



# DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY LIFE

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MAKEUP ARTIST  
LAURA KERR



TO THE EDGE  
OF THE WORLD



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## Pipe dream

PIPE MAJOR CRAIG IRVING

MIKE MARSHALL  
THE MOVIE MAN

THE GENIUS OF  
CHARLES JENCKS

ROYAL BURGH  
OF LOCHMABEN

WIN A  
**£10,000**  
WEDDING AT  
MABIE HOUSE  
HOTEL

WALKING CRIFFEL  
MOSTLY GHOSTLY



# PIPE DREAM

Craig Irving is Pipe Major of the award-winning Langholm Pipe Band, but in his day job he plays for many of the thousands of couples who marry every year at Gretna Green

Photography by Phil Rigby

**P**iper Craig Irving is delighted to have been able to turn a favourite pastime into a full-time career.

For the last seven years Craig has been making a living as a piper in Gretna Green, specialising in weddings.

He's much in demand at the romantic hotspot to add a traditional Scottish flavour to nuptials, and he loves every minute.

"You get to meet some really nice people from all walks of life and from all over the world," Craig says.

"I find no two weddings are ever the same; sometimes there are 60 guests and sometimes it's just the couple on their own and I've often



'I often get booked by a family member or friend as a surprise for the couple'



been called on as a witness.

"Often I'll get asked to take a picture at the Gretna Green sign on a couple's mobile phone so they can let their friends and family know they're married."

Craig, who lives in Gretna with his wife Bev and sons Archie, six, and Matt, two, started out by playing for weddings at weekends.

"It got to the stage where I was working during the week and was away all weekend at weddings and a few of the hotels asked if fancied doing piping full-time," he says. "In 2003 I bit the bullet and just did it, and I've never looked back."

Originally from the Chapelknowe area, near Canonbie, Craig has been playing the bagpipes since he was eight. But it was only after a break from playing for more than 10 years that he got back into it again when a friend started to learn.

Craig is now busy playing at all sorts of occasions and is also Pipe Major of the



award-winning Langholm Pipe Band. His piping career has seen him play for the Queen at the prestigious Braemar Highland Gathering – where Langholm won the prize for best band last year, and for American TV star Ty Pennington when he was in Langholm making a TV show last year. It has also taken him to New York to take part in the famous Tartan Day celebrations.

**T**he 36-year-old has entertained his fair share of celebrity guests – from top footballers to TV stars – at weddings he's played at, and he has appeared on national TV when GMTV organised a wedding at Gretna's Anvil Hall a couple of years ago.

Craig is booked for weddings on all days of the week, with Valentine's Day in Gretna Green always proving popular, as well as memorable dates like last year's 9/9/09 and

this year's 10/10/10.

"I often get booked by a family member or friend as a surprise for the couple," says Craig. "I do get asked to play things like Elvis on the pipes, but I like to keep it traditional."

"There have been some awkward moments too – a few years ago I piped a couple in and out of their wedding ceremony and then the groom decided he needed to go to the toilet. But he never came back and just disappeared."

Thankfully these moments are rare and Craig enjoys the variety his job brings. He also plays the Scottish small pipes, which offer a quieter and more mellow sound for indoor ceremonies.

"I feel very lucky to have been able to turn a hobby – something I really enjoy – into a job and get paid for it," he adds.

■ See [www.gretnagreenpiper.co.uk](http://www.gretnagreenpiper.co.uk)