

# Music shop is so much more than a pipe dream

The thought of the Highland capital being without its own bagpipe shop inspired **Brian Yates** to take on Cabar Fèidh Bagpipe Supplies and go into business

Small Business Focus  
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**Q** How would you describe your business to a stranger?

**A** We sell bagpipes and all the related accessories – music, books, drums, supplies and some apparel; hose, Glengarries, Inverness capes. We also do repairs on bagpipes and practice chanters. I will get back to manufacturing my own practice chanters when my lathes are up and running.

It is a niche market but we do sell things that appeal to the broader market, so anybody interested in trad music and groups, Gaelic song – we sell those CDs.

As far as I know, we are the only piping supply shop in the Highlands.

**Q** What inspired you to start the business?

**A** I ran into Niall Matheson at the World Pipe Band Championships in 2012. I've known Niall for years and he told me he'd closed the shop. I said 'WHAT!' He asked if I would have been interested and I said 'Niall, I would have jumped in with both feet!'

The thought of no Highland bagpipe shop in the capital of the Highlands was ridiculous. Where else would pipers go if they want to try reeds, try instruments or just hang out with other pipers to get the craic?

Niall still had the old space in the Victorian Market and I was able to trade from 12/12/12!

**Q** How has your business developed?

**A** When the food market was going into the Victorian Market, I was fortunate enough to move into Church Street in 2020. It was the best thing we ever did because we have three times the space. We moved in right before lockdown!

It was a total bùrach (Gaelic for mess!). Lockdown gave us a chance to organise the space.



**Brian Yates, owner of Cabar Fèidh Bagpipe Supplies in Inverness.**

Picture: Callum Mackay

**Q** What are your plans to develop your business in the future?

**A** To do our own repairs and manufacture some of our own products now I can get my lathes out.

We have more and more people come in for MOTs, bag changes, people who want to get their pipes going again so we're doing a lot more on the service side.

I teach pipes, and Andrew MacLennan who works for me, and Steven McCabe who comes in – we all teach. We could only teach one at a time in the old shop, now we have three rooms.

We're hoping to turn this into an education centre, not only for piping, but also for Gaelic, to make it a traditional culture hub.

**Q** What lessons have you learned from your time in business?

**A** A very dear friend of mine in the States said 'you will find, when you go into business for yourself, you're actually working for everyone else.'

He's absolutely right! I'm working to pay bills for my suppliers, my utilities, administrative work – I had no idea how much work I would be doing in the background for everyone to keep a business going.

**Q** What's your vision for Inverness city centre?

**A** I would like to see the opportunity for a wider variety of businesses – rents that are a little more affordable. Church Street is fun because we have music here and other interesting businesses: clock repairs, a documentary filmmaker, a historian. I would like to see free or lower cost parking! People want free parking. That will bring shoppers into the centre and spend time shopping.

**Q** Can you tell us something interesting about yourself?

**A** I have a Masters degree in teaching secondary English. For the last five years I've had the great good fortune to teach in the music department in the High School which is an absolutely fabulous department and good school.

My first language of literacy was French because we moved to Paris when I was two then went back to the States. I moved here in 2005 for my wife!

She's German but had made Scotland her home. The fact I had piping and I understood the music and the culture enabled me to fit in a little bit better!