Armstrong would have been made before 1975, as he is known to have ceased making himself by around 1970. Therefore, any set by Jack that has less than 20% ivory should be eligible for self-certified exemption.

As always, I would like to close my report by expressing my sincere thanks to all those who have helped the Society to further its aims in the last year. None of it just happens. Somebody has to do a lot of work for the list of achievements referred to above to come about and I am extremely grateful to your Committee members and Ann Sessoms, our secretary, who devote so much of their time and energy to the Society’s affairs. I am very sorry that we will be losing Alice Robinson from the Committee, when she steps down at the AGM, and wish her every happiness with her new baby (due about the same time as the AGM!). A special thank you this year to Andy May, who stepped in for me as Chair during a period of extended holiday, as well as all his work on the concert and the Piping Festival, and to Baroness Joyce Quin, our wonderful President, who is always there to help with any difficult issue and who so ably represents us in areas we could not reach without her support.

I look forward to “meeting” as many of you as possible at the AGM.

Keep piping!

Andrew Davison, OBE
Chairman, October 2023

Item 1b

Cleveland and Co. Durham Branch Chairman's Report 2023

Northumbrian Pipers' Society, Cleveland and Co. Durham Branch
Report July 2022 – September 2023

- 1) The Branch AGM was held in November 2022. Minutes of the meeting have been sent to NPS Admin.
- 2) Physical meetings of the Branch held on 2nd Wednesday of the month in Ceddesfeld Hall have continued successfully. Numbers declined in the aftermath of Covid-19, but are now recovering . We have two new attendees.
- 3) The monthly practice on 4th Wednesday has also continued successfully for the last year.
- 4) The Branch Hon. Treasurer organised a special meeting for February which featured the piping and history of the border pipes from Iain Gelston. This was an entertaining and informative event, though numbers attending were disappointing.
- 5) The Branch's public playing group completed its performances at the National Gardens Scheme Open Gardens in 2022 and the summer of 2023, though we played at fewer events this year because a couple of our requests to play were turned down. We have four pipers now in the playing group. Two members of the Branch played at Wallington in August.
- 6) The Branch held a successful Christmas meal event at the Dun Cow in Sedgfield before the December meeting
- 7) There have been no requests for pipe hire.
- 8) The Branch's 2023 AGM will be held during the October meeting.
- 9) The Chair thanks the Branch committee and members for their work and support.

David Cook
Cleveland and Co. Durham Branch Chair and Secretary
September 2023

Item 2 Accounts of the Society to 31 March 2023

These will be available before the AGM on the NPS website

www.northumbrianpipers.org.uk or on request from admin@northumbrianpipers.org.uk

Item 3 To re-appoint each member of the Committee subject to re-election and offering themselves to be re-elected for a further term until the AGM of the Society in the year referred to against their name below:

Andrew Davison 2025

Andy Lawrenson 2025

Carolyn Soakell 2025

Vincent Syson 2025

Item 4 To appoint an Honorary Treasurer. The Society does not currently have a treasurer. Nominations for the role are invited and can be submitted at any time up to the point of considering this resolution at the AGM. In the event of there being more than one nomination, the position will be awarded to the candidate who secures the most votes.

Item 5 To appoint additional members of the Committee up to the maximum number permitted (13 unless increased by Ordinary Resolution). Assuming that those members standing for re-election are re-elected and that there is no Honorary Treasurer appointed, this leaves 2 Committee position to be filled.

As at the date of posting this Notice of Meeting, one nomination has been received, as follows:-

Melanie Rothman – Proposed Susan Craven, Seconded Paul Knox.

I am a professional oboist and musician, originally from the UK, now residing in Munich, Germany after having been appointed a position in the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra.

I first took up the NSP in 2018 after having fallen in love with the sound, and due to my location at the time (Salzburg, Austria) which was remote from any teachers, I largely learnt to play on my own. I've however participated in some piping courses and competitions and have won the Archie Dagg cup at the Bellingham Show in 2018 and more recently the Billy Pigg memorial cup at the NPS competitions in 2023.

