



RHKYC Pipe Band at the Singapore and South East Asian Pipe Band Championship

WORDS: GARETH WILLIAMS

Since the reforming of the old Hong Kong Pipe Band into the RHKYC Pipe Band in October 2012, it has been the band's firm intention to compete at the highest level possible given the available piping and drumming resources in Hong Kong.

The problem was, whilst the RHKYC Band may be quite a good band, just how good was uncertain. Preparations started in late 2012 to identify a possible pipe band competition that has sufficient standing within the international pipe bands associations that would give the band a grading. Without a grading, the band wouldn't be able to compete anywhere.

The Singapore and South East Asian Pipe Band Championships in Singapore proved to be the right place to start. The contest brings in judges from Australia who are accredited through the Pipe Band Association of Australia to grade bands for Asian contests.

Having identified the most suitable contest, the RHKYC Band was graded in Grade 4 as we were completely unknown. The band determined that the firm intention was to go there and win our grade and get upgraded to Grade 3.

We set about compiling and arranging a set of tunes that would fulfil the competition requirements. That meant a March, Strathspey and Reel set, standard sort of stuff, as well as a medley; anything we wanted to play provided it lasted for between four and six minutes. A medley requires us to compile and arrange tunes to give a full ensemble of sound,

including harmonies and changes of tempo, and encompasses a slow air as well as jigs and hornpipes.

Practises were taken very seriously and Club members may recall hearing the band practising not only on Tuesday nights, but Thursdays as well. Additionally, the band practised on Sunday afternoons at the Sea School in Stanley.

The contest was held over two days on 8 and 9 June in Singapore. The band set off taking nine pipers and five drummers to the contest.

In the final count, the RHKYC Band prevailed in every aspect of the contest, solo piping, solo bass drumming and the overall band contest. We won the Grade 4 pipe band contest so overwhelmingly that the band has been promoted out of Asian Grade 3 and is eligible for Grade 3 contests in Scotland and Australia. No band in Hong Kong has ever been graded at this level.

The RHKYC Band has attracted so much attention in pipe band circles in Hong Kong that the best talent is joining and testament to that is that on the same weekend that 14 band members went to Singapore, the band provided the Club with a second band of 12 pipers and drummers for the Club's Kellett Island Day.

Building on the platform of success in Singapore, the band intends to carry the RHKYC name to contests in Australia next year as well as fulfilling our obligations to provide the Club with a band for Club functions. 🇬🇧