After having held a pop up get-to-know the NSP event at my orchestra's Container Corner in July of this year, I have an enthusiasm and desire to further explore ways to present this wonderful instrument and tradition to a wider audience. As an experienced professional in another field of music, I would aim to help build a bridge between the musical world that I've been trained in and the tradition that I've come to know and love.

The Northumbrian Pipers' Society Annual General Meeting 2023

Proxy Form – please detach and return once completed (see notes 5 and 6 overleaf)
Before completing this form, please read the explanatory note overleaf

I / We (*print name*)

.....
 being a / member/s of the Society appoint the Chairman of the meeting or (see note 3)
 appoint

--

as my/our proxy to attend, speak and vote on my/our behalf at the Annual General Meeting of the Society to be held on Saturday 18 November 2023 at 6.00pm (UK time) and at any adjournment of the meeting.

I/We direct my/our proxy to vote on the following resolutions as I/we have indicated by marking the appropriate box with an 'X'. If no indication is given, my/our proxy will vote or abstain from voting at his or her discretion and I/we authorise my/our proxy to vote (or abstain from voting) as he or she thinks fit in relation to any other matter or resolution which is properly put before the meeting.

	Resolutions	For	Against
1	To receive and approve the reports of the Chairman and the Chairman of the Cleveland and Co. Durham Branch		
2	To receive and approve the Society's annual accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2023		
3	To re-appoint the following as members of the Committee:		
	Andrew Davison		
	Andy Lawrenson		
	Carolyn Soakell		
	Vincent Syson		
4	To appoint an Honorary Treasurer		
5	To appoint additional members to the committee:		
	Melanie Rothman		
	Signature	Date	

Notes:

1. As a member of the Society, you are entitled to appoint a proxy to exercise all or any of your rights to attend, speak and vote at a general meeting of the Society. You can only appoint a proxy using the procedures set out in these notes and the Notice of the meeting.
 2. Appointment of a proxy does not preclude you from attending the meeting and voting in person. If you have appointed a proxy and attend the meeting in person, your proxy appointment will automatically be terminated.
 3. A proxy does not need to be a member of the Society but must attend the meeting to represent you. To appoint as your proxy a person other than the Chairman of the meeting, insert their full name in the box. If you sign and return this proxy form with no name inserted in the box, the Chairman of the meeting will be deemed to be your proxy. Where you appoint as your proxy someone other than the Chairman, you are responsible for ensuring that they attend the meeting and are aware of your voting intentions. If you wish your proxy to make any comments on your behalf, you will need to appoint someone other than the Chairman and give them the relevant instructions directly.
 4. To direct your proxy how to vote on the resolutions, mark the appropriate box with an 'X'. If no voting indication is given, your proxy will vote or abstain from voting at his or her discretion. Your proxy will vote (or abstain from voting) as he or she thinks fit in relation to any other matter which is put before the meeting.
 5. To appoint a proxy using this form, the form must be:
 - 5.1 completed and signed;
 - 5.2 sent or delivered to the NPS Administrator at Sandpipers, North Broomhill, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE65 9UL, UK; and
 - 5.3 received by the Society no later than **6.00pm on 16 November 2023 (UK time)**
- As an alternative to completing this hard copy proxy form, you can appoint a proxy electronically by sending an email to agm-voting@northumbrianpipers.org.uk. For an electronic proxy appointment to be valid, your appointment must be received by the Society no later than **6.00 pm on 16 November 2023 (UK time)**.
6. Any power of attorney or any other authority under which this proxy form is signed (or a duly certified copy of such power of authority) must be included with the proxy form.
 7. If you submit more than one valid proxy appointment, the appointment received last before the latest time for the receipt or proxies will take precedence.
 8. For details of how to change your proxy instructions or revoke your proxy appointment see the notes to the notice of meeting.

You may not use any electronic address provided in this proxy form to communicate with the Society for any purposes concerning this meeting other than those expressly stated.